

**WEST SLOPE WATER DISTRICT**

Regular Board of Commissioners Meeting

Wednesday, December 18, 2024

**Meeting Summary**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Present: Chair Ramesh Krishnamurthy; Commissioners Chris Eppler, Susan Meamber, Commissioner Andy Smith, and Paul Schuler

Management Staff: Michael Grimm, General Manager; Wendy Irwin, Finance Manager

Absent: None

Public: Josiah Close, HDR

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**1.0 – CALL TO ORDER**

In the temporary absence of Chair Krishnamurthy, Acting Chair Smith called to order the meeting of the West Slope Water District Board of Commissioners at 5:00 P.M., Wednesday, December 18, 2024. The meeting was held in person and virtually through Zoom virtual meeting technology. The public was made aware of the meeting through the District’s website (the meeting agenda and Zoom meeting link were posted on the website).

**2.0 - PUBLIC COMMENTS/COMMUNICATIONS**

The District did not receive any public comments regarding agenda items or other issues for the Board to consider.

**3.0 – CONSENT AGENDA**

Commissioner Eppler had a question for staff regarding a large payment to a customer who significantly overpaid their water bill by accident. Commissioner Schuler made a motion to accept the entire Consent Agenda Items 3.1 through 3.8. Commissioner Eppler seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously (4-0).

**4.0 – DISTRICT ACTIVITIES**

4.1 – General Manager’s Report: Mr. Grimm highlighted some key issues from the General Manager’s report:

Beaverton-Hillsdale Hwy Project: Mr. Grimm stated that he is working with the District’s legal counsel to resolve the contractor’s claim. Staff will schedule a meeting with ODOT officials and Oregon House Transportation committee members following ODOT issuing a permit for the SW Garden View water line project. The focus will be on the extra expenses incurred by the District for which ODOT should reimburse the District.

Chair Krishnamurthy joined the meeting at 5:10 PM

SW Garden View Avenue Water Main Project: AKS is planning on bid advertisement in January.

Water System Master Plan: Mr. Grimm stated staff has reviewed the 20-year CIP list and provided comment back to Grayling Engineering. Grayling also completed the draft version of the Reservoir #4 feasibility report. Staff is currently in discussions with The Ferguson Group (TFG, a financial/investment consultants through the National Coalition of Special Districts) regarding federal funding through loans, grants and Congressional discretionary spending. At this point, staff is not recommending hiring TFG to assist the District beyond the “free” service the District is provided through SDAO and NCSD. If the District decides to seek federal funding that requires a very complex application process, the District may want to pivot to hiring a consultant like TFG.

Text My Gov: Mr. Grimm shared that the District has signed a three-year contract with Text My Gov to provide the District with an outgoing text message blast platform. After an initial start-up cost, the annual subscription cost is \$1,500. The value to the District is for those customers who opt in for notifications, we will be able to send a broad or focused distribution text message for acute or urgent information to customers such as notifying customers to boil or not use their water, having their water temporarily shut off for main repairs, or water main flushing in a specific areas of the system.

Josiah Close entered into the meeting at 5:18 PM.

4.4 – Final Water Rate Study Report (Josiah Close, HDR): Mr. Close shared a few changes from his last presentation with the Board such as the inclusion of the full CIP project list and the resulting impacts on water rates. Mr. Close then reviewed the impact of O&M and purchased water costs on the proposed three customer class (single family, multi-family, and commercial) water rate models. Chair Krishnamurthy asked how long it will take for the lower water rates for customers using water in the lower tiers to equal the today’s water rates. Mr. Close replied that although HDR did not specifically address where the two water rate curves would cross, it would likely take a few years for the new lower tier rate to equal today’s uniform water rate. Mr. Grimm pointed out that under the new tiered water rate structure, the water rate for the lowest tier will forever be less than the rate that would be applied using the uniform rate structure currently in use. Mr. Close also responded that the “gap” identified by Chair Krishnamurthy would not close due to the water rate structure being determined by cost of service by customer class for the first time in the District’s history. Ms. Irwin explained that part of the customer outreach effort to explain the new tiered water rate structure will include a typical bill comparison ... what a customer’s bill / water consumptive charge would be under the current/old structure compared to what the charge would be under the new rate structure. Mr. Grimm stated HDR will assist the District with the outreach messaging to help customers understand the rate structure and its impact to customer bills.

Mr. Close left the meeting at 5:50 PM. The Board will consider the acceptance of the final report at the January meeting since the full report from HDR was accidentally omitted in the December 2024 board packet.

4.2 – Finance Manager’s Report: Ms. Irwin shared she has been working on the rate study with HDR as well as studying for her government finance officer’s certification (CPFO) which consists of seven separate exams. Ms. Irwin has successfully completed and passed her first exam. Ms. Irwin is starting the budgeting process for the next fiscal year. Commissioner Meamber asked

when the District conducted the last salary survey and pay equity survey. Mr. Grimm stated the last regional salary survey for which West Slope was a contributor would have been 2019. Ms. Irwin described a pay equity survey as an evaluation of pay within an organization for employees in the same position or job classification. It is likely the District has never conducted such a survey noting a pay equity survey would only be germane to the three utility operator positions as all other District positions are unique within the organization. Equity would be evaluated based on longevity, qualifications, certification, etc. in an effort to make sure that favoritism is not impacting employee salaries.

4.3 – Budget Committee – Member Appointment: Mr. Grimm informed the Board that all members of the 2024 Budget Committee have expressed an interest in returning for 2025. Chair Krishnamurthy made a motion to approve the Budget Committee member roster as presented in Attachment 4.3.1. Commissioner Schuler seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously (5-0).

**5.0 – COMMISSIONERS COMMUNICATIONS**

There were no outside meetings attended by the Commissioners. There were no other topics or issues to be raised at this meeting. Team HR, Inc. has started working on the General Manager’s performance evaluation process. If any Commissioner has some metrics or comments they would like to contribute to the process, please send that information to the General Manager and it will be passed on to Team HR, Inc. Acting Chair Smith suggested that SDAO lobbyist Mark Landauer present a brief summary of legislative issues facing water utilities in the 2025 Legislative Session. Mr. Grimm agreed and also reminded the Board that Mr. Landauer will be presenting a similar session at the SDAO Annual Conference in Bend February 6-8. The consensus of the Board was the meeting went well.

**6.0 – ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to discuss, Commissioner Schuler made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Meamber seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously (5-0). Acting Chair Smith adjourned the December 18, 2024, Board of Commissioners regular meeting at 6:27 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved:

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Michael W. Grimm, P.E.  
Acting Secretary

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