

**WASHINGTON COUNTY WATER CONSERVANCY**  
**DISTRICT**

Minutes of Meeting of Board of Trustees

May 19, 2015

Minutes of a public meeting of the board of trustees of the Washington County Water Conservancy District, held on Tuesday, May 19, 2015, beginning at 6:00 p.m. at 533 East Waterworks Drive, St. George, Utah. Those board members present for the meeting were: Chair Ed Bowler, Jim Ence, Ken Neilson, Howard Bracken, and Jon Pike. Tom Hirschi was not present. Also present were General Manager Ron Thompson, Associate General Managers, Barbara Hjelle and Corey Cram, Public Information Officer Karry Rathje and Secretary Roberta McMullin. Alan Ayala, law clerk, was also present. See attached roll for others in attendance.

Ed Bowler conducted the meeting and welcomed those present.

The first item on the agenda was status reports by general manager Ron Thompson as follows:

**Lake Powell Pipeline Project**- Ron told the board this project is still moving along. They are trying to keep the studies in line. Ron said some of the district staff have been doing a lot of work on the Water Needs Assessment. There are so many studies and some of them take a lot of time and cost a lot of money. The process is long. Two or three of those reports, in terms of the project, are extremely important. Barbara has been working on rewriting some of these reports. The socio-economic sections need a rewrite. Biological opinions are also important. The project is getting a lot of press, some negative but the negative is primarily from one group who is negative about everything we do and want no growth. Ron said as long as our elected leaders want us to develop a water supply and protect the current water supply that is what the water district will do.

**Water Treatment Plant** – The treatment plant is about 30 years old and Ron told the board they have had to replace the roof, update the lab and remodel some of the offices. Also, the filter upgrade should be done in the next week. There is still a

fair amount of work to be done on the remodeling. Ron reported they have signed the final contract on the metal equipment building at the water treatment plant.

**Desert Garden** – Ron said the garden is going to open in the morning and they will have some press there to report on it. There will still be a grand opening to dedicate the garden in the fall. There is still some planting and signage left to do. The public is already accessing it and using it. Every species of plant will have a scanner for scanning on your smart phone to get information about the plant. It will be an educational place for people to visit and use. A traditional landscape will take 70” of water per square foot per year and a desert landscape will use something under 20” per square foot. Hopefully, the garden will provide people with visual ideas on desert landscaping that they will use.

**BLM and projects** –. Ron told the board that turnover with the staff at the BLM is not in our best interests in moving some of our projects forward and we are hoping that this will change soon. This problem is particularly slowing down the Ash Creek project.

**Ivins Recreation Plan -** This plan is moving forward . They are pulling out all old debris, trees, etc. in the reservoir basin. They almost have a causeway built in there. They will start putting water in the reservoir as soon as all this is wrapped up. Ivins city is working on the recreation part of the plan, putting in trails and other recreational features.

**Ash Creek Project** - There are bids going out in the next few weeks on a well the district wants to drill as part of Ash Creek project which will provide construction water for the project and can tie into the Cottam well system.

**Approval of property purchase in Kane County** - Ron told the Board when the district bought property over at Cockscomb for use with the Lake Powell Pipeline Project, there was one 40 acre parcel they couldn't get at that time. This parcel was in middle of the other property we bought. It is at the same price per acre as the other property purchased. It is also where the springs are on that property and is a key piece of this whole parcel. Ron asked for authorization from the board to proceed with purchasing this property. This site will have a pump station, a power substation and the pipeline goes through the heart of it. When we are done with the project, the property not needed can be exchanged or sold.

*Jon Pike made a motion to approve the property purchase in Kane County of 40 acres at Cockscomb for the same price as other parcel purchased. Howard Bracken seconded the motion and all voted aye.*

**Manager's Report** - Ron told the board he would like to show the documentary done by KUER and KUED called, *Utah's Uncertain Water Future*. He said this documentary debuted a few weeks ago in Salt Lake with a panel following it which Ron, Paul Van Dam and Jody Williams participated on. Ron said this will give the board an idea of the dialogue that is going on in the public broadcast arena. He also said this will omit some of the Iron County part to save time.

*Utah's Uncertain Water Future* was shown.

Ron said the video showed there are a lot of different uses of water people argue about, but agriculture and the environment will be the overwhelming majority of water use.

