**Westport County Water District**

**Board of Directors**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting**

**Thursday, October 24, 2024**

The regular monthly meeting of the Westport County Water District (“District” or “WCWD”)Board of Directors convened at 7:08 pm via zoom on Thursday, October 24, 2024. 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 (7:16 pm):**

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

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

Director Weiss moved that the Board approve the minutes of the regular Board meeting held on September 19, 2024, with a minor revision to correct the spelling of Mr. Morrill’s name in one place. Director Thomas seconded the motion, which was then unanimously approved by the Board.

1. **Correspondence (7:17 pm)**

There was no correspondence to report or discuss.

1. **Public Comment (7:17 pm):**

Mr. Finnell offered his thanks to the WCWD directors for their service during the time in which the Board has been limited to just 3 directors. The Board welcomed the impending addition of two more directors in December: Mr. Finnell and Mr. Cardullo.

Mr. Finnell praised the preparation of minutes for each meeting, which he stated has been important and valuable. Director Weiss then shared that he had had a communication with member of the public Ms. Melinda McLaughlin, in which Ms. McLaughlin had raised the question of whether the minutes should provide less detail. Director Weiss explained his perspective that detailed minutes are worthwhile and outweigh the risks of providing them. Mr. Finnell stated his agreement with the level of detail currently employed in the minutes prepared by Director Weiss. Chairman Tepper agreed and asked whether the meetings could be recorded on Zoom. Mr. Finnell said that this technology is available but expensive and does not add significant value. Director Thomas stated that recordings still must be proofread and that the technology is more trouble than it is worth. Chairman Tepper agreed.

Mr. Finnell then suggested that the Board consider adopting a practice in which, 60 days after the minutes are formally approved, the secretary’s notes of the meeting are discarded. Mr. Finnell stated that in his experience, many organizations follow this practice.

1. **Staff Reports (7:28 pm):**
2. **Bookkeeper/Administrator Report (7:28 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 October 2024 expense report as well as a current accounts receivable aging summary as of October 8, 2024. She reported that as of the date of the meeting, there was $51,144.35 in the District’s main checking account, along with $15,768.60 in water capital and $15,851.59 in sewer capital. Ms. Cooper reported that the funds currently in the District’s main checking account are roughly $250 lower than were in the account in October 2023. Ms. Cooper reminded the Board that the District has yet to pay $4,000 owed to its auditor, as part of the $8,000 charge previously approved by the WCWD Board.

The directors and members of the public asked questions about various expenses listed on the report. For example, Director Weiss asked what the $603.50 expense characterized as “State Compensation” was. Ms. Cooper replied that this refers to the District’s workers compensation insurance policy premium. Director Weiss then asked about the Alpha Labs expense. Mr. Morrill reported that the charge of $856 for “Alpha Labs” referred to the water sample testing the District is required to perform. Mr. Morrill stated that during most months, two samples are taken and analyzed by Alpha Labs, but during September each year, more samples must be analyzed and hence the District’s monthly bill is higher in September than in other months. Ms. Cooper pointed out that a $160.22 charge incorrectly listed as “accounts payable” to Ms. Cooper was actually part of the fee for purchase of the District’s new Ooma phone system, which she had paid out of her personal checking account and then was reimbursed by the District.

Mr. Finnell asked about whether the District had an adequate reserve fund for emergencies. Ms. Cooper stated that the District has an account designated as an emergency fund that contains only $200 in it. Chairman Tepper stated that the main checking account as well as the water and sewer capital accounts could be considered part of the District’s emergency reserve. Mr. Finnell stated that he had learned in seminars produced by the state that a reserve fund covering at least 3 months of expenses is commonly recommended. Ms. Cooper stated that the District’s monthly expenses were averaging approximately $17,000, and that the funds in the District’s checking account therefore does cover 3 months of expenses. Mr. Morrill stated that he believes the District nevertheless needs to increase its reserve funds and/or reduce its expenses to prepare for emergencies.

1. **Operator’s Report (7:40 pm)**

Mr. Morrill led the discussion of the October 10, 2024, Operator’s Report he had circulated in advance of the meeting. Questions about the report were asked and answered.

Mr. Morrill expressed his thanks to staff for covering for him and taking on extra responsibilities while he was away tending to his wife’s emergency hospitalization. He acknowledged that the District had assumed extra overtime charges as a result.

Mr. Morrill reported that the District had sent its chlorine pump out for warranty work. The pump intermittently failed to sense the flow monitor, causing the plant to stop operating each time. The spare pump has been put into service and is working properly.

