

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PUBLIC AWARENESS/PERSONNEL/POLICY COMMITTEE
OF THE VALLECITOS WATER DISTRICT
THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 2021 AT 2:00 P.M.
VIA TELECONFERENCE

Director Boyd-Hodgson called the meeting to order at the hour of 2:00 p.m.

Present: Director Tiffany Boyd-Hodgson
Director James Pennock
General Manager Pruim
District Engineer Gumpel
Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins
Public Information Representative Urabe
Public Information Representative Yerman
Human Resources Analyst Anderson
Executive Secretary Posvar

ITEM(S) FOR DISCUSSION

UNDERSTAND THE SCOPE OF THE COMMITTEE UNDER PREVIOUS BOARD ADMINISTRATIONS

BRAINSTORM FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND IDEAS

OUTLINE PROCEDURES FOR TACKLING THE BROAD SCOPE OF THIS COMMITTEE

PUBLIC AWARENESS

General Manager Pruim stated the Board felt there were good ways for things to be worked on by a smaller subcommittee of the Board to make it more flexible and easier to have conversations. Typically the committees do not make decisions nor direct staff on bigger initiatives. They work with staff to try what may make sense for the committee to work on, often times will take the committee recommendations to the Board to see if the Board as a whole thinks this is a good direction to go. PAPP committee meetings have not met very frequently. General Manager Pruim introduced Chris Robbins and his staff, Lisa Urabe and Alicia Yerman. The outreach portion and the public information portion is our work group. Staff also perform water conservation activities.

One of the big outreach activities is the water academy. Typically, the District would do the water academy once per year in the fall, have had it targeted for October over the past few years and has had good success with the weather. Tried to add in a half day event that was on a weekend – called it an open house. Reported that it didn't work out.

Some of the other outreach activities that they handle is the Speakers Bureau. Staff will go out and give speaking engagements to specific groups - there is a lot of interest in Lake San Marcos. When in drought, everyone wanted a speaker about drought. When desal came online, everyone wanted a speaker about desal. Once those two items fade off, it is much harder to get attendance and a presence at speaker groups. Also do booths and street fairs in the fall and spring put on by the Chamber of Commerce. Also hand out succulents at those events. Often times, Board members will attend those as a chance to reach out and speak with customers. Also have some partner events. There is a possibility of partnering with the City for their State of the City Address; previously made center pieces provided by the District; more of a partnership where we partner with a local entity or agency, sometimes the fire department. Will also do landscaping workshops. Lisa Urabe recently passed her Master Gardner Certificate through the UCSD Extension, quite a few school education programs, onsite tours, going to the schools to talk about jobs in the water industry or water conservation topics. The PAPP Committee would want staff to give them an update on various costs for various programs, some items would come to the PAPP committee for review before going to the Board. Recently have a different water rate for agricultural customers, one that is the SDCWA's, and one that is the District's water rate.

An ongoing change is the development of our The Work We Do Program. It is online videos that Alicia creates. She has grown into a kind of master of being able to take a topic, story, a work site, a project, a specific department and turn it into a story to show to customers. With the advent of the internet and Facebook/social media, it is more of a way to communicate with our customers using video rather than three-fold brochures.

General Manager Pruim stated that about a month ago, Director Boyd-Hodgson took a virtual tour online of water treatment plant in the Los Angeles area. He stated this is the type of thing we want to start moving towards - find a way to get our story out. This is the type of thing we want to start moving towards to find a way to tell our story. Whether it's the work we do or the facilities we have to the public who may not want to come to a meeting on a Wednesday night. May not want to take a full day to go to the water academy. But is interested in the district in general or maybe about a specific aspect of what the District does.

