

Indian Creek-Westridge Community Services District Board Meeting
November 11, 2025
Jill Kinmont Boothe School Auditorium at 166 Grandview Drive, Bishop, CA

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Board Chairperson Casey Dean. Present were Directors Sarah Petersen, Ted Williams, Robert Waters; District Manager Terry Tye; District Operators Don Buser and Kim Derr; eleven members of the Indian Creek-Westridge Community Services District.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes of the August 12, 2025 meeting were approved unanimously (moved Williams, seconded Petersen).

Operations and Maintenance Report: Mr. Derr reported the following. Helped pull water samples with representative from Geosyntec. Responded to a 2 a.m. alert for Well 5 that was probably caused by a power outage; he reset the Sensaphone. Mr. Buser responded to a customer complaint about a generator running at Well 1; turned out to be an air compressor running, which Mr. Buser turned off for the night. Frontier Communications installed an overhead phone/communication line at the Well 3 power pole. After advertising a position for water district operator, Mr. Tye conducted a training session, and then hired Taylor Hubble, who is scheduled to start on December 2.

Finance Report—Quarterly Report, Delinquents: Mr. Tye presented the report in Mr. Gillespie's absence. He explained how funds are collected.

The balance in the bank stands at \$838,337, including an O & M total of \$362,185 and Capital Funds of \$476,152.

O & M expenses are higher than usual due to the increase in rates for electricity, payment for an audit, insurance rate increase, and hiring someone to paint all equipment.

The delinquent amount of \$5,200 is higher than usual. One customer owes \$2,700, and Mr. Tye has a lien on that property. He explained that he goes door-to-door to collect what is owed. After his recent rounds, the delinquent amount is \$1,700.

An audience member asked how long the capital fund has existed. Mr. Tye said that it started before 2010.

Owens Valley Groundwater Authority (OVGA) Update: No updates or recent meetings.

Consolidation with Sierra Highlands Community Service District and Brookside Estates Mutual Water Company. Open Discussion with Interaction of Board and Members of the Public: Mr. Tye provided background information about the possibility of consolidating with Sierra Highlands and Brookside. The state of California wants small systems to consolidate, for which there is grant funding. Brookside has 22 connections, is in a severe financial situation, and has no operator. They contacted Provost and Pritchard (consolidation consultants for the State) and signed a letter of intent with the City of Bishop. Fred Finkbeiner of Sierra Highlands also contacted P&P and the City of Bishop. The State's estimated cost for Bishop to

consolidate with Sierra Highlands is \$23 million. Mr. Tye and Mr. Finkbeiner discussed a possible merger and grant funding. Engineers looked at the water systems. Mr. Tye has made it clear to P&P that ICWCSD would only agree to consolidate if the State agrees to make improvements to its system, which Mr. Tye and Kendall Weisenberg roughly estimated to cost five to eight million dollars.

After discussions by the ICWCSD Board, Mr. Tye contacted P&P. They said that in the current funding cycle there is money to consolidate Brookside and Bishop but not Sierra Highlands and ICWCSD. P&P will wait a year to see if there will be funding in the next cycle. Mr. Tye noted that the ICWCSD Board has misgivings and many questions about consolidation. Some members strongly oppose it but are willing to listen. The Board wants to know whether or not customers want it to continue looking into the possibility of consolidation.

In answer to questions from a member, Mr. Tye said that Sierra Highlands has 217 connections and ICWCSD has 298. Additional staff would be needed if there is consolidation. The Sierra Highlands infrastructure is weaker than ICWCSD's but he would ask the State to fund an upgrade. Sierra Highlands does not have an operator. A couple of people do monitoring. Their finances are good. Under consolidation, both districts would be represented on the board, and the State would probably demand metering but it would have to provide funds for this.

Mr. Tye noted that the State is encouraging, not forcing consolidation. Wilkerson received \$6 million for its recent consolidation.

Mr. Tye explained that some of the issues of consolidation are giving up our sovereignty and comingling funds. The advantages and disadvantages of consolidation will remain unknown until P&P provides concrete information. It is also unknown if rates would increase.

Mr. Dean stated that the ICWCSD Board submitted a set of questions to P&P.

Ms. Petersen mentioned that there are different ways to consolidate. Ours would be physical and financial. Mr. Dean said that ICWCSD made it clear that it will not pay for any part of a consolidation. There are two ways the systems could be joined. One would be from Carol Lane and require an easement permit from DWP. The other would connect down Line Street and then Barlow Lane to Sierra Highlands.

An audience member who is a customer of Brookside and ICWCSD water systems stated that the Brookside system is outdated and has been neglected. The City of Bishop will replace a well and tank, install meters and chlorinate the water. Rates will be the same as City of Bishop. The given timeframe for full consolidation is three years.

