

Indian Creek-Westridge Community Services District Board Meeting
February 13, 2024
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, Casey Dean, Ted Williams; District Manager Terry Tye; District Operator Don Buser; Assistant Operator Kim Derr; District resident Sarah Petersen; general manager of multiple local small water districts David Tanksley.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes of the November 14, 2023 meeting were approved unanimously (moved Dean, seconded Williams).

Operations and Maintenance Report: The following is a summary of Mr. Buser's report. Resolved problem with blown fuses at Well 1. Started cleanup of Well 1 southeast fence storage area. Installed, painted and repaired storage boxes along fence. Assisted Bishop Creek Water Association in cleaning up culvert near Morningside Drive and Grandview Road. Investigated a leak by Manor Market that turned out to be City of Bishop responsibility. Determined that a service call from a residence was the customer's responsibility; assisted in finding a plumber who was available immediately. Attended an informational meeting about the process of consolidating small water districts with City of Bishop. Cleaned out debris from dry creek at Well 5.

Finance Report--Quarterly, Delinquent Update, 2022-2023 Audit Report, State Controller's Report from Nigro and Nigro: Mr. Tye presented the report. The months listed under Income Received were revised from Aug., Sept., Oct. to Nov., Dec., Jan. The balance in the bank stands at \$720,342 including an O & M total of \$378,615 and Capital Funds of \$341,727.

As of today, seven delinquents owe a total of \$1,700. One customer owes \$1,000 and is on a payment plan that is being fulfilled so far.

Mr. Tye noted that Nigro & Nigro's audit report and State Controller's report are in the agenda packet for this meeting.

OVGA (Owens Valley Ground Water Authority) Update: Mr. Elias reported that the next meeting is scheduled for March 14. They want to establish a database of water pumping in the Owens Valley.

Protest Letter to State Water Resources Control Board and the Department of Water Resources. Report on State Proposal to Consolidate Local Water Districts with the City of Bishop. Follow-up to Meeting of 1/19/24 with Representatives from Provost and Pritchard, Indian Creek Westridge CSD and Sierra Highlands CSD.

Mr. Tye opened the topic by expressing extreme frustration with the State's treatment of small water districts. Approximately three weeks ago he and other managers of local water districts sent a letter to the State Water Resources Control Board in San Bernardino (copy in agenda packet). Mr. Tye also sent a personal letter to the members of the ICWCSD board urging them to help with the challenges facing small water districts. The overwhelming amount of new rules is

making it increasingly difficult to protect the viability and existence of our water system. Mr. Tye lodged formal complaints to State and Inyo County representatives. Small water systems are in jeopardy of being crushed and bankrupted. Mr. Tye is tired of doing this by himself and asked ICWCSD board members to step up.

Mr. Williams stated that the biggest current problem for the District is the difficulty of hiring staff, even if the worst of the state's requirements don't go into effect. Mr. Derr said that this is a long-standing problem. Mr. Tye stated that the three current staff members receive low compensation and no benefits.

Mr. Tanksley said that CSD boards are cautious about compensation rates due to their fiscal responsibilities. In reality the board has to increase the pay rate and start marketing the positions. Currently there is no replacement pool. Regulations will require monitoring of water use, and households will probably be charged more if they use more than a certain amount. Mr. Tanksley advised starting to save now for the meters that are scheduled to be in place by 2032. Engineering costs might be covered by full or partial grants. So far the state is able to succeed with unreasonable requests because they have not been challenged.

Mr. Tye explained that when he prepared the USDA grant application the estimated cost of adding meters was between \$650,000 and \$800,000. Today the cost is likely between one and two million dollars.

Mr. Tye wonders how the lead and copper requirements can be implemented. Will 298 connections have to be dug up? If so, will the District or the customer be responsible? There are other costly requirements that could necessitate raising monthly rates to possibly \$300 or \$500.

Mr. Tye noted that he has been making day-to-day decisions but now he needs direction from the board. He feels the many unreasonable requirements have to be challenged, and he asked the board to get involved. Mr. Anderson and Mr. Williams expressed doubts about succeeding in these challenges. Mr. Williams stated that his main concern about the water quality is to keep it chlorine-free. It's possible that the State will backpedal, as it did on the Owens Valley Groundwater Authority requirements.

Mr. Elias expressed support for Terry. If letters don't succeed, an alternate plan has to be developed. ICWCSD could make the best possible effort to comply and show the State that it can't do more. Mr. Anderson explained that if we don't comply, the State would take over the system. Mr. Elias feels the District could be more successful if it got the whole community involved. Mr. Derr said that if the City of Bishop takes over the system it is not clear if they would chlorinate. Mr. Dean noted that once the water is chlorinated there is no turning back. Ms. Petersen explained that there are three scenarios when this would not be so. Mr. Tye pointed out that our district only chlorinates when digging might expose the water to contaminants.

Mr. Tye suggested a possible "hybrid" approach. The consolidation process could take up to eight years. This would allow time to challenge the unreasonable requirements and keep the system alive. As for the copper and lead requirements, all service valves have been replaced. Mr. Dean and Kendall Engineering could testify that they replaced the valves and there is no lead. Ms. Petersen wondered if this, along with data, would satisfy the State. Mr. Tye said he will hope for the best.

Mr. Tye informed the board that Sierra Highlands CSD decided to consolidate with the City of Bishop. Mr. Williams suggested submission of a letter of intent to consolidate, which carries no commitment, and at the same time start a campaign. Mr. Tye sees this as a way to keep the system going for the next few years. If the campaign didn't succeed, the district could then agree to consolidate. Mr. Tye said he will not be doing this work if meters have to be installed. Estimated price of a meter is \$5,000.

Mr. Tanksley suggested starting to save for meters now, with the Consumer Price Index in mind, because even if the District consolidates with Bishop it will have to pay for meters. Mr. Anderson proposed raising a certain amount, like the District did for service valves.

Ms. Petersen speculated that if the District is not in full compliance in 2032 but shows it has a plan and is doing its best, the State might show leniency.

Mr. Tanksley said that metering compliance is not insurmountable and will not necessarily change the billing process. For example, meters can be read once a year. Mr. Derr noted that costs to the consumer will increase.

Mr. Anderson suggested starting efforts to implement metering to show the State that the District is doing its best. This could possibly allow an extension past 2032. Mr. Dean agreed with Mr. Anderson, adding that the District explain the situation to customers. He is not in favor of submitting a letter of intent at this time.

Mr. Williams proposed notifying customers that costs for water use will increase in the near future. Mr. Dean noted that several customers already know that metering will be implemented. Mr. Dean and Mr. Williams stated that a rate increase has to include additional funding for staff salaries.

Mr. Tanksley noted that digging and preparation can be done without adding meters.

Mr. Elias favors challenging unreasonable regulations.

Mr. Tanksley noted that many CSDs are not complying with the new monthly reporting requirement.

Ms. Petersen said some engineers are not well qualified. She gave an example of this. She offered the name of a qualified engineer to Mr. Tye.

Mr. Tye asked the board to help in requesting waivers for a lot of newer regulations that don't apply to our District. He said the California Rural Water Association might help.

The ICWCSD board supports Mr. Tye. If he writes a letter objecting to the Drought and Conservation monthly reporting, they will sign it.

Mr. Elias announced that the next meeting is scheduled for May 14, 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Stephanie Sheltz