

JOSHUA BASIN WATER DISTRICT  
REGULAR BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
MEETING MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 15, 2023

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – President Floen called the board meeting to order at 5:30pm
2. DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM – All Directors are present.

STAFF PRESENT –

Sarah Johnson, General Manager; Anne Roman, Director of Finance; Autumn Rich, Accounting Supervisor; David Shook, Director of Administration; Jeremiah Nazario, Interim Director of Operations; Brandon Warner, CIRP Supervisor; Steve Corbin, Production Supervisor; Lisa Thompson, Executive Assistant.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL PRESENT –

Chairperson David Carrillo, Karen Morton, Karen Tracy, Glen Harris.

CONSULTANTS PRESENT –

Kathleen Radnich, Public Information Consultant; Jeff Hoskinson, Legal Counsel; Alex Handlers, Bartle Wells

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA –

1<sup>st</sup> -Delph

2<sup>nd</sup> -Doolitte

5/0/0 motion carried to approve agenda.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT –

- A. Karen Morton reported burst pipe on dirt road and mentioned that the cones were still there. Staff briefly responded that work was still ongoing.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. DRAFT MEETING MINUTES – 01.10.23

B. DRAFT MEETING MINUTES – 01.18.23

C. DRAFT MEETING MINUTES – 02.01.23

1<sup>st</sup> - Delph

2<sup>nd</sup> -Jarlsberg

5/0/0 motion carried to approve consent calendar minutes.

6. ITEMS PULLED FROM THE CONSENT CALENDAR – none.

7. ACTION CALENDAR

A1. PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER INCREASES TO WATER RATES AND CHARGES

1<sup>st</sup> -Delph

2<sup>nd</sup> -Jarlsberg

5/0/0 motion carried to accept and file the water rate study report.

A2. PUBLIC HEARING:

- President Floen opened the hearing relative to the noticed water rate increases at 5:38pm.

- Staff/Consultant Presentations and questions:
  - Consultant Alex Handler provided a power point presentation summarizing the water rate study.
  - Director of Finance, Anne Roman commented that the district has saved money switching bill printing companies and saving approximately \$14,000. Districts using inhouse paving, utility marking.
  - Vice President Doolittle thanked Consultant Handlers for his presentation.
  - President Floen commented that the district has a “culture of thrift.” The rates cannot exceed the cost of service. We have not addressed the cost of wastewater.
  - Director Delph commented that we don’t make a profit. Board members pay the same as the rate payers. Inflation and Mojave Water pipeline costs increased. We need to keep up with the pipes. The best management practices using percentage of rate increases. The past rate increase did not factor in capital improvement. Pipe cost has increased dramatically, and we need to replace pipe.
  - Director Jarlsberg commented that the rate increase will help save water. Cutbacks are mandated for the District but people that have a lot of trees will pay those higher rates. Gas has gone up tremendously and she now has to figure out how to cut those costs.
  - Director Short asked for clarification on how to mitigate the increased costs as discussed in the rate study report. Consultant Handlers provided clarification and stated the community has done a good job on conservation on average. Director Short asked about the other scenarios that were in the rate study. Director of Finance, Anne Roman provided clarification on the pros and cons of each scenario.
  
- Public Testimony Relative To Proposed Rate Increases
  - Charles Magda stated that he completes a Southern California Edison survey once or twice a year, and they provide a discount on bill for completion. Magda asked if the District could consider doing the same thing. He also expressed that he uses the water from his showing to water the trees.
  - Patricia Jensen questioned the fairness of the tiered rate system. She requested more definite numbers.
  - Ann Lear stated that many Joshua Tree residents are on a fixed income. In the past two months the gas bill doubled, Edison is increasing their rates, and now the water district is increasing rates. She stated that this is not sustainable.
  - Gary Link provided community and income statistics. Link suggested the District should apply for heavy duty grants. Link stated the he read about a certain individual who broke the rules and was dismissed last year for embezzlement. Link suggested that the District needs an external audit. Director Delph responded that the check registers are public information and available. The Finance Committee goes over check registers every meeting. The District has an external audit completed each year. Director Delph also stated it was our employees who brought the situation to the auditors regarding the former General Manager.
  - Tracy Johns raised concerns about the rates impacting the community. She stated that we must have safe and reliable water which is fundamental. She expressed concerns on we can ease the impact on the people who are the most vulnerable. She would like to see if there are more programs available for low income households. Johns also expressed appreciation of the transparency for the Rate Study process.
  - Ben Lawless understands that we need to raise rates, but is there any way possible to keep the rates lower. He thanked Director Short for his service.

