**Westport County Water District (“District” or “WCWD”)**

**Board of Directors**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting – Thursday, October 20, 2022**

The regular meeting of the Westport County Water District Board of Directors convened at 7:04 pm via Zoom videoconference. 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.

1. **Roll Call at Inception (7:04 pm):**

Present Board Members: Mr. Lee Tepper, Mr. Ryan Grossman and Mr. Gary Weiss.

Not able to attend: Mr. David Brothers.

Present Staff: Operations Manager and Chief Plant Operator Mr. John Morrill and Administrator Ms. Kayla Cooper (portion of meeting).

Present Members of the Public: Ms. Melinda McLaughlin, Mr. Jeff Whitehouse, Ms. Dorine Real, Ms. Carla Thomas and Mr. Robert Finnell (portion of the meeting).

Visitor/Presenter: Mr. Mark Carey, Principal Engineer of MC Engineering

1. **Presentation and Q/A with Mr. Mark Carey on Behalf of MC Engineering re its Statement of Qualifications in Response to the WCWD’s RFQ (7:05 pm)**

At 7:05 pm, Mr. Carey began his presentation on behalf of MC Engineering, which had submitted a written Statement of Qualifications in response to the WCWD’s Request for Qualifications in September and had been invited by Mr. Morrill to make a presentation to the WCWD at a Board meeting. (The Board temporarily deferred its discussion of the other items on its agenda in deference to Mr. Carey.) Mr. Morrill has also invited two other companies who had responded to the WCWD’s RFQ, Bennet Engineering and GHD, to present to the WCWD Board, and the WCWD Board noticed a special meeting on September 27, 2022 to hear from those two companies.

Mr. Carey discussed MC Engineering’s prior work on behalf of various California communities and tribes, including the Gualala Community Services District and the Clearlake Oaks County Water District. He noted that his firm had replaced redwood tanks, rebuilt lift stations and located and built wells for other clients, and that his firm had largely been successful in obtaining grants for its work.

Mr. Carey then described the team MC Engineering would deploy for the WCWD’s projects if it obtained the contract to do the work. This includes a variety of employees of MC Engineering, but also subconsultant firms for hydrogeology, environmental and electrical work. He described the background and experience of each proposed member of the team and disclosed that one proposed team member is his daughter.

Mr. Carey then described the overall approach MC Engineering would undertake if selected for the WCWD’s various projects. This includes the preparation of a master plan covering all of the proposed work at the outset, and then undertaking each of the projects as a separate phase of the plan. He stated that his team would also undertake to document Mr. Morrill’s valuable knowledge so that it is preserved and archived for future use.

Mr. Carey next discussed the prospect of applying for and obtaining grants. He described his firm’s overall approach and techniques, as well as a ballpark success rate. He described his firm’s relationship and experience with various grantor agencies and agencies that might assist the District in obtaining grants, including the California Rural Water Association. He discussed the likely impact Westport’s status as a disadvantaged community might have on the grant process. He described the range of out of pocket costs the WCWD might have to pay to apply for an initial planning grant. He described the time sensitivity of this process of the need to get a grant application on file before the available funds dry up.

The Directors and members of the public then engaged in a question and answer session with Mr. Carey. Among the questions addressed in this session were: (1) MC Engineering’s design and engineering approach to the specific projects being considered by the WCWD, such as the lift station, tank replacement, well exploration and drilling, etc.; (2) MC Engineering’s use of sub-consultants rather than employees in certain areas, and the reasons for this; (3) MC Engineering’s size, structure and billing rates and how these could impact the work on the WCWD’s projects; (4) MC Engineering’s prior experience in doing work similar or related to what the WCWD will undertake and in obtaining grants for such work; (5) MC Engineering’s success rate in obtaining grants on similar projects and its strategy in responding to hurdles in the grant application process; and (6) MC Engineering’s receptivity to various alternative billing arrangements.

Mr. Carey concluded by emphasizing his firm’s size and rate structure as advantages and stated his love of being on the North Coast. He then left the meeting at approximately 8:15pm.

