

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE RAINBOW MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
SEPTEMBER 2, 2021**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The Communications and Customer Service Committee Meeting of the Rainbow Municipal Water District on September 2, 2021 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 Stewart, Alternate Gray *(via video conference)*.

Also Present: Executive Assistant Washburn, Information Systems Specialist Espino, Construction and Maintenance Supervisor Lagunas, Operations Supervisor Gutierrez.

Absent: Member Vernon.

Also Present Via Video Conference or Teleconference:

Finance Manager Largent, Human Resources Manager Harp, Information
Technology Manager Khattab.

One member of the public was present via teleconference or video teleconference.

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

Mr. Shute read aloud the instructions for those attending the meeting via teleconference or video conference.

5. **SEATING OF ALTERNATES**

Ms. Gray was seated as an alternate.

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.

***8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. July 1, 2021

Motion:

To approve the minutes.

Action: Approve, Moved by Alternate Gray, Seconded by Member Hamilton.

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

Ayes: Member Hamilton, Member Shute, Member Stewart, Alternate Gray.

Absent: Member Vernon.

9. GENERAL MANAGER COMMENTS

There were no comments.

10. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Stewart expressed his appreciation for his subdivision receiving advance notification that the District wanted to meet with them to discuss the implementation of replacing all the meters.

11. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION TO APPOINT COMMITTEE OFFICERS

This item was deferred to the October committee meeting.

12. REVIEW 15-DAY SHUTOFF LETTER

Ms. Gray displayed the proposed shutoff letter with the committee.

Mr. Shute stated the letter read well to him as well as asked if there was a number of customers who would be impacted.

Ms. Largent pointed out RMWD submitted 174 delinquent accounts that were \$2,000 and above to tax roll which totals approximately \$1.2 million. She noted staff believes these letters will prompt those customers to either pay or set themselves up on a payment plan with the District which will reduce the number of shutoffs to a considerably lower number. She noted these letters will be mailed out by billing cycle with the first scheduled to be sent as part of Cycle 3 for September. She added these letters are required under SB998.

Mr. Shute inquired as to whether there was any benefit to proactively reaching out to these customers to notify them in advance they will be in receipt of these letters. Ms. Largent stated the letter would serve as proactive outreach, especially when taking into consideration, the District will follow up on the letter with a 48-hour notice which will be provided via Federal Express allowing for approximately five days for the customer to act prior to their services being shut off.

Mr. Hamilton concurred with Mr. Shute that a note be dropped in the mail in advance of the letter being mailed. Ms. Largent pointed out notification regarding RMWD reinstating the shutoffs have been provided in the newsletters as well as a notice to all the past due customers shutoffs will be resumed and how they were at risk for being sent to tax roll. She explained the challenge with

just grabbing one cycle is that the results will not be the same after the Cycle 3 billing has been run. Ms. Largent offered to research whether a robo call could be made.

Ms. Largent mentioned RMWD was currently working on a survey related to applying for funds for those customers past due through June 15, 021 including those accounts sent to tax roll. She stated should RMWD receive this funding, it would be allocated out to all the customers that were past due as of June 15th. She pointed out there was no requirement for customers to apply due to a COVID-related hardship. She said she will familiarize herself better with this program over the next few weeks prior to proceeding.

Ms. Largent pointed out this matter was taken to the Board in August at which time they decided the letter should be mailed out as opposed to extending the deadline. She solicited the committee for input as to whether they had any revisions to be made to the letter prior to it being sent. Mr. Shute recommended robo calls be placed to these customers emphasizing RMWD was willing to work with them noting payment plans are available.

There were no revisions to the letter.

13. PHONE SYSTEM STATUS UPDATE

Ms. Gray reported staff was still considering providers for the phone system; however, neither were offering an option for a call back which was mandatory. Ms. Largent added Jive has replied this was something they may be implementing later this year; however, it was not guaranteed. She mentioned some changes have been made in terms of how the calls ping each RMWD customer service representatives and how the wait times have been improved; therefore, it may be worth waiting a few months to see if this feature is added before making a change which would in turn save the District time and money. Ms. Gray confirmed the wait time has been at its lowest since May 2020.

Mr. Shute inquired as to whether Jive shares their software release schedule that could give the District a little view of what can be expected. Ms. Largent agreed to see if this was something staff could request.

14. EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION PROGRAM

Ms. Gray recalled this item was related to the committee's request for implementing a program for obtaining and updating customer information to ensure any important information from the District is received. She said staff has confirmed the District has a good amount of email addresses and phone numbers through which customers could be contacted related to emergency notifications. Mr. Shute inquired as to whether text messaging would be available as well. Ms. Gray confirmed.

Mr. Shute asked what steps would be required to formalize the program. Ms. Gray stated it determining the type of notifications to encourage customers to update their contact information.

Mr. Hamilton asked how RMWD was going to encourage ratepayers to provide this information. He explained during a communication with a wrong billing address which caused him to wonder if whether RMWD should periodically reach out to the customers to confirm their information on file is correct. Ms. Gray pointed out the situation to which he was referring was not a matter of the address being changed in RMWD's system, but through Infosend. She explained RMWD utilizes its system information to mail out shutdown notifications. She said if the information is not updated notifications and phone numbers would not reach the customers regardless.

