**Westport County Water District**

**Board of Directors**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting**

**Thursday, July 10, 2025**

The regular monthly meeting of the Westport County Water District (“District” or “WCWD”)Board of Directors convened at 7:12 pm via zoom on Thursday, July 10, 2025. Notice and the Agenda were previously properly issued, a Board quorum was present, and it was confirmed that each Director was able to hear and be heard by the other Directors and members of the public in attendance.

1. **Roll Call at Inception (7:12 pm):**

Present Board Members: Directors Ms. Carla Thomas, Mr. Robert Finnell, Mr. Steve Cardullo and Mr. Gary Weiss, with Chairman Lee Tepper and Director Cardullo in attendance for a portion of the meeting.

Present Staff: Operations Manager and Chief Plant Operator Mr. John Morrill, and Administrator Ms. Kayla Cooper.

Present Members of the Public: None.

1. **Entity Governance (7:13pm):**

Director Weiss stated that he would prepare the minutes for this meeting.

1. **FFPC Training on AB 1234 – Ethics Training for Local Public Officials (7:14 pm)**

Each director reported on the status of his/her respective completion of FPPC training on AB 1234 – Ethics Training for Local Public Officials (to be taken online every two years at no charge). Each director said he/she had completed the training except for Chairman Tepper, who reported that he had signed up for the training and would soon complete it. Ms. Cooper stated that she will hold the completion certificates forwarded by each director that has completed the training.

1. **Consent Agenda**
2. **Approval of Minutes (7:16 pm):**

Director Weiss moved that the Board approve the minutes of the Regular WCWD Board Meeting held on June 12, 2025. Director Thomas seconded the motion, which was then approved unanimously by the Board.

1. **Correspondence (7:16 pm):**

Ms. Cooper reported that a WCWD customer had called her, as well as Mr. Morrill, wanting to discuss the possibility of shutting off water and sewer service and of being relieved of the obligation to pay for these services. Ms. Cooper relayed that she had invited the customer to join a WCWD Board meeting to discuss the matter, but the customer declined to do so. Mr. Morrill said he had told the customer that the Board would discuss the topic at this meeting and report back on the discussion.

Director Cardullo said this question had been raised on a few occasions during his long prior tenure on the WCWD Board. The conclusion has always been the same, he said: We are all members of the District by virtue of our residence within the District; a customer cannot opt out of the District simply because the customer does not want to pay. Proposition 218 makes this mandatory, said Director Cardullo. He likened it to a family within a public school district asking to be relieved of its duty to pay taxes simply because it does not want to send its children to the district public school and instead chooses to send them to private school. Payment is mandatory in both cases, he said. Director Finnell said he supported Director Cardullo’s position and suggested that the customer be invited to the next Board meeting and hear it directly from the Board. Director Cardullo responded that this is an everyday issue that can and should be handled by Ms. Cooper – that she should call the customer and relay the Board’s position and then confirm the conversation in a letter to the customer. Ms. Cooper stated that she would do so.

1. **Public Comment (7:23 pm):**

There was no public comment.

1. **Staff Reports (7:24 pm):**
2. **Bookkeeper/Administrator Report (7:24 pm):**

Chairman Tepper joined the meeting at 7:24 pm.

Ms. Cooper led the discussion of the WCWD’s monthly financial report. In advance of the meeting, Ms. Cooper had distributed to all attendees a copy of the July 2025 expense report as well as the July 2024 expense report and the accounts receivable aging summary as of June 30, 2025.

Ms. Cooper reported that as of the end of June 2025, there was $41,763.57 in the District’s main checking account, along with $17,572.57 in water capital and $17,655.58 in sewer capital. Ms. Cooper reported that the funds currently in the District’s main checking account are roughly $3,543.93 less than were in the account at the end of June 2024.

In response to questions from the Board, Ms. Cooper attributed the cash balance difference to the timing of the receipt of customer payments and the payment of WCWD bills during June of 2024 versus 2025 (such as a large payment made to Aqua-Aerobic Systems in 2025 for a 2023 invoice), and not to any meaningful trend. She highlighted that deposits have continued to be delayed due to the Post Office removing its Westport P.O. boxes.