Director Boyd-Hodgson stated she is looking forward to hearing about the rewards that Lisa Urabe will be receiving and loves the ideas that are being presented and notices the outreach. She is not sure what was done in the past and the frequency of meeting, but it is her intention that she will be very involved with this and will meet frequently. She wants to hear the updates, wants to provide ideas, and her hope will be open to them and that all can elevate the public awareness even further. Will be meeting more frequently than has been done in the past. Her vision is that staff will continue down the excellent course that was started. She doesn't want to direct, get her hands in the pot, but does have a lot of ideas. Would like to bounce them off all and can create a dialogue. VWD has a lot of room for education in the customer base. There is a lot of room to showcase the programing and outreach that all are doing. It is just a question of figuring out a marketing plan to do that.

Director Pennock stated he will do a lot of listening and will not come in and make a lot of changes, just wants to do a lot of listening to see what is working, what is not working, and how we can facilitate and make things better. Would like to listen to ideas, see what is working for staff and what isn't.

Director Boyd-Hodgson asked Director Pennock if he feels there are areas that are working really well or areas that he feels need more Board support to get them going or like to branch into.

Chris Robbins, Public Information/Conservation Supervisor, stated the water academies are a very special event. There is a lot of effort between staff and himself but also has to give appropriate accolades to the staff who also work that event with them. Staff from collections, water operations, and engineering help out with it. There is a euphoria from the end of the event, that it was accomplished, and getting the feedback forms from the customers and looking at all the positive comments that you have been able to show people what it is they do. It's a fabulous event, the hard part is getting people to attend. He has considered coming up with a virtual event where it is essentially the equivalent of the tour but just a series of videos with some sort of methodology to let the customer prove to us that they watched all the videos. We could send them lunch to a specific place on their own after they have completed the event. This would be a virtual water academy to market to the customers and what sort of reward would the customer get for participating.

General Manager Pruim stated the challenge is that the district has a very limited demographic. We make it available to everyone, but when you look at the demographics of the people who attend, it is very narrow on the demographics. It tends to be an older group, they are typically retired, and probably lived in the area for a while. It is really hard to hit the younger generation and the working folks. They aren't represented in great numbers. The goal is to send everyone in the district to the water academy, to raise their level of awareness of what we do and the challenges we face is eye-opening for a lot of people. People are not willing to give up eight hours of their day whether it is a weekday or weekend.

Director Pennock asked General Manager Pruim what the actual numbers are of those who have attended. General Manager Pruim asked Chris Robbins how many individuals typically can be on the bus. Chris stated the bus will hold approximately 55 people max, 50 is what they are looking to get. Director Pennock asked if they fill the bus. Chris's response was "almost". The bus is typically full and never have a feeling of "there is not enough on the bus".

General Manager Pruim stated that staff has not had to turn a lot of people away. If started having problems with additional people, could consider another bus on the same day, or doing the event twice or three times a year, or whatever the demand dictated. It appears the demand is pretty consistent in the one bus. If that number could be driven up, that would be great. A lot of the stuff that people do not think about is that operations crews are out there for weeks before the event getting the facility to a state that we can accept visitors. If had four buses go through it, it is no more work for staff to clean and the cost of another bus and lunches would not be that much. Would like to

keep it to a 1-day year event. If thought it was better to have multiple times by year, that is ok as well.

Director Pennock asked if it had to be eight hours or if it could be shortened.

General Manager Pruim stated this has been broken into two half days. He explained the process for the constituents on the tour. General Manager Pruim stated that it wouldn't be difficult to eliminate one half or the other, could make it just a tour or just a speaking portion. Would be difficult to do all of it in one half day. The service area is too big to effectively see a significant portion of it in two hours.

Director Boyd-Hodgson stated the information was very helpful. She further stated that it sounded like there are many programs ongoing on that are really spectacular and is looking forward in learning the discussion.

POLICY

General Manager Pruim stated that there is not a lot that has been done by a policy perspective with the P3 committee. There have been policy issues that have been handled by committees but tend to be handled by other committees such as the Finance Committee. His experience has been that most of the items have found a home either at the Board level or another committee, it doesn't mean that there isn't room to expand that function. Have been working a little with Diane on an administrative code. This might be something that the P3 committee can help if interested to talk about that, where we're at, where we need to go, and what is the role of the committee vs. the role of Board.

