

**VENTURA RIVER WATER DISTRICT
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING March 16, 2022**

Directors present via Zoom video were: Jack Curtis, Bruce Kuebler, Ed Lee, Nathan Rosser and Peggy Wiles. Also present were: Attorney Lindsey Nielson, General Manager/Board Secretary Bert Rapp, Office Manager Emily Arnbrister Public Present: Christy Cooper of Harris & Associates

1. **CALL MEETING TO ORDER-** President Peggy Wiles called the meeting to order at 3:00 P.M.
2. **CONSENT AGENDA:**
 - A. MINUTES FEBURARY 16, 2022
 - B. FINANCIALS JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2022
 - C. CONFIRMATION OF RESOLUTION 2021-335 REMOTE MEETINGS

Jack Curtis moved for approval of the recommended action, seconded Ed Less and carried 4-0. (AYES: Jack Curtis, Bruce Kuebler, and Peggy Wiles. NOES: None. Absent: Nathan Rosser)

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT (FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA) –** None.
4. **ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER RECRUITMENT:** The district has been advertising for an Assistant General Manager since January 2022 but has only received 3 applicants. A recruiting professional may be able to find a candidate, at the rate of 25% of the first-year candidates' salary, contingent on filling the position through the agency. General board discussion ensued regarding the reasoning behind lack of applicants. **Public Comment:** None. **Recommended Action:** 1. Approve the attached agreement with PEAK Technical Staffing for recruiting services at a cost of 25% of the first-year salary of an approved candidate. (Approximately \$32,500) 2. Change the pay rate for the Assistant General Manager salary to a maximum of \$140,000. Bruce Kuebler moved for approval of the recommended action, seconded Jack Curtis and carried 5-0. (AYES: Jack Curtis, Bruce Kuebler, Ed Lee, Nathan Rosser, and Peggy Wiles. NOES: None.)
5. **APPROVAL OF CONTRACT WITH HARRIS & ASSOCIATES-GRANTS & CONSERVATION:** There are two grant opportunities available for the District that will help pay for solar and water conservation. The two grants are up to a 50% match of either up to \$500,000 or up to \$2,000,000. Harris Associates are technical grant writers that could help secure funding and help with the administration of the grant funds as well. Christy Cooper of Harris & Associates explained how grant scoring works, and the timeline for use of grant funds. Christy Cooper clarified they are federal grants from the Interior Department, Bureau of Reclamation. President Peggy Wiles inquired about the timeline of hiring for grant services vs when the grant is available. General discussion was held regarding the solar project. **Public Comment:** None. **Recommended Action:** Authorize the Board President to sign a District standard Professional Services Agreement with Harris & Associates to prepare a grant application per the attached proposal in the amount of \$24,748. Jack Curtis moved for approval of the recommended action, seconded Peggy Wiles and carried 5-0. (AYES: Jack Curtis, Bruce Kuebler, Ed Lee, Nathan Rosser, and Peggy Wiles. NOES: None.)
6. **ADOPTION OF REVISED WATER WASTE ORDINANCE:** This item was brought back from last months meeting. The revision has changes regarding single pass cooling systems, and continuously running water. There was general Board discussion regarding the Vons store and their current cooling system, the General Manager has yet to receive a response from the store regarding their system. **Public Comment:** None. **Recommended Action:** 1) Adopt Water Waste and Conservation Ordinance 2022-1. 2) Direct the General Manager to prepare an item for a future Board meeting to incorporate possible changes to Section 8-Water Waste Prohibitions. Ed Lee moved for approval of the recommended action, seconded Nathan Rosser and carried 5-0. (AYES: Jack Curtis, Bruce Kuebler, Ed Lee, Nathan Rosser, and Peggy Wiles. NOES: None.)

