

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE  
COMMITTEE MEETING  
OF THE RAINBOW MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT  
FEBRUARY 1, 2024**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The Communications and Customer Service Committee Meeting of the Rainbow Municipal Water District on February 1, 2024, was called to order by Chairperson Shute at 3:31 p.m. via Zoom, utilizing participation information listed on the duly posted meeting agenda. Chairperson Shute, presiding.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **ROLL CALL:**

**Present:** Member Shute, Member Hamilton, Member Stewart, Member Milakovich,

**Also Present**

**Via video**

**Conference:** General Manager Wiley, District Secretary Quintanar, Information Systems Specialist Espino, Customer Service Supervisor Cruz, Administrative Analyst Weber

No public members were present in person, via teleconference, or video conference.

4. **INSTRUCTIONS TO ALLOW PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS FROM THOSE ATTENDING THIS MEETING VIA TELECONFERENCE OR VIDEO CONFERENCE**

No members of the public were in attendance via teleconference or video conference; therefore, the instructions were not read aloud.

5. **SEATING OF ALTERNATES**

No alternates were seated.

6. **ADDITIONS/DELETIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA (Government Code §54954.2)**

There were no amendments to the agenda.

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT RELATING TO ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA (Limit 3 Minutes)**

\*8. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. January 4, 2024

***Motion:***

***To approve the minutes.***

***Action: Approve, Moved by Member Hamilton, Seconded by Member Stewart.***

***Vote: Motion carried by unanimous vote (summary: Ayes = 4).***

***Ayes: Member Hamilton, Member Shute, Member Stewart, Member Milakovich***

## **9. GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS**

Mr. Wiley, reported on the January 23, 2024, Board of Directors Meeting. Twelve candidates submitted letters of interest to fill the Division 3 vacancy, and the Board conducted interviews in open session of the seven candidates in attendance. The Board selected two candidates to return in February, Cari Dale and Lisa Herman. He also reported on the approval of the contract for the pump station project, which is moving ahead aggressively. The CEQA requirements have been completed and the site has been cleared. The Construction Management (CM) Contract is with Valley Construction, selected from seven proposers. We are progressing on the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) Operations Plans and have had one meeting on the first aqueduct to service RMWD's connections 1 and 10. Many of the issues and logistics have been discussed, and we have a commitment that RMWD will get the Operations Plan on the second aqueduct in late February.

Budget planning for the next fiscal year has started, and staff has met to discuss the five-year Capital Improvement Projects, which incorporates projects related to the detachment from the SDCWA.

He also announced the new Finance Manager/Chief Financial Officer, Rick Aragon, and reported that staff will present a schedule of events at the February Board meeting. Staff will provide information on the exit fees, rates, and other considerations for the next fiscal year's budget at the February Board meeting.

The rainfall is great, and it is predicted that the Sierras will receive two to four feet of snow. The State Water Project allocation started at 10%, starting December 25, 2023. We don't yet have an update for January. He opined that it should make a huge difference. The water supply condition looks good, and the anticipated rainfall will bring us close to average.

## **10. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

Member Stewart relayed appreciation for the media articles sent and is pleased with the level of reporting by Valley News.

Member Hamilton announced that annual award nominations for the California Special Districts Association (CSDA) open on May 1, 2024, and he suggested nominating ourselves. These awards showcase the most valuable contributions to the communities served, and we should consider nominating ourselves for the detachment from the SDCWA as a great benefit to our ratepayers.

### ***Motion:***

***To recommend the nomination of RMWD for the annual CSDA awards.***

***Action: Approve, Moved by Member Hamilton, Seconded by Member Stewart.***

***Vote: Motion carried by unanimous vote (summary: Ayes = 4).***

***Ayes: Member Hamilton, Member Shute, Member Stewart, Member Milakovich***

Member Shute commented that weather systems cause a lot of work for the District to prepare and asked how this is communicated to our ratepayers. Mr. Wiley responded that helpful hints are included in our newsletter. Operational preparedness includes clearing pump station sites to ensure drainage, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) are in place to help us maintain our easements and erosion control. Most of our facilities have permanent standby generators. The bigger effects are from Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) in the sewer system, which is impacted by runoff. Our staff has a lot to do, but we can showcase this in a future newsletter and we can also communicate information through a banner on our website. One of our sites has additional storage because we have capacity limitations in certain portions of the system. Today's storm hasn't posed any problems.

## **11. CROPSWAP UPDATE**

Mr. Wiley reported that this program originally focused on swapping out higher water-use crops for lower water-use crops. Rancho California Water District (RCWD) has \$5M grant funding secured from the State and is looking to make adjustments to the program. There are significant incentives for swapping crop types but they are also focused on new varieties of crops. The majority of the interest has been in replacing old groves with new varieties. He opined this is a long-term project that will assist our customers with staying in the agriculture business. A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being reviewed by the partnering agencies and their legal teams, and staff anticipates presenting this item for approval at the February Board of Directors meeting. The State or United States Bureau of Reclamation might provide additional grant funds, which will help the program expand. The initial investment for the start-up requires \$25,000 from each agency to fund activities such as website development. RCWD will hire someone for two years to administer the program and is developing outreach and marketing materials. The program rollout is planned for April or May of this year, and over two dozen growers have already subscribed to the interest list. There are also incentives for improving the efficiencies of existing crops.