Attendees then discussed the status of the Post Office’s action on postal service in Westport in the light of the removal of the P.O. boxes. Ms. Cooper stated that she had spoken with the Post Office and learned that they will re-do the entire postal route for Westport in August. She further reported that Mr. Morrill had installed a mailbox for the District to be located at 36970 Omega Street. She said that any customers mailing payments to the District should continue to send them to P.O. Box 55, but that any customer wishing to hand deliver payments could do so at the newly installed mailbox.

1. **Operator’s Report (7:29 pm):**

Mr. Morrill led the discussion of the July 10, 2025, Operator’s Report he had circulated in advance of the meeting. Mr. Morrill answered questions from the Directors about the report.

He noted first that, as is typical for this time of year, the District has been using a good deal of water, particularly the campground, which has been extremely busy.

Mr. Morrill reminded attendees that pursuant to the Westport County Water District Ordinance # 1-25 adopted by the WCWD Board of Directors on April 10, 2025 (“Cross Connection Control General Policy”), and the mandate issued by the State Water Resources Control Board (“SWRCB”) to inspect for and remediate any cross-contamination issues identified within the District, the District had mailed to its customers a survey intended to identify any cross-connection issues to be remediated. Mr. Morrill said he had thus far received 29 responses to the survey and that he would continue to follow up with customers to get more responses. Meanwhile, the SWRCB had recently sent an email that the deadlines for plan submittal would be pushed back a year, to July 2026. Nevertheless, Mr. Morrill said, he would continue to march ahead with the progression of the District’s program. He said he had already submitted the District’s plan and received verbal confirmation from Matt Foster, Sanitary Engineer of the SWRCB, that it is acceptable. He said he will next press for an official sign-off from the SWRCB.

Mr. Morrill reported that he had recently received the SWRCB Division of Drinking Water’s 2025 Sanitary Survey Deficiency List and Recommendations and had discussed them with Matt Foster. He said that Mr. Foster highlighted some deficiencies that the District must remediate by various dates in 2025 and 2026.

One item to be remediated is the level of manganese in the District’s drinking water. Mr. Morrill reminded attendees that in May, he had taken 10 gallons of WCWD water to be tested by the SWRCB with a different polymer than the District had been using to re-test manganese levels. As reflected in the 2024 Consumer Confidence Report dated February 21, 2025, discussed at the March 13, 2025 WCWD meeting, the WCWD’s water meets all primary safe drinking water standards, but Mr. Morrill believes levels of Manganese are higher than they should be, which Mr. Morrill has continued to describe as an aesthetic issue rather than a health safety issue. Nevertheless, the SWRCB identified this issue as a “moderate” hazard that must be remediated no later than June 30, 2026. Mr. Morrill reported that the tests conducted with the new polymer (reported on at the WCWD Board meetings of May 8 and June 12, 2025) had not shown reduced levels of manganese in the District’s drinking water. Mr. Morrill said he planned to continue to monitor and test manganese levels, which tend to rise when the creek is running low and fall when the creek is running high. In addition, he will continue to experiment using different filters with different kinds of sand as well as chlorine treatments.

The SWRCB also identified the replacement of the District’s old and leaning redwood tank as a “moderate” hazard that must be remediated before the tank fails. Mr. Morrill reminded attendees that the project to replace the tank is one the District has already been pursuing with GHD to obtain grant funding on for well over a year. The SWRCB suggested that the lifespan of the tank might be extended by keeping water levels in the tank lower.

The SWRCB in its Survey Deficiency List also mandated that the District begin testing for pH, alkalinity, orthophosphate and calcium levels at one distribution location each time it performs lead and copper tap monitoring.

Finally, the SWRCB Survey Deficiency List includes a mandate to the District to update its existing operations plan, which had been drafted at the inception of the WCWD, by December 31, 2025. They describe the hazard of having an older plan to be “minor.” Mr. Morrill believes that it may not be possible to complete a new comprehensive plan until later than the end of this year.