7. **FIRST REVIEW OF 2022/23 BUDGET-APPROVAL OF SALARY RANGE SCHEDULE:** Water usage is expected to stay like the current year at around 900 AF. Two job classifications will be changed to "exempt": the Office Manager and Field Supervisor, with no fiscal impact to the District. There was discussion regarding price increases for health insurance and Casitas Municipal Water District. Director Kuebler recommended adding the AGM salary to the salary expense line item and mentioned an expected increase to the UVRGA pump fee expense. There was general Board discussion regarding the budget. **Public Comment:** None. **Recommended Action:** 1. Approve the updated Salary Range Schedule dated March 16, 2022. Ed Lee moved for approval of the recommended action, seconded Jack Curtis and carried 5-0. (AYES: Jack Curtis, Bruce Kuebler, Ed Lee, Nathan Rosser, and Peggy Wiles. NOES: None.)
8. **PROPOSED WATER RATE INCREASE OF 2% EFFECTIVE APRIL 15, 2022:** The District was originally scheduled for a 6% rate increase instead; a 2% rate increase was recommended to take effect April 15, 2022. The rate increase will sustain the 10-year capital improvement program based obtaining the Zero interest loan . This rate adjustment will consist of two parts. The first is reducing the base rate to \$0, the second is a tier water consumption rate increase of 4%, to produce a net 2% increase. Also included is a rate schedule that charges all conservation penalties at the rate of \$1/unit instead of the stepped program. **Public Comment:** None. **Recommended Action:** 1. Approve a net 2% rate increase effective April 15, 2022. 2. Approve Appendix I of the Rules and Regulations dated effective April 15, 2022, to apply the rate increase to the cost of water and lower the base rates to \$0 per month and create only one conservation penalty charge. Ed Lee moved for approval of the recommended action, seconded Bruce and carried 5-0. (AYES: Jack Curtis, Bruce Kuebler, Ed Lee, Nathan Rosser, and Peggy Wiles. NOES: None.)
9. **BOARD REPORTS ON MEETINGS ATTENDED & UPDATE ON THE UPPER VENTURA RIVER GROUNDWATER AGENCY (UVRGA)- BRUCE KUEBLER:** Bruce Kuebler reported on UVRGA, they will implement a rate change similar to how they handled it during the last rate change process. The Executive Director of UVRGA was asked to review the OBGMA GSP, and work with OBGMA as well as their specialists from Dudek. The City Manager of Ojai requested to join UVRGA, which has not yet been considered by the Ojai City Council. Pete Kaiser requested that it be brought to UVRGA's next Board meeting for a vote that is needed to be unanimously approved by the Member agencies.
10. **GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT ON WATER & DISTRICT STATUS:** The static aquifer level at Well #2 on March 1, 2022, was at elevation 530.1, rising 8.4 feet since the first of last month. The aquifer is currently 0.7 feet below the 30-year average for March 1st. Well #1 is pumping 1,012 GPM, up 22 GPM from last month. Well #2, #3, #4 & #6 were not online in February. Well #7 is pumping 760 GPM, up 30 GPM from last month. No supplemental water was purchased from Casitas. Sales dollars billed on February 28, 2022, amounted to \$162,580, over budget by \$9,942 for February. Water sold in February 2022 amounted to 24,066 HCF, a decrease of 19% below the 29,667 HCF sold in February 2013. On March 1, 2022, Lake Casitas level was at 34.8% of full capacity at elevation of 489.7 feet. The lake decreased 0.2% since last month. Mike Flood, General Manager of Casitas MWD anticipates the Tico Merger Application will be on the Casitas agenda March 23, 2022. No action was taken on this item.
11. **OLD & NEW BUSINESS:** The District has updated the minutes to show signature of only of the board secretary instead of President and Vice President. The District received a Public Records Request from the Ojai Valley News regarding the adjudication. UVRGA was separately served a Public Records Request for similar information. This District is currently compiling the requested records and sending them for legal review .

12. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** – Peggy Wiles moved the meeting into executive session at 4:16 pm to discuss pending litigation. Peggy Wiles brought the Board out of executive session at 4:27 pm. No action was taken in Executive Session.

Meeting adjourned at 4:27pm.

Attested:



Bert J. Rapp, Secretary