**Westport County Water District**

**Board of Directors**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting**

**Thursday, June 12, 2025**

The regular monthly meeting of the Westport County Water District (“District” or “WCWD”)Board of Directors convened at 7:11 pm via zoom on Thursday, June 12, 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 (7:04 pm):**

Present Board Members: Chairman Lee Tepper, and Directors Ms. Carla Thomas, Mr. Robert Finnell, Mr. Steve Cardullo and Mr. Gary Weiss.

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 (7:05 pm):**

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

1. **FFPC Training on AB 1234 – Ethics Training for Local Public Officials (7:05 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 (7:07 pm):**

Director Weiss moved that the Board approve the minutes of the Regular WCWD Board Meeting held on May 8, 2025. Director Thomas seconded the motion, which was then approved unanimously by the Board.

1. **Correspondence (7:08 pm):**

Ms. Cooper reported that the WCWD had received a letter from Shimmins Consulting in Laytonville inquiring whether the WCWD had any records concerning selling water to Shimmins between October 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022. Ms. Cooper said that she was able to find no such records. Chairman Tepper requested, and Ms. Cooper agreed, that Ms. Cooper send a letter to Shimmins informing them of this fact.

1. **Public Comment (7:11 pm):**

Director Finnell informed participants that the Westport Village Society had met on June 11, 2025. He expressed his concern that the WVS is a very important organization that does not garner sufficient interest or participation from the community. He had invited WVS Board Members to attend the WCWD Board meetings but none have done so. He expressed concern about the siloed nature of the various organizations in Westport and asked that WCWD directors participate more actively in the WVS, including attending meetings. Director Thomas stated that she had recently written a letter to WVS Board Chairman Thad Van Buren stating that she has an interest in participating more actively in the WVS, albeit after this summer passes. Director Finnell stated that Chairman Van Buren had told him that he was encouraged by Director Thomas’s interest and that Chairman Van Buren would support her candidacy for a position on the WVS. Director Finnell urged the WCWD directors to do their best to attend WVS meetings.

1. **Staff Reports (7:20 pm):**
2. **Bookkeeper/Administrator Report (7:17 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 May 2025 expense report as well as the May 2024 expense report and the accounts receivable aging summary as of June 12, 2025.

Ms. Cooper reported that as of the end of May 2025, there was $36,651.66 in the District’s main checking account, along with $17,372.57 in water capital and $17,455.58 in sewer capital. Ms. Cooper reported that the funds currently in the District’s main checking account are roughly $4,870 less than were in the account at the end of April 2024.

In response to questions from the Board, Ms. Cooper attributed the cash balance difference of $11,906 to the timing of the receipt of customer payments and the payment of WCWD bills during May of 2024 versus 2025, and not to any meaningful trend. She highlighted that deposits have been delayed due to the Post Office removing its Westport P.O. boxes. Mr. Morrill confirmed the slowness of mail deliveries but stated his view that the slowdowns are occurring more broadly than just in Westport. He also outlined a number of extraordinary expenses the District had incurred recently, including the approximately $3,000 charge for new dosing pump parts and more than $1,000 to fix a leak on Abalone Street.

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 said that she would research whether the District needs to purchase a mailbox and if so, what street number on Omega Street to use for it.

Director Finnell commended Ms. Cooper and the WCWD Board on its success in reducing the District’s aged receivables and inquired as to which directors are tasked with watching the District’s cash flow trends. Director Weiss stated his belief that all directors are responsible for doing so. Ms. Cooper stated that the District’s books are audited once a year, and that this is another form of monitoring cash flow trends and issues.

Attendees then discussed the District’s choice of auditors and the need to find an auditor closer to Westport than its existing auditor, who lives in Truckee. Ms. Cooper said that she would contact Ms. Megan Hunter, the Assistant Auditor-Controller for Mendocino County, to identify some potential candidates. Mr. Morrill offered to assist in the search for a new auditor and offered to travel to Truckee to retrieve the District’s books and records in the possession of the current auditor. Director Weiss stated that the District’s audit process usually begins in July, and Ms. Cooper confirmed that this is the case. Accordingly, she said the selection process for a new auditor must begin forthwith. Director Finnell suggested that this matter be included on the agenda for the WCWD Board’s next regular meeting in July.