Director Boyd-Hodgson would like to propose/implement the need for a policy manual as a Board. Asked for it – is in influx. Need to regularly review policies. This is done by Boards on a regular basis. To review the policies, we need to coagulate all the policies together. Need to be accessible to all that want them. Her vision is to be able to access that, consolidate all the policies, review and update all the policies, and draft a timeline for that to happen. This is work that she can foresee being undertaken here and would like this to be done sooner than later.

Director Pennock stated there is a lot of time and effort spent on policies and nobody reads them. His concern is spending so much time on something that is not going to be used that much.

PERSONNEL

District Engineer James Gumpel has a personnel item that requires Board approval. He has nine staff who have retired and two that have left the District in a three-year period. He had a lead position which was Eileen Koonce, Development Services Coordinator. He saw an opportunity to bring Eileen Koonce back. She operated in the lead role of that position where they did quality control. The main job of that position is plan checks with development, quality control, assigning and checking work to other technicians, doing water and sewer studies and a little bit of inside modeling. Basically implemented and brought their own water and sewer models which are GIS models.

Under Cal-PERS rules, you have to be severed from services for about 180 days. Eileen retired in end of November last year. Due to the uniqueness of her experience at the District and needs with his supervisor leaving, the Board could make an action to allow her to come back without sacrificing her retirement. There are no benefits for her and she would be allowed to work 960 hours in a fiscal year.

General Manager Pruim stated that staff will be getting the Board's approval at the Board meeting which is required by CalPERS. CalPERS is the agency that pays the District's retirement. CalPERS sets the rules saying that former employees have to be separated from employment for 180 days before you can bring them back. Except if there is a set of circumstances that exist, it could allow them to come back before 180 days.

The rules came into place in 2013 with pension reform. This is where all these rules and regulations from CalPERS comes from. It protects Eileen as a retiree as well as the District to make sure we are following those rules so that we don't then have to pay CalPERS any later fees. Staff have kept with CalPers and done all their due diligence on that to make sure all rules are being followed.

General Manager Pruim stated that staff would only bring Eileen in for a limited time while filling Rob's position. This is an interim stop gap measure.

James Gumpel stated he spoke with Eileen on the issue and he had to do all the research on the CalPERS side and she had to do the research on the social security side. Social Security has a different set of rules. Eileen is not going to take advantage of the 960 hours by the end of the fiscal year. She is going to be working 18 hours a week 3 days a week, six hours a day if it were to get approved, and then basically to the end of the fiscal year. This will give staff an opportunity because staff is in the middle of recruitment for a new technician to fill one of the vacancies. This will give staff the opportunity since she is the trainer in that department in a new staff. Once a new supervisor is on board, which will be towards the end of the fiscal year, it gives an opportunity because the supervisor will have the knowledge of policies and procedures which the new supervisor won't have because there is not an internal candidate that is qualified for that term.

General Manager Pruim stated this becomes a cost saving due to saving the money that is not being spent on Rob's position while he is not here. There is no out of pocket money on this. It is going to the Board due to it being a CalPERS requirement that the Board gets approval.

Director Boyd-Hodgson stated that it appears Eileen has been a great employee for the District and the expertise is badly needed. As long as she has done her research and we have done our research, we can make sure we are protecting her retirement. If can keep her and have her overlap with the new person, that would be really helpful. She asked if there is a provision for that.

District Engineer Gumpel stated that they already started the recruitment before he knew Rob was leaving for another position for replacement of the technician. Human

Resources and he have been working on getting interviews scheduled sometime in early February or possibly end of January. She would be coming on Board by January 25 if the Board approves it. She would be available to interview the future technician and getting that person on board. In addition, going to advertise for replacement of the supervisor position in early February, which ideally will bring somebody on board hopefully by the beginning of June and if it's an outside candidate, will go through our processes.

General Manager Pruim stated having Eileen's expertise on the selection panel will be of great value. No one better than to determine what we need than someone who has supervised in that capacity. He feels the committee would be good on those types of items. If there is something that will be coming before the Board, will run it through the committee first to see if the committee has any insight, maybe something we didn't think about, or at minimum to have a better understanding.