The Board, Mr. Morrill and members of the public then took the next portion of the meeting to discuss Mr. Carey’s presentation and answers to questions and to assess MC Engineering’s qualifications, working style, relationships, performance on other projects and stated approach to the WCWD’s projects. The group also discussed the process for selecting among the three applicants for the WCWD’s projects, including arranging a special meeting to hear from the other two applicant companies as well as the process for checking references and for undertaking other investigative steps to assess the relative performance and qualifications of the various firms.

1. **Consent Agenda (8:45 pm)**
2. **Draft Board Meeting Minutes (8:45 pm):** The draft minutes of the Regular Board meeting of September 15, 2022 were provided in advance of the meeting and were before the Board for approval. Upon motion duly made (Chairman Tepper) and seconded (Director Grossman), the Board unanimously approved the September 15, 2022 Minutes with instructions to have the applicable meeting secretary (Director Weiss) sign the minutes and place with the District records.
3. **Correspondence (8:48 pm):** At this juncture of the meeting, Ms. Cooper’s wifi access became inadequate for her to participate, and so the Board deferred discussion of this topic.
4. **Public Comment (8:50 pm):**

Ms. Melinda McLaughlin urged the Board to meet in person rather than on zoom.

Mr. Robert Finnell urged the WCWD to participate in a Westport-wide meeting of all of Westport’s various organizations – perhaps in June or July – stating that Westport would benefit from more coordination among its various organizations in the way the town of Elk does.

1. **Staff Reports**
2. **Administrator’s Report (8:52 pm)**

In Ms. Kayla Cooper’s absence from the meeting due to ongoing technical difficulties, the Board deferred discussion of this topic.

1. **Operator’s Report (8:53 pm)**

Mr. John Morrill led a discussion of the WCWD Operator Report dated October 20, 2022. (See attached Report for more detail.) Some of the more important discussion points were the following:

1. Maintenance: Mr. Morrill reported on the ongoing pampas grass issue. He stated that he plans to have Adam Vanwormer mow the field (estimated cost is $1600) and then have Brian Hawes dig up the pampas grass with his excavator (estimated cost is $2,000). Mr. Morrill stated that using an herbicide would be more cost effective. The Directors and members of the public voiced their unwillingness to use herbicide due to the unintended health effects of same on members of the community. Upon motion made by Director Grossman and seconded by Director Weiss, the Board unanimously authorized Mr. Morrill to retain Mr. Vanwormer to mow and Mr. Hawes to use his excavator to uproot and clear the pampas grass.
2. Mr. Morrill reported that the production and use of drinking water in September was down significantly from the prior month.
3. Wastewater: Mr. Morrill reported that pond depth remains at just 10.62% of capacity.
4. Drought: Mr. Morrill reported that with 1.8 inches of rain in September, the yearly total is 36 inches. The creek flow remains well above minimum flow rates.
5. **Old Business**
6. **Review of Revised Draft Policy and Process for Handling Delinquent Accounts, and Authorization of Late Charges, Property Liens and/or Discontinuance of Service (9:10 pm):**

Due to the lateness of the hour, and because not all Directors were yet prepared to weigh in with specific comments on the draft policy, the Board tabled discussion of this topic for a future meeting. Mr. Finnell said this topic should be placed first on the agenda at the next meeting. Ms. Real said that because the next meeting would likely address the choice of contractors to handle the WCWD’s capital improvement projects, and because of the priority and time sensitivity of that topic, the WCWD should consider scheduling another meeting, perhaps a special meeting, to address the delinquency policy.

1. **RFQ to Implement Various Needed Capital Improvement Projects (9:11 pm):**

This topic was covered at the outset of the meeting due to Mr. Mark Carey’s attendance. At this point of the meeting, the Board agreed to call a special meeting on October 27, 2022 to give the other 2 applicants that had submitted a statement of qualifications, GHD and Bennet Engineering, an opportunity to make a presentation and answer questions.

1. **New Business**
2. **Adjournment:**

Upon motion made (Director Weiss) and seconded (Chairman Tepper), the Regular Board Meeting of the WCWD was unanimously adjourned at 8:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Weiss

Temporary Secretary for the October 20, 2022 WCWD Board Meeting