

# MEETING MINUTES



## SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MARCH 19, 2026, 9:00 AM

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

President Doolittle called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

### 2. DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM & ATTENDANCE

**Board Members Present:** President Doolittle, Vice President Short, Director Floen, Director Jarlsberg, Director Fick

**Staff Present:** General Manager Johnson, Director of Finance Roman, Accounting Supervisor Rich, Director of Administration Shook, Interim Director of Operations, Ray Kolisz, Executive Assistant Thompson

**Consultant(s) Present:** Legal Counsel, Jeff Hoskinson, U.S. Water Alliance Associate Director, Austin Thompson-Spain, Ridgeline Municipal Strategies Principal, Dmitry Semenov, West Coast Civil Principal Engineer, Kyle McCarty, Public Outreach Consultant, Kathleen Radnich

**Citizens Advisory Council Member(s) Present:** David Carrillo

### 3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Vice President Short moved to approve the agenda and seconded by Director Jarlsberg and approved by the following vote:

1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> Short/Jarlsberg  
Ayes: Doolittle, Short, Floen, Jarlsberg, Fick  
Noes: None  
Abstain: None  
Absent: None

### 4. PUBLIC COMMENT –

Garrett Carlson, a landscape architect, stated that he has owned property in Joshua Tree for approximately 20 years and has developed several custom homes. Carlson noted that his water costs have increased significantly over time and expressed concern regarding rising water rates, as well as the increasing cost of water meters, citing a recent quote of approximately \$24,000. Carlson also referenced similar rate changes in Los Angeles and their impact on landscaping practices. Carlson conveyed concern about the potential long-term effects these increasing costs may have on the character of Joshua Tree. Additionally, Carlson noted that he had submitted two letters to the District encouraging the use of native and drought-tolerant landscaping, as well as recommending adjustments to tiered water rates to better promote drought-tolerant plants and trees.

## 5. CONSENT CALENDAR

### A. DRAFT MINUTES – 03.04.26

Vice President Short made a motion to approve the Consent Calendar 03.04.26 draft minutes and seconded by Director Fick, approved by the following vote:

1st/ 2nd	Short/Fick
Ayes:	Doolittle, Short, Floen, Jarlsberg, Fick
Noes:	None
Abstain:	None
Absent:	None

## 6. ITEMS PULLED FROM CONSENT CALENDAR FOR DISCUSSION

## 7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- A. WORKSHOP PART ONE: HEXAVALENT CHROMIUM (CHROMIUM-6) TREATMENT PROJECT  
PRESENTED BY: SARAH JOHNSON, GENERAL MANAGER; AUSTIN THOMPSON SPAIN, U.S. WATER ALLIANCE; RAY KOLISZ, INTERIM DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS; AND KYLE MCCARTY, PRINCIPAL ENGINEER, WEST COAST CIVIL.  
RECOMMENDED ACTION: RECEIVE PRESENTATIONS AND PARTICIPATE IN THE WORKSHOP DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CHROMIUM-6 TREATMENT PROJECT AND FUNDING.

President Doolittle opened the workshop at 9:07a.m. General Manager Sarah Johnson introduced Austin Thompson Spain from U.S. Water Alliance (USWA). Spain introduced her team members, Carrie Smith and Kathleen Hohweiler. The U.S. Water Alliance team presented on Chromium 6 outreach support, including proposed outreach materials, key messaging, frequently asked questions, and visual concepts to help inform the public about Chromium 6 and upcoming updates.

Following USWA, Interim Director of Operations Ray Kolisz discussed Chromium-6 treatment, including conducting a pilot study for all District wells, noting that the our approved compliance plan deadline for completing a pilot study is December 2026. Kolisz also responded to Board questions and provided an overview of the District's evaluation of treatment options for Chromium 6, including ion exchange systems. Kolisz explained the differences between strong-base and weak-base treatment methods, including pH considerations and operational requirements. Kolisz indicated that a strong-base ion exchange system with regeneration would reduce the facility footprint and is the recommended approach.

The workshop paused for a break at 10:45 a.m.

The workshop resumed at 11:00 a.m.

### WORKSHOP PART TWO: FINANCIAL PLANNING

PRESENTED BY: ANNE ROMAN, DIRECTOR OF FINANCE; DMITRY SEMENOV, RIDGELINE MUNICIPAL STRATEGIES; AND DISTRICT STAFF

RECOMMENDED ACTION: RECEIVE PRESENTATIONS AND PARTICIPATE IN THE WORKSHOP DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CHROMIUM-6 TREATMENT PROJECT AND FUNDING.

Director of Finance Anne Roman introduced Dmitry Semenov of Ridgeline Municipal Strategies. Semenov presented the District's long-term financial forecast and Chromium-6 funding analysis, including revenue and expense assumptions, capital improvement projections for 2026–2035, reserve targets, and potential financing scenarios. He also discussed infrastructure financing considerations and fiscal impacts. Semenov outlined best- and worst-case scenarios and noted that, without Chromium-6 costs, the District remains financially stable, with the ability to maintain operations, preserve reserves, and fund capital improvements with modest annual rate increases.