Director Pennock stated that he agrees with everything said, there is no internal candidate that is qualified. Hopefully that is where we look first. Hopefully can promote within, if no one is qualified, this is where the first look will bring in from the outside.

Director Boyd-Hodgson stated that it sounded like James' was staring down a difficult situation with so many of his staff retiring. Seven or eight years ago, seven or eight staff retired. Went through a restructuring at that time.

General Manager Pruim stated that staff continues to try to find creative ways to manage the short term with a vacancy before filling a position and see if there is an opportunity to do things differently in the future. Not all of those items go to the Board, few of them do. Doesn't mean they can't be taken in front of the committee. This particular one is a mandate that goes to the Board if there were items that resulted in new positions, increases in salary, changes in their job description, salary structure, etc. All require Board approval. If he had the authority as the General Manager to work within the authority already given to him, it wouldn't need to go to the Board, but if committee would like to be made award of these things, can inform them on what is happening with changing personnel.

Director Boyd-Hodgson stated that could have a periodic update about how we're tracking with general expertise within the District. Staff have put in a lot of years, that is a source of pride and if we start seeing a lot of departures then maybe that is what we need to look at. Want people to stay, don't want to lose the knowledge base, it's expensive, and it's a safety issue. Periodic updates would be welcomed.

General Manager Pruim stated that the District does not have a problem with retention. The most common reason for openings is that people retire. Occasionally, someone will leave due to a promotion. Sometimes they leave due to the long commute.

General Manager Pruim stated there will be an action item agendized and there will be a staff report in the Board packet. Staff will make a presentation at the Board meeting and will leave with the Board's recommendation. Will be looking for the Board to support that recommendation.

General Manager Pruiim introduced Bridget to the Board members. The Committee has not been that active on personnel issues with the exception of when they did the latest MOU. At that time, they started to bring a lot of issues forward to two committees – the P3 committee to talk about the personnel side of things and also brought items to the Finance Committee because negotiations had financial impacts. Those two committees were fairly active in dealing with personnel issues, to having the Board approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with employees.

Bridget stated that the District has the Vallecitos Water District employee association, and it functions as a union. They aren't backed by a national group, such as Teamsters or SEIU. They are structured, they have their rules and regulations and the President is our contact for any kind of negotiations or employee issues that have to go through the Association. They are not backed by national unions. The employee association President is Ingrid Stichter, it is an elected position and has held for two or three years. They normally hold elections every December and they were put on hold this year due to COVID. Dean Toth is Vice President.

Director Pennock asked what the purpose is for the association. Bridget stated staff can pay into dues if they choose. Those funds go to employee events. The main purpose for the dues is their legal representation or negotiation during contract negotiations.

Director Boyd-Hodgson asked how long it comes around. Bridget stated it used to be on average every three years, the current MOU is four.

Director Pennock asked if there have been any negative issues. Bridget stated that before 2012, there were some contentious times, but seemed to have smoothed over.

General Manager Pruiim stated there have been a lot of changes over the last ten years that haven't always been employee friendly. When you deal with CalPERS, each employee has a share of their retirement, they have to pay 8% of their salary to PERS. The District picks up a certain percentage. In the past, the District picked up the employee and employer share. With pension reform, and agencies trying to manage their costs, over time, usually through the MOU negotiation process, they required employees to pick up the employee share. Almost every district and city was going through this process of no longer picking up the employee share if that agency had picked up the employee share. Similar with the Social Security costs. VWD is unique, most agencies do not participate in PERS and Social Security, the District does. Employees currently pay 8% toward PERS and whatever they pay through social security. Over time, District is picking up less of the employee's retirement related costs. Most of those reforms are done. We are not at the point where employees are picking up 100% of what they should be picking up. Feels the labor issues are a little different now. They are not as contentious, they are smaller in nature.

