

Indian Creek-Westridge Community Services District Board Meeting
August 12, 2025
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 Casey Dean. Present were Directors Randy Gillespie, Sarah Petersen, Ted Williams; District Manager Terry Tye; District Operators Don Buser and Kim Derr; Sierra Highlands Community Service District General Manager Fred Finkbeiner.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes of the May 13, 2025 meeting were approved unanimously (moved Petersen, seconded Gillespie).

Operations and Maintenance Report: Mr. Derr reported the following. Well tanks were painted. Wells 1 & 2 were out of service for a short time after a leak was noted at well 1. Martinez Welding determined it was caused by rust in a pipe, which was repaired. Made sure generators were working properly after a power outage. Attended to a service call about standing water in the front and back yard of a home, and determined it was not caused by ICWCSD. Assisted Corbin Swafford with cross-connection inspections throughout the District. Mr. Buser and Mr. Tye started tank flushing. Mr. Buser filled tank with water and air. Mr. Buser and Mr. Derr investigated well 3 remote run problem. Mr. Derr recommended contacting Frontier Communications because the problem did not appear to be caused by the District. Frontier found the source of the problem caused by their equipment, made a temporary repair, and will follow up with a permanent repair. Mr. Derr and Mr. Tye cleared a fault call from well 5. After another “high temp” fault call at well 5, Mr. Derr rectified the problem.

Finance Report—Quarterly Report, Delinquents: Mr. Gillespie presented the report. Operations and maintenance costs were higher than usual due to painting of pipes, wells and tanks; payroll increase of \$15,000; cross-connection work; and Southern California Edison costs of \$5,000 per month in summer. Mr. Tye said this cost is \$1,700-\$1,900 in winter. Mr. Gillespie stated that in the future the District might have to raise rates to cover payroll costs. Payment delinquencies are \$1,900 (Mr. Tye mentioned that a recent payment brought it down to \$1,650). The home of one of the delinquencies is in foreclosure; Mr. Tye placed a lien on it. Mr. Tye explained that the grant bank account was opened because it was a requirement to apply for a USDA grant. Mr. Tye noted that income is higher than usual because 100 customers prepaid for the year.

The balance in the bank stands at \$859,200, including an O & M total of \$398,005 and Capital Funds of \$461,195.

Mr. Tye mentioned that capital projects are on hold while the District explores a possible consolidation.

Meter Mandate—Response to Manager’s 10/24/24 Inquiry to SWRCB (State Water Resources Control Board) for Advice; Response Letter from Sean McCarthy, Assistant Deputy Director, Division of Drinking Water, Southern California Field Operations Branch: Mr. Tye said that last

October, after the community meeting, he sent a letter to SWRCB asking how the District should proceed. He noted paragraphs 5 and 6 of the response dated July 8, 2025, which state, in part, that SWRCB cannot enforce the meter mandate. Mr. Finkbeiner thinks that if the State wants all districts to have meters, everyone will have to comply. Mr. Tye stated that our District does not have the funds to install meters, so the State will have to pay for this. SB463, which went in and out of the suspension file, is dead.

Cross Connection Control Plan: Mr. Tye reported that the plan was completed and submitted to SWRCB on 5/13/25, ahead of the 7/1/25 deadline. The plan was approved on August 1, 2025, so this project is done. Mr. Tye told the State that he estimates customers will comply within the next three years. If customers don't comply, the District will have the work done and add the cost to the customers' water bill.

Mr. Dean mentioned that now all hose bibs are anti-siphon. Mr. Tye explained different ways water can become contaminated. The biggest risk is from irrigation systems. In answer to Mr. Finkbeiner's question, Mr. Tye said many homes in the District have surface water. Those homeowners will be responsible for complying with State mandates.

Consolidation Feasibility Committee—Minutes from 7/1/25 Meeting, Responses from Provost & Pritchard, Board of Directors Discussion of Issues Related to the Concept, and Board of Directors Direction on How to Proceed: Mr. Tye noted that the minutes of the July 1, 2025, meeting were included in the agenda packet. He requested detailed information from Sierra Highlands and Brookside, the two water districts that might consolidate. The agenda packet included information submitted by Sierra Highlands. Ms. Petersen received information about Brookside.

Ms. Petersen invited discussion and feedback about Provost & Pritchard's response to District questions. Mr. Dean said that P&P is still waiting for word from the State about funding. In response to Ms. Petersen's question, Mr. Tye said that P&P cannot provide a preliminary engineering report because there are still unknowns, such as whether or not Los Angeles Department of Water and Power would concede an easement. Ms. Petersen asked if the proposal is "all or nothing" with regard to the two water districts under consideration. Mr. Tye suspects the State wants both to be included in the potential consolidation.