- Deb Bollinger a 24-year rate payer stated that she understands infrastructure needs replacement and the District may need to treat for chromium-6, but she did not support the rate increase. She also expressed concerns about being in a low income community.
- Frank Erickson a long term resident of Joshua Tree expressed concerns about increasing costs. Erickson does is best to conserve water and lives on a fixed income without the ability to earn more as he is the primary caretaker for his wife. He also expressed the same sentiment that CAC member, Hannah Campbell, stated that we are not going to be able to keep up.
- Buck Buckley does not support the rate increase because he does not have confidence that the pipe replacement will get done.
- Tony Callaway stated that she used to be on the State Water Board. She had questions on what percentage of rate increase for chromium-6. She also expressed concerns being in a poor community, she doesn't get all of the mailings, and has very high pressure.
- CAC member Glen Harris stated that he has been involved with the rate study process for at least a year. He appreciates the new administration onboard that is now running the District. The board members are looking at ways to offset bills for those that need it. Harris explained that many miles of pipe have reached the end of their life and we have to get very aggressive at replacing the pipes. Additionally we may see future mandates to reduce usage, which will result in the district losing money towards replacing pipe.
- Catherine Freeman questioned the Tilford project. She stated that the District needs to focus on the need to have, not the nice to haves. Freeman also stated she wants the District to respond to the notes she sends in with her water bills.
- Sandra Smith a 22 year resident in Joshua Tree wanted to know why the District did not take care of the infrastructure sooner.
- CAC Chair David Carrillo mentioned to the public to come to the Citizen's Advisor Council to see what is going on, our field guys work very hard. We have a great General Manager.

**A3. PRESIDENT FLOEN CLOSED THE HEARING AT 8:13PM.**

**A4. PROTESTS TABULATED AND REPORTED**

- General Manager Johnson, Director of Finance Roman, Director of Administration Shook, Director of Operations Nazario, examined and tallied all received protests in open public session. Based on this process, 81 protests were received and, in light of the number received, all were counted as valid as such numbers were substantially less than a majority protest.

**7B. CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION 23-1052, AS PRESENTED OR AMENDED AT DIRECTION OF THE BOARD, TO ADOPT RATE INCREASE, TAKE RELATED ACTIONS, AND MAKE RELATED FINDINGS.**

Director Delph motioned to adopt Resolution 23-1052 as presented. Director Jarlsberg seconded the motion.

Voting For: Director Delph, Director Jarlsberg

Voting Against: President Floen, Vice President Doolittle, Director Short

Motion Failed: 2-3 to adopt Resolution 23-1052 as presented.

Director Doolittle motioned to adopt Resolution 23-1052, with Exhibit A amended to "Scenario B," as presented to the Board at its December 2022 meeting. Motion failed for lack of a second.

President Floen moved to adopt Resolution 23-1052, as presented, but with direction to implement the rates "Scenario C," as presented to the Board at its December 2022 meeting. Director Short seconded the motion.

Voting For: President Floen, Vice President Doolittle, Director Short, Director Delph, Director Jarlsberg.

Voting Against: None.

Motion Passed: 5-0 to adopt Resolution 23-1052 as presented, with implementation of Scenario C at this time.

## 8. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS AND REPORTS

### A. DIRECTOR REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Director Doolittle attended Water Resources and Operations Committee meeting last week and reported on the number of service orders, fire flows for development, valve exercised, and mainline leaks.

Director Delph attended the finance committee meeting.

Director Jarlsberg attended no meetings.

Director Short attended the Mojave Water Agency (MWA") Technical Advisory Committee ("TAC") meeting and reported on urban water use standards.

President Floen attended 5 meetings, Copper Mountain Mesa Association Board meeting, MWA meeting, etc.

## 9. FUTURE DIRECTOR MEETINGS

Directors will attend meetings as follows:

## 10. ADJOURNMENT

1st -Delph

2nd -Jarlsberg

President Floen called the Board to adjourn at 9:09pm

Respectfully submitted,



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Sarah Johnson, General Manager & Board Secretary





# Draft Minutes 2.15.23

Final Audit Report

2023-04-20

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