

Indian Creek-Westridge Community Services District Board Meeting
August 9, 2022
Christian Science Church, West Line Street and Grandview Drive, Bishop, CA

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Board Chairperson Luis Elias. Present were Directors Jeff Anderson, Dave Mappus, Ted Williams; District Manager Terry Tye; Assistant Operator Kim Derr.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes of the May 10, 2022 meeting were approved unanimously (moved Mappus, seconded Anderson).

Operations and Maintenance Report: Mr. Buser did not attend because he is on family medical leave. Mr. Tye asked Mr. Derr to present a summary of activities. There are ongoing issues at well 2 due to out-of-balance conditions. There was an unexpected power failure at well 3 on Aug. 1, 2022. Both issues were corrected by District electrician Scott Berger under the direction of operator Derr. Final clean-up was done at the site of wells 1 and 2 resulting from rock and soil debris removed from the Wildrose fire hydrant project.

Finance Report: Quarterly, Revised Annual Budget, Current Capital Expenditures: Mr. Tye reported that the balance in the bank stands at \$704,340, including an O & M total of \$357,849 and Capital Funds of \$346,491. Mr. Tye reviewed the revised and updated annual budget that was included in the meeting packet. He noted that current capital expenditures were primarily related to the installation of the hydrant on Wildrose.

OVGA (Owens Valley Groundwater Authority) Update: Mr. Elias stated that the July meeting was cancelled. The next one, scheduled for August 11, 2022, is expected to be primarily focused on routine business.

Fairview Fire Report: Mr. Tye presented a narrative of the events of July 8, 2022, and their impact on District resources. Discussion included details of District capital improvements over the last twelve years to improve District fire suppression capabilities, and the impact those improvements had on the surrounding members of our community. Details are outlined in the attached op-ed piece that appeared in the July 23, 2022 edition of the Inyo Register.

Wildrose Fire Hydrant Project: Mr. Tye gave the following presentation. At the May, 2022 meeting the board of directors allocated \$100,000 for completion of this critical fire suppression project. A comprehensive report was given to the board about the course of events that led to the completion of this project. The major components included locating a suitable site, public relations work with residents to be impacted by the project and gaining their permission to access their property, giving assurances to those residents that their properties would be fully restored to original condition, obtaining easements, and actually doing the substantial and difficult work necessary to complete the work. The project was completed in mid-July at a cost of \$57,617, \$42,000 under budget, with a more satisfactory location of the hydrant with respect to the District goal of meeting the generally accepted distribution of hydrants. The hydrant was flow tested by Joe Dell, fire chief, with the conclusion that 750gpm were being delivered.

At this point the fire chief approached the manager and Mr. Elias with a request that ICWCSD consider extending pipelines to the Fairview neighborhood to provide them with fire protection

in the future. The ensuing discussion gained unanimous support from the board of directors, with the following conditions:

1. No ICWCSD money would be allocated
2. All administrative work and costs would be completed by outside agencies
3. All permits, easements etc. would be completed by outside agencies
4. ICWCSD would only supply water for fire suppression, e.g., fire hydrant or water tank
5. No water supply for personal use, i.e., no new service connections, customers or billing
6. Water supplied would be at usual rate of \$1.24/1000 gallons measured by flow meter

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Minutes submitted by District Manager Terry Tye, prepared by Stephanie Sheltz.

Fire and water

Inyo Register, 23 Jul 2022

By Terry Tye, Guest Columnist



With the tragedy of the Fairview Fire fresh in our minds I thought it appropriate to comment on the number one weapon that firefighters rely on to fight fire, water. In conversations I've had with firefighters and the fire chief it is clear that the lack of adequate water supplies at the beginning of the fire may have made the outcome worse, possibly resulting in the loss of homes that could have been saved.

As the manager of a local public water system, Indian Creek Westridge Community Services District (ICWCSD), I can speak to the heroic efforts of the firefighters involved that day, July 8, 2022. When I became aware of the fire and its location, I made my way out to the district. Upon arrival I found multiple fire trucks filling their tanks from our fire hydrant in front of Manor Market. There were trucks waiting their turn to fill so they were directed to other nearby hydrants to expedite filling and get them back on scene to assist with the fight. While it is not possible to determine the exact amount of water that ICWCSD provided that day, I estimate that it could be around 500,000 gallons.

The neighborhood where the fire occurred did not have a water system in the traditional sense. I believe they relied primarily on private wells. There were no fire hydrants. The firefighters quickly exhausted the water supplies that they brought with them and had to back off from the fire and wait for backup water supplies to be brought in from hydrants outside the neighborhood.

This is not an unusual situation in our community. Most small water systems suffer from inadequate budgets and many lack trained certified water operators. Many systems rely on volunteer residents to operate and maintain their systems. Many do not have enough money in the bank to meet their annual operating budgets let alone financing for capital improvements like fire hydrants. This is a set up for future catastrophic loss of homes, other infrastructure and potentially life due to fire.

So what can we do? There is a variety of water system governing structures. County, municipal, community service districts, mutual water companies, private for profit enterprises are some examples. Except for the private systems all the others should have a governance board structure. These boards (county supervisors, city councils, boards of directors) all provide the opportunity for public comment and input. Attendance at these meetings and the provision of your opinion are critical. Ask what is being done to protect you from fire. Ask about the budget and available capital funds. Demand accountability from these boards, councils and commissions when it comes to protecting your assets and welfare. Consider volunteering your time to help maintain and improve your water system.

The ICWCSD may be better equipped to maintain and improve our system due to the size of our District (297 connections, population~1030). But size alone does not account for our success. Our Board of Directors has approved and imposed two painful rate increases on our customers in the last nine years. In 2018 we raised our rates by 50%. The foresight of the Board and the revenue that these increases generated allowed us to accomplish major system improvements, many focused specifically on increasing our ability to supply water for fire suppression. In the last twelve years we have spent over \$500,000 on capital improvements. The projects focused on fire suppression have cost over \$300,000.

We charge our customers \$74.00 per month for water. Twenty dollars of that goes to our Capital Improvement Fund generating about \$72,000 per year for capital projects. Many small systems are not charging enough for their services and are chronically in the red because of it. Rate increases are never popular but they are necessary periodically. Grant funding is another source of revenue but obtaining grant money is difficult and very time consuming. When you apply for a grant there is no guarantee that you will be successful. If you want to pursue a grant contact the USDA, the California Department of Water Resources or the State Water Resources Control Board.

I would like to join with others that have offered thanks to all the firefighters that responded from multiple jurisdictions to assist with the Fairview firefighting effort. My own brother was a firefighter for 30 years so I know the difficulties and danger that you face every day. I offer my condolences to all those that lost their homes, personal belongings, livestock and pets in this terrible incident.

The ICWCSD, recognizing a deficiency in the distribution of fire hydrants in our own system, embarked this last month on correcting that deficiency. We installed a new fire hydrant (making 27 total hydrants in our system) on Wildrose Road. It was a difficult project because the water main that we tapped into is in the back yard necessitating running a pipeline across private property to the street. This would not have been possible without the cooperation of the homeowners on either side of the pipeline. Special thanks to Tom and Rita Wheat and Derrick Olson for granting us access to their property and providing an easement to ICWCSD. Their participation and commitment to their community allowed the project to go forward and improve our fire suppression capabilities.

(Terry Tye bought his home on Rome Drive in 1999. He works at Northern Inyo Hospital and is the general manager of the Indian Creek-Westridge Community Services District [public water system].)