Mr. Shute inquired as to whether the mailing databases with Infosend are not synched with RMWD's database. Mr. Hamilton explained mail houses are required by law to check for updated forwarding address information and in this case the ratepayer had provided a change of address to the USPS for a short period of time, but that change of addresses request stayed with USPS for a year so that when Infosend ran their mailing list against the USPS addresses, it was flagged with the forwarding address resulting in the bills going to the incorrect location which was something that may not be fixable due to the mail house legal requirements. He mentioned in his experience the mail house provides a list of all the address differences so it can be compared to a list he had on file so that the customer can be contacted to find out the correct mailing address. He recommended if this could be a request made by RMWD to Infosend. Ms. Largent stated RMWD recently started receiving this report from Infosend after receiving this one complaint so the District can contact those that are different and can mail something to the customer to confirm the correct billing address to avoid future confusion.

Mr. Shute asked if RMWD's system has the ability to differentiate between the mail to and service address. Ms. Largent confirmed the system has this capability.

Mr. Shute recommended putting something together that talks about the benefits of emergency notification that RMWD could send out to the customers on an annual basis inquiring as to whether their information is updated and correct noting how with the correct information on file, they will be sure to receive any important notifications. He noted this would be a benefit to the District. Ms. Largent stated RMWD decided to start doing this once it realized Infosend could provide RMWD with the report discussed earlier. She said although only one customer complained, RMWD will do everything it can to ensure communications and bill statements arrive at the appropriate location.

Mr. Shute pointed out it would also be beneficial for customers to receive bills via email or text. Ms. Largent stated it would be ideal for customers to receive their bills via email. Mr. Hamilton suggested adding a discount for going paperless. Ms. Largent explained a discount could not be offered without Board approval first. Ms. Gray suggested publishing something in the newsletter encouraging customers to receive paperless bills.

15. RAPID AERIAL WATER SUPPLY (RAWS) PAMPHLET REVIEW

Mr. Gutierrez provided background related to the installation of the Heli-Hydrant noting the tank was up and running for the most part with minor issues which are currently being resolved. He stated the trial run was conducted recently which worked out perfect. He reported there have not been any fires since the tank has been installed.

Mr. Gutierrez announced the Grand Opening/Ribbon Cutting Ceremony will take place on September 14, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. He stated the final details for this event will be worked out to ensure the safety of all civilians in the area as well as spectators. He referenced the flyer prepared for distribution at the event and solicited the committee for input prior to it going to print pointing out how staff came up with the new title Rapid Aerial Water System (RAWS).

Mr. Hamilton suggested adding the interagency cooperation a little stronger on the flyer.

Mr. Stewart inquired as to whether the Heli-Hydrant would be accessible both during day and night hours. Mr. Gutierrez confirmed the tank illuminates at night.

Mr. Gutierrez mentioned RMWD reached out to the eleven property owners surrounding the Pala Mesa tank area and how all of them were very excited to have this asset in their neighborhood,

especially those who remember when the Rice Fire occurred. He noted these property owners were also invited to the September 14th celebration.

Mr. Shute stated he found the flyer to be very good.

Mr. Gutierrez mentioned RMWD was hoping to get some grant funding for a second tank for the Jeremy Way/Gomez Creek area since RMWD's Gomez Tank was in this area making water accessible. Mr. Stewart inquired as to the overall cost for this project. Mr. Gutierrez stated the Board approved \$150,000 and how an open work order exists for the 120' of 8" PVC and how in-house costs would be approximately \$10,000. Discussion followed.

Mr. Stewart stated once this tank has been installed and others successfully funded, it may be something worth sharing with the local insurance companies in hopes of receiving reduced premiums, especially when rates are six times more with the whole region being reclassified as high fire danger area.

Ms. Largent inquired as to whether this type of system could be installed at a main line or reservoir located at the top of an open hill. Mr. Gutierrez said it could be installed literally anywhere, but it must be where the pilots are happy with unobstructed access as well as where RMWD can provide enough water. Discussion followed.

16. WATER SERVICE UPGRADE PROJECT (WSUP) UPDATE

Mr. Gutierrez reported the project was 68% completed and will be very close to 75% by the end of October. He noted the remaining inventory has been reviewed and how the lead time for a variety of the material is 3-4 months out along with price increases. He summarized the steps being taken as well as the areas in which meters will be replaced.

Mr. Shute inquired as to what has been happening during this project in terms of meter downsizing as well as backflow devices. Mr. Gutierrez stated these, and similar situations are all being taken into consideration.

Ms. Largent asked how many meters will be remaining once the 97% mark is reached. Mr. Gutierrez answered approximately 500.

Mr. Shute questioned if calls have been received from customers regarding new meters or changes in their bills. Ms. Gray replied there has not been anything substantial.

Mr. Stewart inquired as to whether the Flume devices would be moved to the new meters. Mr. Gutierrez stated customers with these devices would need to have them recalibrated and how Flume staff are available to walk the customers through the process. Mr. Hamilton recommended a reminder be published in the newsletter regarding this requirement.

17. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH ITEMS

- A.** Topics
- B.** Calendar
- C.** Snipes Calendar
- D.** Updates from Other Committees
- E.** Customer Relations
- F.** Monthly Newsletter Review
- G.** Social Media Post Updates

Ms. Gray reviewed the information to be included in the upcoming monthly newsletter.

18. REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF RMWD RELATED MEDIA STORIES

Mr. Hamilton pointed out The Village News has been giving RMWD a great deal more coverage lately and how there may be an article coming out regarding Mr. Kennedy's salary. He pointed out other interviews have been published in Spanish as well.

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

It was noted the selection of committee officers, potential drought restrictions, as well as updates on the shutoff letter, emergency notification program, WSUP, Heli-Hydrant project, phone system status, and developments should be on the next agenda.

20. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chairperson Shute.

The meeting adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

Bill Shute, Committee Chairperson

Dawn M. Washburn, Board Secretary