

**VENTURA RIVER WATER DISTRICT  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING MARCH 15, 2023**

1. **CALL MEETING TO ORDER** - President Ed Lee called the meeting to order at 2:00 P.M. Flag salute led by Lindsay Nielson. Directors Jack Curtis requested invocation of AB2449 for emergency circumstances. Peggy Wiles moved to allow Director Curtis to attend via zoom, seconded by Bruce Kuebler and the motion carried 3-0. (AYES: Bruce Kuebler, Ed Lee, and Peggy Wiles. NOES: None.)
2. **ROLL CALL:** Directors Jack Curtis, Bruce Kuebler, Ed Lee, and Peggy Wiles were present. Director Nathan Rosser was present as a member of the public and unable to vote due to AB 2449 compliance. Also present were: Attorney Lindsay Nielson, General Manager/Board Secretary Bert Rapp, Assistant General Manager Alma Quezada, Office Manager Emily Arnbrister. Public Present: Stuart Nielson, Matt Ingamells of Padre and Associates, Fran Fitting with Tico Mutual and Ichiko Kido with Robert D. Niehaus Inc (RDN).
3. **PUBLIC COMMENT (FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA)** – None.
4. **CONSENT AGENDA:**
  - A. **MINUTES FEBRUARY 15, 2023**
  - B. **PAYMENTS & CHECKS FOR FEBRUARY 2023; FINANCIALS FOR JANUARY 2023**

Jack Curtis moved for approval of the Consent Agenda, seconded by Bruce Kuebler and the motion carried 4-0-1. (AYES: Jack Curtis, Bruce Kuebler, Ed Lee, and Peggy Wiles. NOES: None. Absent: Nathan Rosser)
5. **ADOPTION OF AN INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION- 2023 WATER PROJECTS:** The public comment period for the Mitigated Negative Declaration is complete. Comments received have been incorporated into the final document. Minor changes were made to Resolution 2023-349. Director Kuebler inquired about the comments made by the Department of Fish and Wildlife and State Water Resource Control Board. **Public Comment:** None. **Recommended Action:** 1) Adopt the findings of the Staff Memo and approve the Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration 2) Adopt updated Resolution 2023-349 and instruct the General Manager to file a Notice of Determination. Peggy Wiles moved for approval of the recommended action, seconded by Bruce Kuebler and the motion carried 4-0-1. (AYES: Jack Curtis, Bruce Kuebler, Ed Lee, and Peggy Wiles. NOES: None. Absent: Nathan Rosser)
6. **GOALS UPDATE:** The Assistant General Manager presented an update to the 2022/23 Goals. No updates or changes were made. **Public Comment:** None.
7. **APPROVAL OF PROTEST HEARING NOTICE:** District staff and rate increase ad-hoc committee worked with RDN to perform a cost-of-service analysis, rate analysis and revenue review. RDN recommends rate increases for FYE 24 and FYE 25 as presented. RDN also recommends adjustment of tier widths, reducing tier 3 from 33 units to 21 units, and tier 4 to begin at 33 units instead of 45 units. The rate increases are subject to a Protest hearing. Staff proposes a Prop 218 hearing on May 10<sup>th</sup> for property owners to comment and protest suggested rate increases. There was general board discussion regarding the rate increases. **Public Comment:** None. **Recommended Action:** The Board approve the Protest Hearing Notice setting the Protest Hearing for a Special Meeting on May 10, 2023 at 2:00pm at the District office or via zoom. Approved rates would become effective on May 15, 2023 and customers would see the increase on their June 30, 2023 water bill. Peggy Wiles moved for approval of the recommended action with the updated prop 218 notice including an increase to \$53 in FYE 25 for the Will Serve Letter/Fire Flow Verification Letter and an RSVP option, seconded by Bruce Kuebler and the motion carried 4-0-1. (AYES: Jack Curtis, Bruce Kuebler, Ed Lee, and Peggy Wiles. NOES: None. Absent: Nathan Rosser)

8. **AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR LEGAL SERVICES:** The Assistant General Manager presented the draft agreement for legal services. **Public Comment:** None. **Recommended Action:** Approve and execute the Legal Services Agreement with Nelson Comis Kettle & Kinney LLP. Bruce Kuebler moved for approval of the recommended action, seconded by Peggy Wiles and the motion carried 4-0-1. (AYES: Jack Curtis, Bruce Kuebler, Ed Lee, and Peggy Wiles. NOES: None. Absent: Nathan Rosser)
9. **BOARD REPORTS ON MEETINGS ATTENDED & UPDATE ON THE UPPER VENTURA RIVER GROUNDWATER AGENCY (UVRGA) - BRUCE KUEBLER:** Director Kuebler reported on the UVRGA Board Meeting. The monitoring system was impacted from the storms and will require a more expensive system. Director Kuebler also attended the Ojai Basin Groundwater Management Agency (OBGMA) meeting. OBGMA's General Manager is retiring, administrative activities are recommended to be completed by Casitas Municipal Water District.
10. **WATER & DISTRICT UPDATE:** The static aquifer level at Well #2 on March 1, 2023, was at elevation 546.4, increasing 17.2 feet since the first of last month. The aquifer is currently 15.6 feet above the 35-year average for March 1<sup>st</sup>. Well #1 is pumping 1,075 GPM, up 93 GPM from last month. Well #7 is pumping 878 GPM, up 84 GPM from last month. Well #2, #3, #4 & #6 were offline in February. Supplemental Casitas water was not purchased. Sales dollars billed on February 28, 2023, amounted to \$113,226, under budget by \$39,903 for February. Water sold in February 2023 amounted to 17,814 HCF, a decrease of 40% below the 29,667 HCF sold in February 2013. On March 1, 2023, Lake Casitas level was at 49.4% of full capacity at an elevation of 512.1 feet. The lake has increased 5.4% since last month. Bert Rapp celebrated 12 years of service with the District.
11. **OLD & NEW BUSINESS:** The General Manager reported some changes to the board room and updates on the grant work through Watershed Progressive. Casitas Mutual Water Company is going to mail out ballots to vote on merging with VRWD.
12. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** – No executive session was held.

Meeting adjourned at 3:23 pm.

Attested:

  
Bert J. Rapp, Secretary