1. **Operator’s Report (7:42 pm):**

Mr. Morrill led the discussion of the June 12, 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, water usage picked up a bit from May to June.

Mr. Morrill stated 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 only 8 responses to the survey and that he would soon follow up with customers to get more responses. Ms. Cooper stated that 2 or 3 more responses to the survey had recently arrived in the mail. Director Finnell commended Mr. Morrill on getting out in front of the cross-connection control issues with his identification of a specialist and preparation of the survey. Mr. Morrill reminded attendees that Mr. Rio Russell, the individual he had hired to identify and address any cross-connection issues, was and is the only certified cross-connection control specialist in all of Mendocino County.

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 in order 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 could be, which Mr. Morrill described as an aesthetic issue rather than a health safety issue. Mr. Morrill reported that the tests conducted with the new polymer were inconclusive as to whether Manganese levels had gone down. Mr. Morrill said he planned to retest the samples with the new polymer to attempt again to assess Manganese levels.

Mr. Morrill reported that the new spare injection pump made by LMI with some used parts (as reported earlier, purchased in toto for about $3,000), that had been delivered in May had continued to experience problems and was sent out for service. He said that if the newly configured LMI spare pump continues to function imperfectly, he would investigate purchasing a pump employing a new pulse-feeder pump technology in the medium-term future.

Director Finnell inquired about copper levels in the District’s raw water. Mr. Morrill reported that the District periodically tests for metals, including copper, and that its copper and other metal levels are in full compliance with state regulations.

Director Finnell asked for a statement of the District’s capital assets. Mr. Morrill stated that this would be prepared as part of the District’s capital improvement program with GHD, to be discussed later in the meeting. See Item 6.B., below.

Mr. Morrill reported that wastewater lagoon depth was about the same in June 2025 as in June 2024. He said the District had enough chlorine on hand for all of the spraying planned for this year. He said Mr. Beck Regalia is currently mowing the spray field and Mr. David Wilson is weed eating the ditches in advance of spraying.

Mr. Morrill stated that the District had flushed its distribution lines on May 14-15, 2025. He reported that he had received no customer complaints about this.

1. **Old Business (7:59 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: (7:59 pm):**

Director Cardullo suggested that Mr. Morrill survey the District’s capital assets and make a priority list of which assets need attention or replacement soonest. Mr. Morrill stated that this was being done as part of the capital improvement program led by GHD. Director Cardullo said he was requesting the list because at some point in the future all of the attendees at this meeting will no longer be the ones guiding the capital improvement program for the WDWD and that future participants will want to understand the context of how the WCWD currently views its capital assets and what priorities it has. Mr. Morrill said that he feels replacing the District’s redwood water tank is the highest priority capital improvement project but that it, and everything else, is on hold until the grant funding is sorted out.

Director Thomas reported that she had been 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. She said the NCRP had grant-funded the installation of the District’s metal water tank 18 years ago. This new program may be applicable to address both fire resiliency and/or drinking water infrastructure, and that 5 North Coast counties including Mendocino have requested $600 million in grant funding. In Westport’s survey response in furtherance of that request, Director Thomas reported that Westport 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 we can expect a NCRP response. Mr. Morrill asked if Director Thomas would serve as the de facto point person for the District on grant funding of its capital improvement projects. Director Thomas replied that she aims to have all of the grant proposal applications prepared with GHD on hand and ready to submit to the Proposition 4 authorities. She said she would contact Holly Cinkutis of GHD (now residing in Florida) both to get an update from her on GHD’s efforts to pursue grants on behalf of the WCWD and to gather all of the previously prepared materials in support of those grant applications for submission to the Proposition 4 authorities.