Mr. Morrill reported that wastewater lagoon depth was a little over 50% of its capacity in June 2025. He said that the District had begun operating the spray fields in late June, with almost 1 million gallons of wastewater sprayed, and that it would continue spraying into August. Although Mr. Morrill had at the June meeting said the District had enough chlorine on hand for all of the spraying planned for this year, he later decided to purchase ½ pallet of chlorine, which would last until the beginning of 2026.

Chairman Tepper inquired as to whether there is adequate standby power for the WCWD’s generators. Mr. Morrill replied that there is enough fuel for 400 hours of operation.

1. **Old Business (7:49 pm):**
2. **Status of Program to Inspect for and Remediate Any Cross-Contamination Issues, Including Status of Completion of Customer Survey Mailed to Customers with May Invoices.**

This topic was discussed earlier in the meeting. See Section 5.B. above.

1. **Status of and Next Steps for WCWD Capital Improvement Projects: (7:50 pm):**

Director Thomas had reported at the June WCWD Board meeting that she was working with WVFD Chief Dan Maxey in responding to a survey by the North Coast Resource Partnership (“NCRP”) for a block grant program enabled through State Proposition 4. This new program may be applicable to address both fire resiliency and/or drinking water infrastructure, and that 5 North Coast counties including Mendocino had requested $600 million in grant funding. In Westport’s survey response in furtherance of that request, Director Thomas reported that Westport had requested $15 million over a 10-year period, some of which would be dedicated to the District’s water supply and quality infrastructure. She said Westport and Mendocino County had been among the first to respond to the NCRP, which she felt bode well for how quickly the District can expect a NCRP response.

During the ensuing month, Director Thomas said she spoke to **[name?],** the person in charge of disbursing NCRP grant funding, and **[s/he?]** gave an optimistic assessment that some of the funds would be distributed as “direct funding,” and that this would likely happen in 2026. Director Thomas added that from her experience, it typically takes a state agency 12-18 months to distribute approved funding to the organizations applying for those funds.

Director Thomas also reported that she had reached out to the Coastal Conservancy to ask them to consider and promote Westport’s needs to the State. She said she would follow up. Director Thomas said she had not yet spoken with GHD to ask them to weigh in with the State Water Resources Control Board (“SWRCB”) but would do so in the near future. She reported that it is possible that the WCWD will receive a “Governor’s Exemption” from ordinary CEQA processes but pursuing that will require assistance from both GHD and the Coastal Conservancy. She said she would report back on this at the next WCWD Board meeting.

Mr. Morrill thanked Director Thomas for her stewardship of the various grant application venues and processes the District is pursuing. The directors likewise thanked Director Thomas for her efforts.

Director Cardullo asked whether a capital improvement wish list had been prepared. Director Thomas said that GHD had prepared a list, after receiving input from Mr. Morrill and Ms. Cooper, as part of the capital improvement program GHD is leading on behalf of the District. That list is part of the grant applications GHD had prepared, which are available for review by any Board member. Mr. Morrill said this list needed to be expanded, but that the number one priority is building a new water tank to replace the existing redwood tank.

**C. Discussion of Draft Document Retention and Destruction Policies and Status of Director Cardullo’s Review and Cataloguing of Existing WCWD Documents (7:59 pm):**

Director Cardullo recounted his ongoing efforts to inventory the many boxes of old WCWD documents located at the WVFD firehouse. He said that he and Ms. Cooper had been reviewing the documents and would like to begin the process of destroying those documents that are clearly no longer needed, such as receipts from the 1980’s and old insurance pamphlets. Director Cardullo said that this process should be handled expeditiously by authorizing Ms. Cooper to carry out the process. Ms. Cooper said she is happy to carry out whatever destruction policy has been approved by the WCWD Board but wants the policy to be clear and approved by the Board before she carries it out.