Director Pennock thanked General Manager Pruiim for his leadership. General Manager Pruiim stated he couldn't take credit for a lot of that as it was done years ago. Some of it was done by the prior Board, some of it was mandated by PEPRRA. Doesn't see any huge labor issues going forward.

Director Pennock asked Bridget what amount of staff participate in the union. Bridget stated it's almost 100. All but 11 are part of the association. Only a handful do not pay dues.

General Manager Pruim asked Bridget if they choose not to pay dues, don't they have to divert that same amount of money to something else? She responded yes.

We don't take a lot of items to this committee because there aren't a lot of items to discuss. Something like what James just spoke about is a good example of when we would do that. He can foresee in the year there is probably going to be a few more issues like that. Where we are going to, have to be a little creative on the short term and don't want to do something on the short-term ending up having that person stay forever. It has been his goal to get staffing levels as low as they can be but still be able to provide top quality services. Really happy with the employee count we have now, 109 employees and 104 actively. We are not just a water district, we provide wastewater services and we do recycled water. Sometimes some people want to compare with how many employees Vallecitos has with Vista Irrigation, however, Vista Irrigation does not do recycled water or sewer. Is very comfortable with our staffing levels.

Director Boyd-Hodgson stated she is planning to make some changes. Some of the things she would like to do is to learn. She asked if our employee application for employment list male, female and other as options or is it just male and female? Bridget stated that it is male, female and decline to state. This is a voluntary form that is confidential – candidates do not have to fill it out and is seen only by Human Resources. Director Boyd-Hodgson would like to find a way to make this language more inclusive. Feels like it is something that people should be supportive of. This is something that is a small change that thinks will be very helpful in making people feel welcome if they don't fit either of those categories. Has some questions on workplace safety protocols. Has questions about workplace safety protocols. Would like to have a better understanding of what kind of training is offered to employees; what kind of mental health counseling is offered to employees; what kind of protocols are in place to help employees navigate any type of situation; would like to learn about harassment training; were given the sheet when came on board; would like a better understanding of what kind of periodic training.

Would like to include the Board in some sort of portal so that they can have access to documents and to history. Has also asked about an email address several times. Would like to get that going and get it in place.

General Manager Pruim let Director Boyd-Hodgson know that General Counsel Gilpin had an answer regarding Board members having email addresses and will get it to her. The Board in the past had wanted to use their personal one, and that is fine too. He received your email and have been processing with Best, Best & Krieger.

He suggests at the next meeting can give her an update as to what required or biannual annual training is required for both staff and Board members. Most is driven by regulations.

Director Boyd-Hodgson stated that she has learned a lot and set the expectation of how she would like the committee to run. She would like to be very involved. That means will meet fairly frequently. It is a big committee, a catch all committee. Her question is how do we do the work in bite size chunks? Maybe could break it up and attack two of the three every time the committee meets.

Director Pennock stated the biggest thing in any relation is expectations and communications, realizing that to some it may not sound like a big deal. Don't have to solve all the problems. By listening, there is not a lot of problems. Things have been going really well. If it isn't broken, don't fix it. If it's running well, keep it going. Can fine tune and maybe make a little more efficient here and there. Staff are happy, General Manager Pruim is running a really tight shift, things are really going well. Just wants to listen the first quarter. Does not want to reinvent anything.

General Manager Pruim stated it's a great organization, he is blessed with the people he has. Of the three Ps, the policy one is easier to get hands around. It may be more work, however, there is a clear direction of what we want to accomplish. With the Personnel and Public Awareness it's a little different. Over time, the committee can give ideas. As we start to inform you what we already do, you can help us identify some blind spots.

General Manager Pruim stated to Director Boyd-Hodgson that she is very tech savvy, she likes social media and those type of things. That is not my strength. Director Sannella is big on that. It's nice to break it down into all these different ways to communicate. Now need to figure what the current resources are that we have, how do we best do that, or do we need more resources, or do we need to contract more? There are different ways to do these things. It all starts with identifying what you want to do and how you want to do it.