To address a question from the audience, Mr. Tye explained his and Mr. Weisenberg's estimate to improve the ICWCSD system was an informal assessment.

Mr. Dean noted that the ICWCSD is not moving on meters. Mr. Tye stated that when he contacted the State after ICWCSD membership voted against funding installation of meters, the State informed him it can't enforce the meter mandate. Mr. Tye reiterated that if the State wants our District to install water meters, the State should pay for them.

Mr. Dean stated that if ICWCSD receives grants to upgrade the system, it would be the only advantage to consolidating.

Mr. Tye answered another audience member question by estimating that four to six thousand districts are trying to consolidate.

An audience participant who is a prior ICWCSD board member asked why the District would want to consolidate. It manages water for drinking and fire suppression. So far, he has not heard a valid argument in favor of consolidation.

Mr. Dean said that salaries have increased. Mr. Tye added that the District can carry the additional cost for three to four years before needing to increase rates.

Mr. Derr explained that if the two districts consolidate, lines would be tied together and the water would be blended. Someone from the audience noted that ICWCSD water is very good and wondered about the water quality of Sierra Highlands. He does not want others to encroach on ICWCSD water and wants to keep District autonomy. Mr. Tye said that ICWCSD water is phenomenal. Another audience member said that ICWSD water quality reports are superior to others he researched online.

In answer to a question from the audience, Mr. Tye stated that consolidation with Sierra Highlands would not require chlorination. ICWCSD only chlorinates when necessary while doing work that could contaminate the water. Ms. Petersen said that all water quality reports are available online at California Drinking Water Watch. Mr. Tye offered to provide a report to anyone who is having difficulties accessing the information.

An audience member mentioned that in California small water systems will fail. He heard that systems with five hundred connections are the ideal size for grant approval from the State. To keep up with rising insurance and electricity costs, it might help to consolidate. He encouraged the Board to continue exploring the possibility of consolidation.

Mr. Dean stated that P&P wanted to make a presentation but the Board decided to hear from customers first. Mr. Tye added that P&P does not have enough information for a public meeting.

Another audience member mentioned that over approximately fifteen years ICWCSD accumulated \$476,000 for infrastructure. He is apprehensive about absorbing another district because potential problems could put ICWCSD at risk.

An audience participant mentioned that there are not enough facts to list pros and cons of consolidation.

Mr. Derr stated that P&P does not have much information about consolidating ICWCSD with Sierra Highlands.

Mr. Tye explained that the ICWCSD Board is seeking guidance as to whether or not to continue looking into consolidation. If the community says “no,” the matter will be dropped.

Mr. Tye commented that here is a small number of ICWCSD projects that are on hold in case the State will pay for them. Without funding assistance, the cost of the projects would drop the emergency fund too low. The system map illustrates that despite a few weak spots, the system is in good condition.

Mr. Buser noted that ICWCSD's location is the healthiest in the area. It is nearest to a good water source. Consolidation could jeopardize this.

Mr. Tye asked for a show of hands for continuing to look into possible consolidation. Seven out of eleven customers were in favor.

Mr. Tye said that although P&P estimates consolidation will take approximately five years, he thinks it will probably take a lot longer.

Mr. Derr noted that the needs of Sierra Highlands and Brookside are more critical than ICWCSD's.

Mr. Williams thanked District customers for attending the meeting.

At Mr. Tye's request, Matt Berger presented information about solarizing the ICWCSD system. Mr. Berger explained that it would be an opportunity to reduce expenses by half or more. It would be a layered discussion. Funding is available to install a system. Currently the rules are changing. In January the rules will change a lot. There is uncertainty about costs and availability of components. It is possible that commercial installations could fall under "safe harbor" using this year's rule. The payoff takes approximately ten years. Some tax credits will remain in place.

Mr. Berger's cost estimate for a solar installation is \$200,000-\$400,000 and reminded the audience about tax credits. Mr. Tye will ask the CPA if the District needs tax credits. Mr. Berger mentioned that there is "direct pay" for entities that don't pay taxes.

Mr. Berger presented possible ways a system could be installed. Consumption as well as creating energy can be optimized.

Barry Simpson, the Inyo County Office of Education Superintendent, whose building is a potential part of an installation, agreed to its use. However, anything on its roof needs State engineering work. Mr. Tye said he is waiting to hear from Inyo County counsel if changing the joint powers agreement with ICOE is allowed.

Mr. Berger noted that the lifetime of inverters is about fifteen years, modules approximately twenty-five years.

Mr. Tye said that he and Scott Berger have been discussing the solar possibility for about two years. They are developing a formal proposal for the February Board meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:29 p.m.
Minutes submitted by Stephanie Sheltz