The directors and staff then engaged in a discussion of the proper roles of WCWD Administrator, the directors, and particularly the Board Secretary. Director Finnell said that it is the Board’s responsibility to agree on a policy and only then have staff members carry it out, and that the Secretary of a municipal water district like the WCWD is a directorial position and not a staff position. Directors Thomas and Weiss agreed.

Director Cardullo voiced his concern about losing momentum on the process of reviewing, inventorying the old WCWD documents stored at the Firehouse and of discarding the ones that should be destroyed. He stated that the Board had long ago passed a document retention policy that he had shared with the Board at a prior meeting and that there was no need to create a new one. Directors Weiss and Finnell suggested that the Board discuss that policy and the alternative policy subsequently drafted by Director Finnell at the next WCWD Board meeting. Director Finnell agreed and suggested that the discussion include the WCWD bylaws. He asked that all those documents be distributed prior to the next meeting so that the Board could review them together. Ms. Cooper said that the WCWD bylaws are published on the web site and that copies of the two document retention policies had been emailed to the directors.

Director Thomas suggested, and Director Cardullo agreed, that the directors review some of the documents on-hand at the Firehouse so that they could get a better sense of what is there. Directors Finnell and Weiss said they would do so.

Director Finnell stated that this is issue is likely not a priority for WCWD customers, and that there is no urgency for it to be completed soon. He voiced his objection to hiring someone new to perform the review and destruction of documents. Director Cardullo stated that if anyone should be paid to do this work, it should be Ms. Cooper.

The Board next discussed whether the video recording procedure agreed upon at the June WCWD Board meeting should await an agreement and vote on an overall document retention policy. Director Weiss stated that he does not need video recordings to prepare minutes. Director Finnell moved to stop video recording WCWD Board meetings until the Board has passed a document retention/destruction policy, and to wait until January 2026 to revisit the consideration and passage of a video recording policy. Director Cardullo seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

1. **Status of Timber Harvest Plan on Property Owned by Roger and Michelle Burch Trust (“Bell Mountain THP”) (8:53 pm):**

Director Weiss reported that he had observed several new filings in the Bell Mountain THP, nothing extraordinary, since the last WCWD Board meeting, except that there is now a July 21, 2025, deadline for public comment. He urged the directors to review publicly available documents in the next 10 days to determine whether the Board should make any public comment. Directors Thomas and Finnell said they would do so.

1. **Communications with Mendocino County Board of Supervisors or State Authorities re SWRCB Wastewater Permit Fees (8:57 pm):**

Director Finnell stated that he would write a letter to California Assemblymember Chris Rodgers and California State Senator Mike McGuire to discuss the gross unfairness of the SWRCB’s permit fee structure for a small county water district like the WCWD. He noted that this would be just the beginning of what could be a long process.

1. **New Business (8:47 pm):**
2. **Search for New Auditor for the WCWD (8:59 pm):**

Ms. Cooper reported that she has been playing phone tag with Megan Hunter in the Mendocino County Auditor-Controller’s office. She will report on progress in the identification of a potential new auditor at the next WCWD Board meeting.

1. **“TMF Assessment” of WCWD (technical, managerial and financial capacity) for the past, present and future (9:01):**

Ms. Cooper and Mr. Morrill agreed to distribute the two grant proposals that GHD had submitted to tee up a discussion of this topic at the next WCWD Board meeting. Director Thomas said that this would be helpful in the effort to obtain a “Governor’s Exemption” to CEQA.

[Director Cardullo and Ms. Cooper left the meeting at 8:59 pm. Ms. Cooper rejoined the meeting at 9:01 pm.]

1. **Brown Act: Continued Digital/Virtual Zoom Meeting Authorization (9:06 pm):**

Director Weiss moved to continue providing the option for zoom attendance at WCWD Board meetings, while offering the option of in-person attendance at any meeting. Director Thomas seconded the motion, which was then unanimously approved.

1. **Adjournment (9:07 pm):**

Upon motion made (Director Weiss) and seconded (Director Thomas), the Regular Meeting of the WCWD Board was unanimously adjourned at 9:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Weiss

Temporary Secretary for the July 10, 2025, WCWD Board Meeting