General Manager Pruim stated the Public Awareness and Personnel Committee will be a little more ambiguous and a little less well defined than the policy issue will be. Before the next meeting, would suggest trying to get more information on the Personnel (training), a little bit more information on the Public Awareness and spend a lot of time on the Policy. Will tell you where we are at and where we need to go next.

Director Boyd-Hodgson stated she would like to break it down and tackle two of the three things, she would like to try and meet twice a month most months. Feels this is the best way to get work done. She indicated Director Pennock would need to figure it out. She does not like meeting over one and one half hour. This is her vision of how this would work. She is pretty flexible.

General Manager Pruim stated that this will be a lot from a staff's perspective. The most active committee is the Finance Committee and they meet once a month. He wants to be careful that we don't set up an expectation that is going to start becoming a huge burden to staff. Because the two of you will attend the meeting, but behind the

scenes, staff will be doing a lot of preparation for each meeting. Every hour we use for this meeting is an hour we are not doing something else. Nobody likes to meet just to meet.

Director Boyd-Hodgson stated she would like to make progress. If they start strong, then we can get a lot done. This is what she would like to aim for. Thinks there is a lot of work. Does want to make work that elevates the district. Helps run smoothly and improves the District.

General Manager Pruim stated he is going to look to the two to help prepare the agendas.

Director Pennock stated that twice a month seems a lot, once a month sounds reasonable. If there is something they need to speak about, can they not communicate via email? Seems like we can get a lot done these days via email.

General Manager Pruim stated that he doesn't think it would be a Brown Act violation. Committees are an advisory group. There is not a lot of power in the committee to direct a lot of things. Especially if they result in large expenditures of money or resource allocations. It's advisable to have some kind of a strategic planning session. Depending on what it is they are trying to accomplish, may have to take something to the Board and tell them this is a significant commitment of resources that we hadn't budgeted for. The Board can weigh in and say is it worth committing those levels of resources. When you look at the most heavily used Finance Committee, they are usually just a sounding board and use them when processing budget things. Feels the admin code is something that can be done in-house with existing staff and still be able to manage our workload. It will be a stretch but thinks he can get it done. He knows from experience that the time it takes to prepare for committee meetings is a lot. Some of the things we are talking about are new things. If he is going to be devoting extra resources or asking for additional money for part time work to do that, has to be done because busy working on committees. Feels can do the administrative code in-house with existing staff and still be able to manage our workload. The time it takes to prepare for committee meetings is a lot. Have to be mindful of how many people are involved in each topic. If we want to narrow the focus on each meeting, would be good to have the fewest number of people in attendance.

Director Boyd-Hodgson stated she is pushing for a cultural change – would like to do new things. Thinks can find a compromise, can find a happy medium, can conduct some things by email. Having the updates is valuable, but making sure the appropriate staff are in the meeting so they can spend their time doing what they should be doing.

Director Pennock asked if can start with meetings once a month. Director Boyd-Hodgson stated that if just going to tackle one topic per to reduce the staff, then means only meeting about policy twice in six months. Director Pennock feels meeting twice a month is overkill. Feels that coming in right away and going from 2 – 3 meetings a year to 24 is a lot. Going to once a month seems realistic and a very good compromise and a good use of staff's time.

General Manager Pruim stated that he didn't mean to indicate we had to have one item per meeting. Can speak about several and would look for some latitude on making little breaks so that can invite people to be on standby.

Director Boyd-Hodgson agreed to one meeting per month. She requested that the PAPP meetings be close to the Board meeting dates. The first Monday or Tuesday of the week would be acceptable. Director Pennock stated he is available in mornings and is flexible.

General Manager Pruim stated that Director Boyd-Hodgson confirmed the first Monday or Tuesday of the first week for her meeting with the General Manager. He also let Director Boyd-Hodgson and Director Pennock know that he meets with the Board members on a monthly basis for a one on one. He has found this to be very helpful.

DISCUSSION - HOW CAN WE DO THE WORK IN BITE-SIZED CHUNKS?

NEXT MEETING DATE

February 1

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at the hour of 4:42 p.m.