

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
PUBLIC AWARENESS/PERSONNEL/POLICY COMMITTEE  
OF THE VALLECITOS WATER DISTRICT  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2020 AT 4:00 P.M.  
VIA TELECONFERENCE

Director Evans called the meeting to order at the hour of 4:00 p.m.

Present: Director Sannella  
Director Evans  
General Manager Pruim  
Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins  
Administrative Secretary Johnson

General Manager Pruim suggested the second agenda item regarding the Water Academy be discussed last as the first and third items are related. The Committee was agreeable to this.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

PARTICIPATION IN THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY'S NEW PERMANENT SPECIAL AGRICULTURAL WATER RATE PROGRAM

Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins provided background information on the San Diego County Water Authority's (SDCWA) Transitional Special Agricultural Water Rate (TSAWR) program which provides customers a lower agricultural water rate in exchange for a reduced level of service during water shortages and emergencies. The TSAWR program is set to expire on December 31, 2020 and will be replaced with the regional Permanent Special Agricultural Water Rate (PSAWR) program on January 1, 2021. The PSAWR program will be available to the District's customers as well as farmers and agricultural customers who want to voluntarily participate in the program to receive a lower agricultural rate tied to a reduced level of service as was available with the TSAWR program.

Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins stated there are approximately 117 agricultural water customers in the District's service area. Most are participating in the TSAWR program; however, some are also participating in the District's own separate Certified Non-Participating Agricultural Water Rate (CNPAWR) program, and some are participating in both programs. Unlike the TSAWR program which required participants to be enrolled in the Metropolitan Water District's old interim agricultural water program on January 1, 2009, new and existing customers are eligible for the PSAWR program, and the PSAWR program does not have a minimum acreage requirement. To be eligible to participate in the PSAWR program, a customer must grow or raise, for commercial purposes, products of an agricultural, floricultural, or horticultural nature. The customer will be required to verify that they are eligible and must get on one of four distinct lists that have been determined by the SDCWA. The lists consist of:

- The Regional Water Quality Control Board's General Agricultural Orders Enrollment List;

- A growers list which is an inventory of agricultural operators with the County of San Diego;
- Active producers certified by the San Diego County Department of Agricultural Weights and Measures; and
- Organic producers, a list maintained by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins further stated that to ensure a smooth transition into the new PSAWR program, the SDCWA will allow a six-month transition period during which current TSAWR customers will be enrolled into the PSAWR program. Customers will have to make the effort to get on one of the four lists by June 30, 2021; if they do not, they will not be eligible to participate in the PSAWR program. Customers will also have to complete a SDCWA enrollment form which will be sent to the District for verification. If a PSAWR participant opts out of the program for any reason, they cannot opt back in unless the property is sold to a new owner.

General discussion took place.

The Committee recommended presenting the PSAWR program to the Board for approval to participate in the program.

#### DECISIONS REGARDING CERTIFIED NON-PARTICIPATING AGRICULTURAL WATER RATES

Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins stated the District's Certified Non-Participating Agricultural Water Rate (CNPAWR) program was established during the 2007-2009 drought in response to customers' requests for an agricultural water rate that would not be subject to water use reductions in times of drought or supply cutbacks. The CNPAWR program was referenced in District Ordinance No. 165, adopted in 2009, and has the same requirements as the TSAWR program. Ordinance No. 165 has been revised and replaced over the years; however, subsequent revisions are silent on the CNPAWR program.

Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins further stated there are 23 customers currently in the CNPAWR program which flat lines customers at Tier 2, with no Tier 1 discount and no Tier 3 increase. He suggested that during the Cost of Service Study currently being conducted, it would be appropriate to consider options for the CNPAWR program such as:

- Keeping the CNPAWR program as is and possibly adding consequences (there are none currently) to the program such as a drought rate or volume reduction and adding the same eligibility requirements as the PSAWR program;
- Eliminating the CNPAWR program and offering only the PSAWR program to agricultural customers; or
- Transitioning from the CNPAWR classification to a type of irrigation classification.

General discussion took place.

The Committee recommended the Board consider options for the CNPAWR program.

FUTURE WATER ACADEMY EVENTS AND OPTIONS FOR A “VIRTUAL” WATER ACADEMY

Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins provided an overview of the tour and activities associated with the District’s annual Water Academy which are not possible during the current COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating the need to cancel the fall Water Academy. He discussed options for the Committee to consider which include planning for a Water Academy in the spring of 2021, fall of 2021, or a virtual tour via Zoom.

General discussion took place regarding the appropriateness of conducting a virtual tour and consideration of a fall event or a summer event rather than a spring event. Another idea was to have staff create videos on various segments of the Water Academy tour which could be offered to groups such as HOAs, mobile home parks, or community groups.

The Committee concurred with staff’s decision to cancel the fall Water Academy.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at the hour of 4:50 p.m.