



**Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Water District (EPCWD)
Estrella-El Pomar-Creston Groundwater Sustainability Agency (EPCGSA)**

**Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday April 10, 2024**

Windfall Farms Conference Room, 4710 Flying Paster Lane, Paso Robles

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 3:01PM by Dana Merrill

Directors Roll Call:

Dana Merrill – present
Lee Nesbitt - present
Jerry Reaugh – present
Hilary Graves – present
Herb Rowland – present

Others present:

Blaine Reely, SLO County
Willy Cunha, Shandon-San Juan Water District
Patricia Wilmore, Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance
Guests (in person and by teleconference)

ITEM 2: REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF MARCH 13, 2024 MEETING

MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES OF MARCH 13, 2024 MEETING made by Hilary Graves, seconded by Jerry Reaugh, passed 5-0.

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENT

Willy Cunha (Shandon-San Juan Water District) suggested a joint special meeting with EPCWD to cover, among other topics, what should Basin governance look like going forward into the implementation phase of SGMA, what protections would be available in a new agency, how various project goals could be achieved.

ITEM 4: CONSIDER FOR APPROVAL RESOLUTION 24-001 AUTHORIZING COLLECTION OF 2023/24 DELINQUENT ASSESSMENTS BY COUNTY TAX COLLECTOR.

This is the annual resolution required to submit delinquent accounts to the County for collection on the tax rolls.

MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 24-001 AUTHORIZING COLLECTION OF 2023/24 DELINQUENT ASSESSMENTS BY COUNTY TAX COLLECTOR made by Jerry Reaugh, seconded by Dana Merrill, voice vote:

Dana Merrill – yes
Jerry Reaugh – yes
Hilary Graves – yes
Lee Nesbitt – yes
Herb Rowland – yes

Motion passed 5-0.

ITEM 5: DISCUSSION OF PBCC DRAFT BUDGET AND IMPLICATIONS OF NEW FUNDING REQUIREMENTS FROM EPCWD

Jerry Reaugh gave background that the proposed budget has been passed by the PBCC, and presented slides outlining the budget and the impact on the EPCWD budget for 2024/25 and beyond. In the past, our budget numbers have been modest as no GSP implementation has been initiated, and the District has strived to keep the assessments levels similarly modest. PBCC funding requirements have come from the State grant which runs out in April, 2025.

PBCC has issues its first budget and the budget will need the GSAs to contribute if implementation of the GSP is to continue. EPCWD's share of the budget is 29.3%. The PBCC Budget is required for "keep the lights on" funding, essentially the administrative functions of the District, which is anticipated to increase to \$1.2M over time; this does not include any projects.

The EPCWD has budgeted to fund its own administrative functions and has generally underspent, with a reserve in place, but the increased responsibilities to the PBCC could result in assessment increases to \$15.00 per irrigated acre and more over time. Dana Merrill reminded the Board and attendees that the original Prop 218 formation ballot authorized the District to charge up to \$35.00 per irrigated acre. Jerry Reaugh requested input on the best way to get the information on the potential increases out to landowners. Dana Merrill pointed out that we have no idea how the GSA partners are funding their PBCC participation, except that it appears that the County is using general funds through the Flood Control District to fund their portion. The question of equity was raised with Lee Nesbitt noting that if general funds are being used, then all County taxpayers are effectively funding the activities in the Paso Basin. Dana Merrill pointed out that the rate study in process at the PBCC may flesh out inequities. Jerry Reaugh asked for input on how an increase in assessments would be received at the corporate farming level with several Board members responding that it would likely be considered another cost of doing business. But what about the smaller farmers? It was agreed by consensus that everyone over the Basin should pay their proportionate share. A public meeting on this topic was suggested, something in the open house model, to update District membership on how the District is approaching this issue. It was agreed that a letter and email would be prepared to invite landowners and interested parties to an open house meeting. Willy Cunha spoke to increasing the irrigated assessment level to \$35.00 per irrigated acre, thus building a fund against PBCC funding and future projects. Kathleen March discussed her experience in the Cuyama Basin, and expressed concern that bigger landowners would somehow have more of a say. Hilary Graves pointed out that every acre in EPCWD is paying, with Jerry Reaugh adding that the District and its members have voluntarily decided to participate in the process.

ITEM 6: ANNOUNCEMENT OF APRIL 16, 2024 SPECIAL MEETING TO DISCUSS PBCC AND EPCWD BUDGETS AND FUNDING.

The Board discussed and determined to cancel the meeting.

ITEM 7: UPDATE ITEMS

Note: The Update Items were discussed generally out of order and will be shown here in the order taken, with the correct numbering:

a. Groundwater Levels Monitoring

2) EPCWD Groundwater Monitoring Network

Jerry Reaugh reported that the next readings will be April 18. The PBCC is working on expanding the existing network to 150 wells, and is working on contacting owners and developing an access agreement.

b. SLO County Board of Supervisors meetings

No update provided.

c. WRAC meeting

The most recent WRAC meeting (April 3) was cancelled.

d. State Water Subcontractors Committee project

This project has now been fully transferred to the PBCC, with an RFP on its way.

e. Paso Basin Cooperative Committee update

1) PBCC meeting March 27, 2024

Report on the meeting will be covered in individual reports below.

2) PBCC staff report

Jerry Reaugh reported that there are four RFPs in process, including the rate study RFP and the State Water/Recharge RFP.

3) Blended Water Project: Engineering Report contract signed, study underway

Dana Merrill reported that Paso Robles City will build a pipeline to Buena Vista, then hand off the project to another entity. Who would that be? How would it be paid for and run? The engineering report in process should answer some of these questions.

f. Update on Regenerative Farming and outreach topics (Hilary Graves)

Hilary Graves reported that the NRCS has a demonstration program for water infiltration and soil health that needs someone locally to provide. Perhaps the PRWCA or Vineyard Team might be interested. Hilary Graves requested the Board approve funds specifically for outreach, with some dedicated to hiring a PR firm to assist. There is an upcoming joint special meeting with SJJWD where a combined effort could be considered.

ITEM 9: TREASURERS REPORT

The report stands as presented. Jerry Reaugh updated that the next budget for EPCWD should be ready for approval in May or June and reminded the Board that the budget cycle is July 1 – June 30.

ITEM 10: NEW BUSINESS

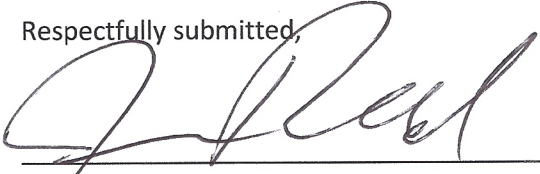
Jerry Reaugh asked when to schedule an outreach meeting. Hilary Graves suggested doing a short regular meeting on May 8 with member group meeting following in the 4:00 – 5:30 timeframe. A letter and email to members could go out first to encourage attendance.

ITEM 11: SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING – MAY 8, 2024

ITEM 12: ADJOURNMENT

MOTION TO ADJOURN made by Hilary Graves, seconded by Lee Nesbitt, voice vote, motion passed 5-0 .
Meeting adjourned at 4:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Jerry Reaugh, Secretary/Treasurer

Accepted:



Dana Merrill, President

05-08-2024
Date