Mr. Finkbeiner presented information about his experience as a water district manager and his perspective about the consolidation. He has considerable familiarity with P&P, which has capable engineers. The State is encouraging consolidation to minimize the number of districts to manage. Sierra Highlands originally chose to consolidate with the City of Bishop, but their plans caused Sierra Highlands to reconsider. For the past two years Mr. Finkbeiner has been unable to find someone to replace him. Throughout California it's been hard to replace water district staff, many of whom are elderly and ready to retire. Candidates who show an interest have unreasonable expectations. Mr. Williams added that a bigger (consolidated) system would be harder to staff. Mr. Dean pointed to the difficulty in finding people with D2 certification. Ms. Petersen asked if the number of current staff would accommodate consolidation. Mr. Tye responded that additional staff would be required. Mr. Williams pointed out that P&P, in their response to question number 11, stated they would not fund recruitment and "onboarding" of staff.

Mr. Finkbeiner mentioned the appeal of consolidation for his district: continued local control, no chlorination, and probably a new general manager and board. Questions about chlorination came up, and Ms. Petersen explained that chlorination is not required unless there is a problem with contaminants in the water. Mr. Finkbeiner thinks Brookside might need chlorination. Mr. Tye said our District has the capacity to chlorinate when necessary. Mr. Tye suggested moving pipelines from residents' yards to the street if P&P pays for the work. Meeting attendants who would be impacted by this voiced concerns about the impact on their homes. Mr. Tye responded that the District can drop this demand. Mr. Finkbeiner brought up the fact that in the past homes had septic tanks. If digging occurs, a special process would be required to address the abandoned tanks.

Mr. Williams expressed concerns about who would be responsible for cost overruns. It appears that P&P would not bear this responsibility. Mr. Derr asked about Sierra Highlands' fire hydrants. Mr. Finkbeiner said they are all new and were tested by the fire department. Ms. Petersen said it is important to help our neighbors, but she has concerns about Brookside. Mr. Williams expressed concerns about P&P's response to question number 12, particularly the phrase "subject to available funding" regarding funding for the consolidation process. Ms. Petersen is also concerned about this response.

Ms. Petersen has concerns about the wording of the answer to question number 14. She is interested in seeing a preliminary engineering report. Mr. Finkbeiner stated that at this point there is still a lot that P&P doesn't know.

Mr. Finkbeiner said that people in his district don't want to consolidate. They don't realize the reality of not consolidating, which is raising rates in order to pay competitive staff salaries. Mr. Tye explained that if the districts consolidate everyone would be charged the same rate. Mr. Tye stated that the only gain to ICWCSD from consolidating is the potential to obtain millions of dollars to improve the water system. If that is not included in the conditions of the consolidation, ICWCSD should not pursue consolidation.

There was a discussion about when and how to present the possibility of consolidation to the public. Mr. Finkbeiner thinks a public meeting with P&P at this point is premature because P&P doesn't have enough information. Mr. Williams agreed. Mr. Finkbeiner estimated that P&P probably will not have a plan for another 3-5 years because engineering reports take a long time. Ms. Petersen emphasized the importance of letting the public know that consolidation is being considered. There was consensus that P&P does not have enough information to present to the public. Mr. Williams suggested sending information about the possibility of consolidation to ICWCSD customers with the next billing, and inviting customers to the next meeting. Mr. Tye will send the notice with the October billing. He will reserve a large room at the Inyo County Office of Education building on Grandview Drive in case there is a large turnout. It will be a regular board meeting, not a public hearing. Brookside and Sierra Highlands will be invited. Mr. Finkbeiner explained that the Sierra Highlands board will reach out to its customers when it has more information.

Owens Valley Groundwater Authority (OVGA) Update: Mr. Williams presented the following information. The Department of Water Resources decided that OVGA's Groundwater Sustainability Plan is incomplete because Mono County and Tri-Valley Groundwater Management District withdrew from

OVGA after the plan was submitted. The OVGA board directed staff to encourage Mono County and TVGMD to rejoin, stressing “together we are more powerful.” If they don’t rejoin, OVGA will apply for a boundary adjustment later this year.

Staff reported that they received 25% to 26% compliance with well registration.

ICWCSD Energy Efficiency Assessment Report: Mr. Tye presented the energy efficiency report created free of charge by the California Rural Water Association, and spoke about the estimated cost to implement the recommendations. He estimated that installing a variable frequency drive (VFD) on wells 1,2 and 3 would save approximately \$5,000 per year on energy bills. Berger Solar Electric submitted an estimate of \$118,000 to install the VFDs and perform additional work, such as rewiring of the control systems and installing programmable logic controller (PLC) systems (proposal included in agenda packet). Mr. Tye said that PLCs would be a good upgrade. He explained that ICWCSDs finances are currently robust, and there are no pending critical projects. Mr. Williams asked Mr. Tye to consider installing only the VFDs to reduce the proposed expenditure.

Mr. Tye plans to ask Berger for an estimate to convert the water system to solar, which would eliminate reliance on Frontier Communications. Ms. Petersen stated that the system should be more current, especially if the District wants to hire new staff. Mr. Finkbeiner said that all the Sierra Highlands wells have VFDs, which increase the service life of the wells.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.
Minutes submitted by Stephanie Sheltz