**C. Discussion of Draft Document Retention and Destruction Policies and Status of Director Cardullo’s Review and Cataloguing of Existing WCWD Documents (8:17 pm):**

Director Cardullo recounted his ongoing efforts to inventory the many boxes of WCWD documents located at the WVFD firehouse. He stated that there are simply too many documents to be reviewed – perhaps 40 remaining boxes – by one person. After several months of work, he said has been able only to inventory (but not review) about 34 boxes of documents, some dating back as far as the mid-1960s. He requested that unless Ms. Cooper wished to devote more hours of her time to this task, the Board should consider hiring someone to do the review. Ms. Cooper replied that she might be interested in doing the review on an hourly paid basis.

Director Finnell suggested that the Board discuss this review and the potential hiring of someone (perhaps Ms. Cooper) to handle the review and archiving of WCWD documents at the next regular WCWD Board meeting.

Director Finnell also suggested that the WCWD begin the regular practice of video recording its meetings. He said that the additional transparency afforded by video recording would be beneficial to the District and would assist the acting secretary in preparing the minutes of the meeting. Chairman Tepper asked whether the District would incur any additional costs if it began video recording. Ms. Cooper responded that there would be no additional cost given that video recording is already included in the $15.99 monthly fee paid to Zoom for conducting remote meetings.

Director Weiss moved that the Board begin the practice of video recording the Board meetings and keep the recording available for 90 days following the meeting, when the recording will be deleted as a matter of course. Director Finnell seconded the motion, which was unanimously passed by the Board.

1. **Status of Timber Harvest Plan on Property Owned by Roger and Michelle Burch Trust (“Bell Mountain THP”) (8:34 pm):**

Director Thomas reported that she had been keeping abreast of the public filings in the Bell Mountain THP and that there had been a flurry of recent activity on the matter since reviewers requested an overhaul of the previously prepared plan, in particular since May 28. She asked Director Weiss whether he had been reviewing the Bell Mountain THP filings of late, and Director Weiss said he had not but would do so in the coming weeks. Director Thomas reported that in response to complaints by Westport resident Gary Quinton, the THP now plans to use the Five Points intersection at Ten Mile Beach to transport the timber. She said the reviewers expressed concern that some of the trees to be felled were over 60 years old and their roots have been playing a role in stabilizing the earth on the mountain. She said that she would continue to review public filings and alert the Board to significant developments and issues.

1. **Communications with Mendocino County Board of Supervisors or State Authorities re SWRCB Wastewater Permit Fees (8:39 pm):**

After some discussion of the SWRCB annual wastewater permit fees, and summary of those fees by Ms. Cooper, she and the Board concluded that these fees constitute approximately 10% of the WCWD’s annual budget. Director Finnell requested copies of the SWRCB invoices from Ms. Cooper, which she agreed to forward. Director Finnell stated that he would contact 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 plans to explain that the WCWD, which is designated as an economically disadvantaged community, simply cannot afford the fees – which are the same as those charged to much larger water districts with many more customers and far more sewage waste than the WCWD has.

1. **New Business (8:47 pm):**
2. **Special District Alternate Seat Election to LAFCo Mendocino (8:47 pm):**

The Board discussed the question of whom to support in the upcoming election for a Special District Alternate Seat on LAFCo Mendocino. The two candidates are Adam Gaska and Dave Shpak. The Board unanimously concluded that while both candidates seem well qualified, the WCWD would support the candidacy of Dave Shpak. The Board reasoned that because Mr. Shpak lives and works on the Mendocino coast, he would provide a much-needed perspective to LAFCo Mendocino, whose other members reside and/or work inland. Director Finnell also said he valued the fact that Mr. Shpak had taken the time to reach out to the District to discuss his candidacy. Ms. Cooper stated that she would complete and submit the ballot for the WCWD.

1. **TMF (Technical Managerial and Financial) Assessment of WCWD (8:54 pm):**

The Board agreed to take this matter up at the July regular Board meeting, with Director Finnell pointing out that the District has essentially done a substantial part of this analysis in connection with its engagement of GHD to conduct various capital improvement projects.

1. **Brown Act: Continued Digital/Virtual Zoom Meeting Authorization (8:57 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 (9:04 pm):**

Upon motion made (Director Weiss) and seconded (Director Thomas), the Regular Meeting of the WCWD Board was unanimously adjourned at 9:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Weiss

Temporary Secretary for the June 12, 2025, WCWD Board Meeting