**PR on Quail Creek Reservoir and Red Hills Desert Garden** - Karry Rathje said that Quail Creek Reservoir will be 30 years old this year. She said it was dedicated on September 20, 1985 and the district may want to do something in the fall around the 30<sup>th</sup> birthday of the dedication. She is working on putting together some data on the economic contribution of Quail Creek, the economic return to the state and what we would like in this county without it. There will also be a fall dedication of the desert garden with some state dignitaries and other local dignitaries to participate in that grand opening.

**Water Year** – Ron said that two or three rainstorms do not get us out of the water deficit. It's snowpack that feeds our reservoirs, not rain. Kolob has come up because Crystal Creek has been a blessing. It may not completely fill, but we're close to 5,000 af right now. He said he wishes we had something like Crystal Creek to help on the Santa Clara River. That is 23% of normal now.

**Audit** - Ron told the board the financial audit for 2014 is almost done. We expect to keep our good bond rating with Fitch.

With regard to Prep60, the four water conservancy districts continue to meet. We have been concerned about tenor of the new legislative performance audit on projections of water needs, which is a criticism that the Utah Division of Water

Resources doesn't have police power to make municipal water users fill out reports "accurately." The measurement of water involves a two-edged sword. For long term planning (which is the job delegated to state water resources ) it works well to measure water based on all gross diversions divided by the resident population. But for comparing residential usage, it confuses people and tends to give a false sense of efficiency because residential users compare their water use the gross diversion planning numbers and they aren't comparable. We could take the approach that Southern Nevada uses, and look at net depletion for residential use. They take the water metered to residential users, then deduct wastewater and return flows to show net depletion as the actual water used, and they don't count tourist use by 40 million people,. If we measured that way that we'd look about the same, but it's not very useful for project planning.

The audit says we need to meter water but there are costs and technology concerns with that approach. All Utah municipal culinary deliveries are metered, but not all secondary. The available technology was not good for measuring secondary deliveries until recently. Weber Basin Water Conservancy District paid \$1,000 per meter to convert to metering on secondary systems, that is to install the meter vault and meter and get it up and running and this cost does not count the cost to read the meter. There was a \$100,000,000 price tag for that conversion. It's not clear that legislators will want to see prices go up to get meters on, even if the auditor says so. We all want better data. The district is working with regional cities to make sure we have best available data. The state has done a good job in many areas, especially for big projects. We can always do better but there's a cost. The data we have isn't that bad, but it will be criticized because it will never be perfect.

**Comments from audience:** Dale Barnes from Leeds said we are allotted 1.5 million acre feet (maf) in the Colorado River and we are using more than our share already. We can't take our full share and cut others.

Ron said Mr. Barnes did not have his facts totally correct. The Lower Basin is allotted 7.5 maf so with the amount they take, we already give an additional 1.4 maf. The lower basin depletes 9.6 maf annually out of Lake Mead, which is a "structural deficit." So it goes down, not because they're entitled to it but because they are using more than their entitlement. Ron said there is 400,000 to 500,000 a.f. of Utah water going down the river which Utah can't use unless it comes from

Lake Powell. There is a lot of misinformation about this but these are the facts. The Upper Basin agreed to share shortages and surpluses. The Lower Basin never did that. They measure the water at Lee's Ferry and don't count shortages when it goes to California. California can't account for their system losses and they can't keep taking more water than they are entitled to. The Lower Basin states are having serious discussions about how to fix the structural deficit because they never have gotten less than their allotment. Ron pointed out that there is lots of storage in the Colorado River. There are low water years and high water years and that what's Lake Powell is for. Every year we are giving the Lower Basin more water than we would use that we're entitled to.

Dale Barnes commented that maybe we ought to postpone the pipeline until there are more people to pay for it. Ron Thompson explained the costs and tax base when Quail Creek was built and compared it to now and the Lake Powell Pipeline project. We need to leave something for future generations. Jim Ence mentioned that it takes so long for all the studies and permitting that if we wait we would be ten years behind and wouldn't have it when we need it. Ed Bowler added that the population doubles every 12 to 15 years so we can't afford to get too far behind. Dale Barnes mentioned the annual interest. Ron explained that is to be paid over a period of time. There's some subsidy of the interest rate if we do as currently planned. The water district is setting aside money for this and so is the state. Jim Ence said as we pay interest, funds return for future projects and it helps build the coffers for future projects. It is a win-win situation

**Approval of Minutes of April 2015 board meeting.** The minutes of the April 21, 2015 board meeting were reviewed by the board after which the following motion was made.

***Jim Ence moved to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2015, Board of Trustees meeting. Kenny Neilson seconded the motion and all voted aye.***

**Adjournment of Meeting** - Jim Ence made a motion to adjourn and the meeting was adjourned.