Semenov emphasized that Chromium-6 compliance represents a significant once in a generation project, that will require laser focus to be achieved successfully, and that financing will be necessary under all scenarios.

The workshop ended at 12:33 p.m.

## **8. DIRECTOR REPORTS/COMMENTS**

### President Doolittle

- Director Doolittle reported on attending the Sacramento legislative trip from March 9–11, where she and the team met with Assemblymember Greg Wallis and Senator Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh to discuss the District's challenges, including the state Chromium-6 unfunded mandate. Doolittle shared that both legislators were receptive to the District's concerns. Assemblymember Wallis expressed opposition to unfunded mandates and agreed to submit a budget letter to highlight the issue, with Senator Ochoa Bogh also shared she supported the effort. Doolittle also stated that General Manager Sarah Johnson was highly effective in the meetings and that she had all matters well prepared and covered.
- Doolittle attended the ACWA Spring Policy Committee on March 13th via Zoom. Doolittle reported learning about a new Bureau of Reclamation grant program for small-scale, "water-smart" projects that promote water efficiency, conservation, and improved community water management.

### Vice President Short

- Short acknowledged community concerns regarding the cost of the Chromium-6 project in comparison to aging infrastructure. Short emphasized that the Board and staff are actively working to address these challenges, including engaging with state and federal representatives. Short noted his personal commitment to supporting these efforts and stated that the Board is taking an active role in pursuing solutions. Short expressed hope that the community recognizes the District's ongoing efforts to address the issue.

### Director Floen

- Floen reported attending the Copper Mountain Mesa Community Association meeting, where Chromium-6 and its potential costs were discussed.
- Floen reported on attending the Washington, D.C. legislative trip in February, noting the experience was worthwhile. Floen also thanked General Manager Sarah Johnson and Vice President Short for their guidance during the trip.

### Director Jarlsberg

- None

#### Director Fick

- Fick suggested exploring the potential for a new well east of La Contenta, noting that nearby recharge activities by Hi-Desert Water District could provide treated water with reduced Chromium-6 levels.
- Fick reported on attending the Sacramento legislative trip from March 9th–11th, noting the trip went well. Fick shared that he gained insight into working with legislators on an issue-by-issue basis.

### **9. MANAGER'S REPORT**

#### General Manager Report

Johnson reported on the following:

- Johnson reported on the Washington, D.C. and Sacramento legislative trips, noting they were productive. Johnson indicated a more detailed update will be provided in the newsletter.
- Johnson and Director of Finance Anne Roman met with Dmitry Semenov of Ridgeline Municipal Strategies to discuss grant writing opportunities.
- Johnson reported that Well 15 is back online and recent sampling results are in compliance. She further explained that the District received a citation from DDW—later reduced to a violation—for failing to collect a nitrate sample while the well was offline for rehabilitation. Johnson noted that the State was aware the well was offline, valved off, and without a motor, making sampling impossible, and that no water was served from the well during that time. The District is currently contesting the violation.
- Johnson thanked the Board, Kyle McCarty of West Coast Civil, and Dmitry Semenov of Ridgeline Municipal Strategies for their time and participation at the meeting. Johnson also expressed appreciation to Interim Director of Operations Ray Kolisz.

#### Management Staff Report

- Director of Administration David Shook expressed appreciation for President Doolittle and Vice President Short and their attention to the needs of Joshua Tree's disadvantaged community.
- Director of Finance Anne Roman thanked Dmitry Semenov of Ridgeline Municipal Strategies for traveling to attend the board meeting in person.
- Interim Director of Operations Ray Kolisz expressed appreciation to the Board for their attention to the Chromium-6 treatment project.

### **10. AGENDA ITEMS REQUESTED BY THE BOARD**

- Doolittle - 1. Wastewater strategy 2. Landscape policy discussion
- Short – None
- Floen – None
- Jarlsberg – None
- Short – None
- Fick – District to join JTABC as a voting member

**11. CLOSED SESSION**

- A. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – EXISTING LITIGATION (Govt. Code §54956.9(d)(1))  
Name of Case: *Scully v. Grace Budka et. al.* (San Bernardino County Superior Ct. Case No. CIV2532231)

Adjourned to closed session at 12:51 pm.  
Returned to open session at 1:44 pm.

Legal Counsel Jeff Hoskinson stated no reportable action.

- B. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – POTENTIAL LITIGATION (Govt. Code § 54956.9(d)(4))  
Number of Cases: 1

Legal Counsel Jeff Hoskinson stated no reportable action.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

On motion by Director Jarlsberg, seconded by Director Floen, and approved by the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 1:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



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Sarah Johnson, General Manager & Board Secretary






# 2. .JBWD MINUTES SPECIAL MEETING 03.19.26

Final Audit Report

2026-04-02

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