

WASHINGTON COUNTY WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Minutes of Meeting of Board of Trustees

October 26, 2016

Minutes of a public meeting of the board of trustees of the Washington County Water Conservancy District, held on Wednesday, October 26, 2016, at 533 East Waterworks Drive, St. George, Utah beginning at 6 p. Those board members present for the meeting were: Chair Ed Bowler, Howard Bracken, Jim Ence, Jon Pike and Tom Hirschi. Ken Neilson and Zach Renstrom were not present. Also present were General Manager Ron Thompson, Associate General Managers Corey Cram and Barbara Hjelle. Other guests at the meeting as shown on the attached sign in sheet. Ed Bowler conducted the meeting and welcomed those present.

Presentation of preliminary budget - Ron presented a preliminary budget, a copy is attached, and reviewed the numbers set forth in the document. After completion of Ron's presentation, Tom Hirschi asked why Virgin River Program expenditures are more than revenues. Ron said that the federal government (Fish and Wildlife Service) has not met its commitment for several years. The district already funds a substantial portion of the program. The program is looking for more money, but would have to cut back if more funds aren't forthcoming.

Ron noted that the budget meets his standard goal of not exceeding growth adjusted for inflation.

Jim Ence asked about items that are over the percent expected for this point in the year. In further discussion on this point the following points were noted: Regional Pipeline utilities, which are an item that varies according to a number of factors, exceeded the budget amount but these costs are passed on to the municipalities who participate in this pipeline. Water Treatment Plant maintenance is high, but the total budget is still under. Revenue from Virgin Town was over budget by 1,000% because Virgin paid amounts due on subdivisions that had been owed for many years after a developer paid the town. Jim Ence noted that overall the preliminary budget looks in good shape.

Ron suggested the board members take the document home and study it for further review at work meeting, when there will be one more month in the report. The final budget will be presented in the December meeting with a public hearing.

Ron told the board that state wide population projections have been released with a range of possible outcomes, which is good for planning. County projections won't be out until 2017.

Tom Hirschi asked what our future water supply looks like. Ron said that with the 13, 670 acre feet we plan to add, we should be good through about 2024, unless population growth exceeds expectations.

Jim Ence moved to approve preliminary budget. Jon Pike seconded. The board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Water year - Ron reported that his take away from the presentation by Randy Julander at the water summit this week was that 2016 was a peculiar year, capping four straight years of drought due to the high-pressure area that doesn't move on through. People thought there would be a monster el Niño and we had a pretty good November through January but then the high set in and there was almost no precipitation in February, March and a good share of April, then some precipitation in May. There was a good storm in September and a pretty good storm this week. These storms brought the soil moisture conditions from abnormally low to average or better so that if we get a good snow pack there will be more run off. They won't forecast what's next. Brian McInerny is more pessimistic, due to his expectations of climate change. Ron said that the Paleolithic record is consistent with what's happening now, so he doesn't think it's that bad. If the high moves out, we could get decent winter storms. Kolob is essentially full and Quail Creek and Sand Hollow are in good shape. The west side is not so good, but a good storm could fill all three reservoirs on that side.

Ed invited comment from visitors.

Audience Comments:

Mari Krashowetz, Executive Director of the Southern Utah Homebuilders Association (SUHBA) introduced Dale Gardner the president of SUHBA and thanked the board for its work. She noted that she had just visited southern

California where residents are tearing out landscape, so she's grateful the district is managing our water resource to avoid such drastic measures.

Mari noted that she had heard that the district has been working on a new landscape ordinance. Ron said the program is based on the "Localscapes" program being developed by northern Utah water conservancy district and it may be called "Dixiescapes." Our staff is working with landscape architects on a set of principles for our climate. After that we'll get public comment.

Mari asked when the comment period would take place. Ron said "Not as fast as I'd like, but hopefully in the next three months." Julie and Ryan are working with landscape architects. Ron explained that the district is not seeking to promote stark xeriscapes, but to get rid of things like three-foot-wide grass strips.

Mari asked if it will be an incentive program. Ron said that hasn't been decided yet. Our district is working with Jordan Valley and Weber Basin water conservancy districts and it's not that far along yet. Various board members said that the program is not expected to be mandatory but rather to provide ideas for nice designs that look good.

Mari asked about the status of the district's "capital facilities plan." Ron said it won't be too much longer before they will be ready to release the draft. There will be notice when the time comes. Ed Bowler noted that we always involve the public in capital facilities planning, so everybody will have a chance to participate, including elected officials

Clint Rogers told the board about two studies done by Carollo Engineering. A Gunlock Arsenic water treatment plant study is waiting for the BLM to approve a site adjacent to the filter station on the Santa Clara Pipeline. There will be a 30-day public comment period followed by design. The plant is anticipated to go online in 2018. The same skid used in the St. George City study was moved to the west dam springs at Sand Hollow and they are using this effort to clarify numbers for the district's impact fee facilities plan. Clint also said, on a personal note, Rick Wheden with Carollo Engineering died from pancreatic cancer last week.

Clint reported that the St. George arsenic plant would involve fencing the site where the solids are stored until they are hauled out.

Miscellaneous - Ron reported that 75,000 people have used the Desert Garden in the last year. Four thousand have visited in the last week where there is now a scarecrow exhibit. He noted that St. George City had more people sign the H2Oath than any other city in Utah, including Salt Lake City, which says quite a bit for our conservation ethic.

Jon Pike reported that Roger Brooks, the “secret shopper” who has evaluated 1500 communities around the world from a tourism economic perspective that advises on what you could or should do said that the Desert Garden was one of the most amazing things he saw here.

Chair Ed Bowler thanked those in attendance for coming, noting that the board is glad to have their involvement.

Tom Hirschi moved to adjourn and the meeting was adjourned.
