

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE RAINBOW MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
MARCH 3, 2022**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The Communications and Customer Service Committee Meeting of the Rainbow Municipal Water District on March 3, 2022, was called to order by Chairperson Shute at 3:31 p.m. in the Board Room of the District, 3707 Old Highway 395, Fallbrook, CA 92028. *(All meetings are being held with in-person attendance following County and State COVID guidelines as well as virtually.)* Chairperson Shute, presiding.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **ROLL CALL:**

Present: *Member Hamilton, Member Shute, Member Vernon (via video conference).*

Also Present: General Manager Kennedy, Executive Assistant Washburn, Alternate Gray, Information Systems Specialist Espino.

Also Present Via Teleconference or Video Conference:

Finance Manager Largent.

One member of the public was 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**

There were no members of the public in attendance; therefore, the instructions were not read aloud.

5. **SEATING OF ALTERNATES**

There were no alternates 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)**

There were no comments.

Discussion returned from Item #9.

Mr. Shute asked if the public member had any comments to which there was no reply.

Discussion went to Item #9.

***8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. February 3, 2022

Motion:

To approve the minutes.

Action: Approve, Moved by Member Vernon, Seconded by Member Hamilton.

Vote: Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Ayes = 3).

Ayes: Member Hamilton, Member Shute, Member Vernon.

9. GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

Discussion returned to Item #4.

Mr. Kennedy reported LAFCO was scheduled to approve the Municipal Service Review (MSR) for the North County Region during their February meeting; however, SDCWA had written LAFCO asking for the approval to be delayed allowing an opportunity for them to review the report first. He said now that SDCWA has reviewed and were given a presentation related to the report, they had presented a list of questions and concerns regarding the report which is believed to be an ongoing pattern to delay and harass the normal operations of LAFCO both concerning the MSR as well as the potential detachment matter.

Mr. Kennedy noted there will be several public members present at the next LAFCO meeting to express their displeasure to the Commission that this unnecessary obstruction of normal proceedings is a waste and routine matters should continue. He mentioned FPUD's General Manager, Jack Bebee, would be sending a letter to the SDCWA Board Members and General Managers expressing these concerns as well as the disappointment that ratepayer funds are being wasted in such a frivolous manner. He concluded with stating it was hopeful LAFCO will continue to move forward with processing the detachment application.

10. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Vernon complimented Mr. Kennedy on his comments and update. Mr. Hamilton stated his position with SDCWA is that there has been more than ample time to provide comments and responses.

***11. REVIEW OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO ADMINISTRATIVE CODE CHAPTER 8.20 – CROSS-CONNECTION CONTROL INCLUDING BACKFLOW NOTIFICATIONS (OPERATIONS)**

Mr. Kennedy noted the agenda packet was a draft action letter as well as the proposed revisions amending and updating Administrative Code Chapter 8.20. He pointed out the main policy revision is related to RMWD practicing a cross-connection program for a very long time that has never been codified within the Administrative Code.

Mr. Kennedy pointed out some of the major revisions have been described in the draft action letter.

Mr. Shute inquired as to whether this was a draft for committee input. Mr. Kennedy stated this was a policy question for the Board; however, it was bringing brought forward to allow the revisions to be reviewed by the committee so the members could provide staff with any feedback.

He mentioned these proposed revisions were also presented to and discussed with the Engineering and Operations Committee at their March meeting.

Ms. Gray reported additional backflow device failure notices would be mailed to 83 customers this week.

Mr. Shute asked once this policy is approved, what steps would be taken to notify the customers. Mr. Kennedy clarified RMWD's current processes would not change, but having the practices codified within the Administrative Code would provide internal staff with specific guidelines to followed.

Mr. Shute inquired as to what would be summarized and published on the website once the proposed revisions are approval. Ms. Gray explained once the policy is solidified, she will be able to update the website with the codified policies and procedures.

Mr. Shute asked if the letter sent to those who backflow devices fail contains all the specific details as to what the customer had to do and when. Mr. Kennedy confirmed this will all be provided in the letters. Mr. Shute inquired as to whether that same information will be on the website as well. Ms. Gray offered to include the simplicities of the letter on the website.

Mr. Vernon inquired as to when a backflow device is required to be installed between a meter and residence. Mr. Kennedy stated per state law backflow devices are required whenever a potential hazard exists or if the customer has a well or pumping system pumping pressure higher than the District, etc. Mr. Vernon recommended there be an article in the newsletter in the simplest means possible.

Mr. Shute requested an official letter be sent to customers with backflow devices on an annual basis confirming their respective backflow device testing results. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Kennedy agreed to meet with IT to produce these letters using the District's current technology.

Mr. Vernon excused himself from the meeting at 4:07 p.m.

12. SHUTOFF FOR NON-PAYMENT UPDATE

Ms. Gray referenced the March 2022 Shutoff Notification Schedule she provided as a handout. She confirmed the 15-day notice will be via telephone calls and all 7-day shut off and final shutoff notices will all be sent via FedEx.

Mr. Shute asked if there was a pattern where customers who were included in the arrearages program continue to not pay their bills. Ms. Largent stated once the late fee is run, she can pivot it against the list to determine how many accounts remain unpaid.