## **12. QUARTERLY CUSTOMER SERVICE CALL METRICS**

Mr. Cruz reported that the average hold time was 45 seconds in October, 46 seconds in November, and 42 seconds in December. The average call duration increased in December due to calls regarding the recent detachment from the SDCWA. Call volume in October increased to 1,082 calls, coinciding with the detachment being on the ballot. Other than that, call volume has been consistent. Member Shute relayed appreciation for the presentation of the historical data to compare year to year. Mr. Cruz concluded by sharing about phone system functionality that improves customer convenience.

## **13. CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY**

Ms. Weber presented a review of the current survey questions. The question about detachment from the SDCWA was removed, some questions were reformatted, and a rating scale was created to measure performance; the rating scale is from 1-5. The proposed questions for the 2024 survey were shared. The goals are to review experience and relay information to resolve issues through a follow-up email or phone call. Ms. Weber explained that the first five questions are focused on rates and water quality, water use efficiency, drought restrictions, infrastructure, and emergency preparation. Those are the questions that receive the most responses. The Committee agreed that the questions and establishment of a scale was well done, and the survey is a tool that can be used to improve our response to customer concerns. Discussion ensued regarding narrowing

down the number of topics and what topics might be common amongst other water district's surveys.

#### **14. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

Ms. Weber explained that the staff is in the discovery stage and will be soliciting feedback from team members, reviewing current communications materials, conducting a SWOT analysis, using demographic research from the 2020 census, and then moving to the development and documentation stage. We will hold a workshop on February 15, 2024, including two Board Members, the Committee, and over a dozen Rainbow MWD's team members. We hope to gain insight from staff who interact with the public regularly so we can improve our Communications Plan. Staff will be facilitating the workshop internally.

#### **15. COMMUNITY EVENTS UPDATE**

Ms. Weber reported that we continue to promote the NCWA Poster Contest with local schools, charter schools, and home schools. Entry forms will be provided and advertised in our newsletter and website, and we will also have a press release for the Village News. Winners will be revealed in Fall 2024 and announced in the NCWA calendar.

Regarding the Spring Field Trip, students from Bonsall High School will visit the District on Thursday, April 25, 2024. Ms. Weber invited the Committee members to join the tour, which will have an agenda, and efforts will be made to reach students interested in math, chemistry, cyber security, and those in the STEM program. We've received a \$3,000 grant from MWD to cover the promotional materials and field trip. Responding to Member Shute, Ms. Weber stated that we have a program that includes a lot of coordination with several departments and that it is a team effort to provide the field trips. It was estimated that approximately fifty hours could be spent in the planning effort for the 3-4-hour event. Mr. Wiley announced that he will also participate in the career day to encourage students and promote careers in the industry.

The Avocado Festival will be held on April 21, 2024. In preparation, collateral materials are being developed, including a guide to understanding the water bill and rate information. There will be several one-page brochures, as well as a CropSWAP tri-fold. Staff will work in shifts for the event, so we will have representatives from each department participating. In addition, we will have eco-friendly, compact promotional items to distribute. Member Hamilton suggested sharing information about Flume at this event.

#### **16. NEWSLETTER CONTENT PLANNING**

Ms. Weber announced that February's newsletter would feature the new Chief Financial Officer, how to check for leaks, the SoCal WaterSmart rebate program, and Flume tips. Flume has created a "How To" guide to address the most common questions and video links. We're also advertising the Calendar Contest. The Winter of the quarterly newsletter was distributed to non-rate payers and summarized the past three months. It included a detachment update, the history and formation of the District, and the promotion of the NCWA Poster Contest.

Planning ahead for March and April, Ms. Weber reported that we will feature information on CropSWAP, and information on "How to read your bill." We will also explain the value of water and the process of bringing water to customers. April will include a feature on Capital Improvement Projects, tips for planting in the spring, rebates from MWD, and a brand new rebate program that will work in tandem with MWD's turf removal program. Staff also hopes to launch

the new survey in the April issue and also share that at the Avocado Festival. Member Stewart requested the informational materials in PDF format to share.

Information planned for March and April newsletter content will be coordinated with various departments in the District before distribution. Mr. Wiley added that we will also have the opportunity to update our customers about the progress of the pump station projects.

#### **17. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATED MEDIA STORIES**

Ms. Weber reviewed the multiple recent media stories related to RMWD. Member Hamilton suggested that a discussion be held at the February 15, 2024, workshop regarding avenues for outreach to share newsworthy items in addition to our website and messages on monthly bills. Discussion ensued.

#### **18. LIST OF SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT SCHEDULED COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Item 11 will be revisited next month, as well as an update on Item 14.

#### **19. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Shute at 4:48 p.m.

  
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Terese Quintanar, District Secretary

  
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Bill Shute, Committee Chairperson