Mr. Morrill reported that the spray fields work has been completed. He reported that he had hired Mr. Beck Regalia as an independent contractor and that the work had been performed well and at or below the cost the District had paid others to do this work for the last 10 years, but with the added benefit that the District’s workers compensation insurance had covered the work.

Mr. Morrill reported that the Lead Service Line Inventory had been submitted by the District disclosing the quality of materials used in pipes connecting customer homes and the District, and that the SWRCB had issued a notice stating its approval. The notice was distributed to District customers with their monthly bills and also posted on the District website.

Mr. Finnell encouraged the District to publicize the good work it has been doing to enhance the safety and quality of its drinking water.

1. **Old Business (7:51 pm):**
2. **Status of and Next Steps for WCWD Capital Improvement Projects (7:51 pm):**

Director Weiss led the discussion of the draft Clean Water Infrastructure Improvement Funding, Planning, and Design Project Agreement (the “Sewer Agreement”), the Drinking Water Infrastructure Improvement Funding, Planning, and Design Project Agreement (the “Drinking Water Agreement”), which has already been signed by all parties, and the draft Master Services Agreement, raising several points and questions about the differing language and interplay of the draft Sewer Agreement, the signed Drinking Water Agreement and the draft Master Services Agreement. The other directors and members of the public voiced their views on and asked questions about the three agreements. After a lengthy substantive discussion, the Board decided to complete the negotiation of the Sewer Agreement before beginning the formal review and negotiation of the Master Services Agreement. Accordingly, the Board requested that Mr. Morrill request that GHD approve and sign the draft Sewer Agreement as the next step in the negotiation process. Mr. Morrill agreed to do so.

1. **Status of Municipal Service Review & Sphere of Influence Update Requested by Mendocino Local Agency Formation Commission (8:05 pm):**

Ms. Cooper reported that the District is still awaiting feedback from Ms. Uma Hinman, Executive Director of the Mendocino Local Agency Formation Commission (“Mendocino LAFCO”) following Mr. Morrill’s and Ms. Cooper’s meeting with her approximately 3 months earlier and the District’s submission to Mendocino LAFCO of much of the information that had been requested. Mr. Finnell suggested that Mr. Morrill and Ms. Cooper request a target date from Ms. Hinman for the next steps. Director Thomas questioned whether the delay in response from Mendocino LAFCO might be connected in some way to the State Water Resources Control Board’s recent decision to table the District’s grant application for the planning of drinking water capital improvement project until 2025. (This decision was discussed in detail during the District’s regular board meeting of September 19, 2024.)

1. **Status of Timber Harvest Plan on Property Owned by Roger and Michelle Burch Trust (8:12 pm):**

Director Weiss reported that he had not yet heard back from Mr. Clint Doucette of Redwood Empire Sawmills regarding Mr. Weiss’s request for a copy of or link to the timber harvest plan on property owned by the Roger and Michelle Burch Trust (the “THP”), once the THP had been completed. Director Weiss stated that he had recently emailed Mr. Doucette to remind him of his prior offer to do so but had not yet received a response. Director Weiss stated that he would follow up with Mr. Doucette.

Director Thomas raised the issue of whether the Board should consider writing a letter of support of Mr. Gary Markley’s efforts to keep Clay Road (Cahto Road) open despite the Burch Trust’s efforts to close the road. The directors and members of the public in attendance all agreed that this was an important initiative for Westport from a fire-safety, historical preservation and recreational use perspective. Mr. Finnell offered to draft a letter in support of keeping the road open, for the WCWD’s signature, to be sent to the Westport Municipal Advisory Council and the Westport Volunteer Fire Department. The directors and Mr. Cardullo stated their support of this action.

Mr. Finnell inquired as to the status of Siamex Corporation’s ongoing attempt to sell its land surrounding Bell Point, just South of Westport. Director Weiss reported that Emily Griffen of the Mendocino Land Trust had told him that the Land Trust had entered into a purchase agreement to buy the property with the support of the State Coastal Conservancy.

1. **New Business**
2. **Brown Act: Continued Digital/Virtual Zoom Meeting Authorization Pursuant to County Health Department Guidance (8:26 pm):**

Director Weiss moved to continue providing the option for zoom attendance at WCWD Board meetings. Director Thomas seconded the motion, which was then unanimously approved.

1. **Adjournment (8:30 pm):**

Upon motion made (Director Weiss) and seconded (Director Thomas), the Regular Meeting of the WCWD Board was unanimously adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Weiss

Temporary Secretary for the October 24, 2024 WCWD Board Meeting