Mr. Shute inquired as to whether RMWD had a program in place in which customers who continue to struggle with paying their water bills could enroll. Mr. Kennedy unfortunately under Propositions 218 and 26, RMWD is not allowed to give a lifeline; however, this was still being discussed in terms of those receiving government assistance be allowed to use their WIC cards to pay their water bills. Ms. Gray noted she lists any assistance programs she learns about on the District's website.

13. COVID-19 UPDATE

Mr. Kennedy reported RMWD was almost back to normal with those not fully vaccinated required to wear masks. He stated he anticipates the mask requirement will change very soon.

Mr. Kennedy shared the most recent COVID-19 related payroll requirements RMWD had to incorporate within the next three weeks.

14. CUSTOMER SURVEY UPDATE

Ms. Gray referenced the proposed survey questions she provided in the handout.

Mr. Vernon rejoined the meeting at 4:18 p.m.

Mr. Shute read the information provided in the handout aloud for Mr. Vernon.

Mr. Shute stated he would recommend asking the customer if their question was answered or their issue resolved with an option to reply yes or no.

Mr. Vernon inquired as to whether there would be a way to identify the person with whom they interacted. He recommended it could be optional for the customer to identify the individual that assisted them as well as what needed to be done.

Mr. Hamilton inquired as to how the surveys would be deployed. Ms. Gray stated through one source such as Survey Monkey; however, they charge a monthly fee as well as a charge every time one is set up. She proposed generating this through the District's website with a link that customers could access and share feedback.

Mr. Shute recommended that when a customer call ends, the person taking the call could confirm the email on file or request an email from the caller so that they can provide the customer with a quick survey. It was noted this could be a good start for capturing the most current customer contact information.

15. COMMITTEE MEMBER RECRUITMENT

Ms. Gray read aloud the press release she drafted for committee input. Mr. Shute recommended adding a water drop mascot or something similar. Ms. Gray agreed to find what was available in the software program.

Mr. Shute recommended provided a brief description of each committee's focus area as well as who to contact to get more information or how to attend a meeting. He added it may be beneficial to mention there is no experience required, but rather a willingness to serve, as well as that the Board appoints committee members. Mr. Hamilton suggested stating something like RMWD was looking for customers to participate in the direction the District takes.

16. SDCWA SHUTDOWN UPDATE

Mr. Kennedy reported someone from SDCWA attended the February Board meeting to provide an update on the shutdown as well as noted the pipeline has been removed and that RMWD's temporary pumps are working. Ms. Gray mentioned the speaker shared the communications sent regarding the shutdown which she has since posted on the website. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Vernon asked when the pipeline repair would be completed. Mr. Kennedy answered the shutdown was scheduled for 10 days; however, it may not take the entire ten days to complete the repair.

Mr. Vernon inquired as to how RMWD would be impacted by a shutdown such as this if RMWD was not attached to SDCWA. Discussion ensued.

17. EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION ANALYTICS UPDATE INCLUDING PROGRESS AND ENHANCEMENTS

Ms. Gray stated staff was working on a data hiccup which was recently settled. She noted emergency notifications are now on the website and messages are recorded notifying callers of emergencies when they call the District as opposed to having to wait on hold. She stated she hopes these steps will greatly improve RMWD's customer service as well as the customer's satisfaction levels.

Mr. Hamilton inquired as to whether expected response time will be shared in these notifications. Ms. Gray confirmed this information is included.

Mr. Shute recalled part of this item was to understand and analyze the ability to reach customers in the event of an emergency. Ms. Gray pointed out this was why steps were taken for the customers for whom staff does not have their correct information can reach the District and provide their most current information. Mr. Shute asked if an update contact information was included in RMWD's billing invoices. Ms. Gray stated the bills have always included a section for customers to complete and provide their most current contact information as well as reminders in the newsletters.

Ms. Gray noted staff would like to move forward with texting customers whenever possible.

18. COMMUNITY EVENT PARTICIPATION IDEAS (AVOCADO FESTIVAL/VINTAGE CAR SHOW)

Ms. Gray reported RMWD has a booth at the Avocado Festival; however, the site remains unknown. She noted the District has a booth at the Vintage Car Show as well; however, it will be held at Bates Nut Farm in Valley Center.

Mr. Shute mentioned he had committed to putting together a "How To" guide for customer service representatives and whoever else works the booth; however, he was still researching the content he wants to include. Ms. Gray noted her suggestion to record Mr. Shute's guide and making it a part of RMWD's library.

Discussion ensued regarding whether RMWD should participate in the Vintage Car Show since it was being held in Valley Center.

19. CONSIDERATION OF A PUBLIC RELATIONS PIECE FOCUSED ON INTERAGENCY COOPERATION (RECENT UNPRECEDENTED LEAKS/HELI-HYDRANT INSTALLATION)

Mr. Kennedy stated he and Ms. Gray would work collectively on putting together a press release. Mr. Hamilton suggested it be an interagency press release. Mr. Kennedy and Ms. Gray agreed a joint press release would be good.

20. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATED MEDIA STORIES

Mr. Shute mentioned there was an article on the SDCWA shutdown. Mr. Hamilton noted there was a recent opinion piece published related to the detachment.

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

It was noted an update on customer surveys, committee member recruitment, SDCWA shutdown, community event participation ideas, consideration of a public relations piece focused on interagency cooperation, and cross-connection outreach should be on the next committee agenda.

22. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Shute.

The meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

Bill Shute, Committee Chairperson

Dawn M. Washburn, Board Secretary