

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PUBLIC AWARENESS/PERSONNEL/POLICY COMMITTEE
OF THE VALLECITOS WATER DISTRICT
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2021 AT 10:00 A.M.
VIA TELECONFERENCE

Director Boyd-Hodgson called the meeting to order at the hour of 10:00 a.m.

Present: Director Boyd-Hodgson
 Director Pennock
 General Manager Pruim
 Administrative Services Manager Emmanuel
 District Engineer Gumpel
 Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins
 Human Resources Analyst Anderson
 Engineering Technician III Stichter
 Pump & Motor Technician II Toth
 Executive Secretary Posvar
 Administrative Secretary Johnson

Director Boyd-Hodgson recognized staff who submitted videos that were shared at the recent California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) conference. The video regarding Mahr Reservoir won CASA's Award for Excellence in Innovation and Resiliency.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

PERSONNEL

INTRODUCTION OF INGRID STICHTER AND DEAN TOTH

General Manager Pruim introduced representatives of the Vallecitos Water District Employees' Association, Pump & Motor Technician II Dean Toth (Vice President) and Engineering Technician III Ingrid Stichter (President).

UPDATE ON RECRUITMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT SERVICES ENGINEER

District Engineer Gumpel stated the job description for the vacant Development Services Engineer position is currently under review. The existing job description includes former Development Services Senior Engineer Rob Scholl's planning expertise and other duties over the 14 years he was with the District that do not match comparable positions at other water agencies.

General Manager Pruim stated job recruitment updates are not typically brought to this Committee; however, if this position changes resulting in a new position, it would require Board approval. If the position is downgraded, the result may be lower pay but more outside consulting assistance may be required in the future. Human Resources Analyst Anderson provided a brief overview of the recruitment process.

UPDATE ON INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE – ADD PRONOUN OPTION / TIMELINE

Director Boyd-Hodgson stated she wants job applicants who do not fit in the binary gender designations to feel included and wants to ensure the District is complying with applicable federal and state laws.

Human Resources Analyst Anderson stated a voluntary demographics form is included with the District's employment application. It includes the options male, female, or decline to say, and ethnicity, choices which all come from the federal government for required reporting purposes. Prior to forwarding applications to the appropriate supervisor, the applicant's name, address, gender, and name of college attended are removed.

General discussion took place during which Director Boyd-Hodgson suggested the option of non-binary be added to the voluntary demographics form. Human Resources Analyst Anderson stated this could be done; however, it is not included in the government reporting process. The use of sex designations such as transgender male or female and pronouns were also discussed.

General Manager Pruim will work with Human Resources staff on additional gender or sex designation choices for applicants and report back to the Committee next month.

CLOSED CAPTIONING OF MEETINGS

Director Boyd-Hodgson asked if closed captioning of meetings can be done automatically to include the hearing impaired.

Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins stated there are several closed caption applications available such as Rev, Verbit, and Total Caption. Their accuracy rates may be less than 80% which could be problematic relative to a person's enunciation or use of acronyms and could result in misinformation. A possible pilot program using one the closed caption applications was discussed.

Staff will research the cost and accuracy rates for closed caption options as well as a concept for a pilot program and report back to the Committee next month if possible.

WORKPLACE SAFETY TRAINING

Human Resources Analyst Anderson stated employees and the Board are required to complete sexual harassment prevention training. She briefly reviewed a spreadsheet provided by the Safety Department which details annual required training for specific work groups. Director Boyd-Hodgson asked about workplace violence training. Human Resources Analyst Anderson stated it is addressed in the annual emergency preparedness and business plan training employees receive. Management staff and the Board also receive ethics training.

Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins stated the District has achieved the Special District Leadership Foundation's designation as a District of Distinction and was awarded the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence. There is a fair amount of Board training that must be completed to attain and maintain this status which is due to expire on June 30, 2021. Staff will provide the Board with information on training to be completed.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

UPCOMING EVENTS OR CONTESTS

Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins provided an overview of tentative upcoming events and contests, depending on COVID restrictions, which included:

- San Diego County blood drive (would love to have Board members participate)
- Future Fair in coordination with the San Marcos Promise (tentative dates for a virtual event are March 22-26; targets high school age students)
- Spring Festival on April 11 (hosted by the San Marcos Chamber of Commerce)
- Annual youth poster/calendar contest for fourth grade students
- Annual landscape contest (showcases customers' low water use landscape)

General discussion took place regarding outreach activities with the Gear Up program through Palomar College, High Tech High, and trade schools pertaining to the need to recruit for future jobs in the water industry. The District participates in the San Diego County Water Authority's intern program which partners interns with host agencies in areas such as water treatment or water distribution. General Manager Prum stated he is interested in the District developing its own intern program which could target high school age individuals. Director Pennock suggested retired military veterans could be included as well as many retire at a young age and may have transferrable experience. Administrative Services Manager Emmanuel stated the District is very open to hiring veterans. The experience may not always be a perfect match; however, District job descriptions and announcements include language that states any combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities relating to the position will be considered.

SPEAKERS SERIES PLANNING

Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins stated the District's speaker's bureau is not currently active due to COVID restrictions. Issues such as drought or desal increase community groups' interest in having staff provide a presentation. He usually invites Board members to speaking engagements within their division. Past topics have included an overview of the District and its wastewater services, water supply reliability and sources, treatment processes, conservation, and landscaping.

VIRTUAL TOURS PLANNING

General discussion took place regarding the possibility of creating virtual tours for use in conjunction with the District's water academy for interested customers who are not able to attend in person.

Public Information/Conservation Supervisor Robbins stated his staff is planning to create a video about the District's Meadowlark Reclamation Facility (MRF) as part of the Work We Do video series. The video would include a virtual tour of staff working in various stations of the MRF facility.

POLICY

UPDATE ON CONSOLIDATION OF RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES/PRACTICES DOCS / PLANNING TIMELINE

General Manager Pruim stated the District does not currently have an approved administrative code. The District has rules, regulations, ordinances, and resolutions that are not consolidated into a centralized document. Resolutions and ordinances can be viewed on the District's website via a list organized by number; however, there is not a name or description of the resolution or ordinance. Staff will work to improve this by adding an index to make it easier for the public to find what they are looking for.

General Manager Pruim further stated staff is trying to determine the best way to organize the District's practices, resolutions, and ordinances into an administrative code. Work on this started last year before the COVID pandemic hit. Staff reviewed administrative codes from other agencies and determined that Padre Dam Municipal Water District (PDMWD) has a good administrative code structure. Staff reviewed the table of contents from PDMWD's administrative code and compared it to applicable topics for VWD to determine if there is a corresponding practice, item in the Employee Handbook, resolution, or ordinance that could be incorporated into a similar administrative code structure. He briefly reviewed a chart of this comparison. The day-to-day operations of the District have always been the highest priority. As staff are brought back to the workplace during the COVID pandemic, more effort will be put forth on this project. General Manager Pruim anticipates a basic structure of the administrative code, including language we already have, could be ready by the end of this fiscal year and that a reasonable goal is to have a draft administrative code completed by the end of this calendar year.

General discussion took place. The Committee approved of staff's approach to this project and timeline. General Manager Pruim will provide the comparison chart to the Committee for their review to determine if they have any particular areas of interest. He noted the administrative code will have to be reviewed by the District's legal counsel.

DISCUSSION REGARDING LEVEL OF DETAIL REQUIRED FOR POTENTIAL FUTURE ITEMS

General Manager Pruim stated sometimes ideas come to staff's attention that may be worthy of the Committee's or Board's consideration, but staff does not want to spend a lot of effort, time, and money to fully vet the idea. He asked the Committee if they would be open to allowing staff to bring ideas that are in rudimentary stages of development to the Committee for discussion.

General discussion took place. The Committee is open to discussing items not fully vetted.

NEXT MEETING DATE – MARCH 1, 2021

General Manager Pruim confirmed this Committee will meet on the first Monday of every month at 10:00 a.m. There may be a couple of exceptions to this schedule such as the Labor Day holiday which falls on the first Monday of the month.

Staff will provide a list of recommended meeting dates to the Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at the hour of 11:38 a.m.