

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE  
COMMITTEE MEETING  
OF THE RAINBOW MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT  
MAY 21, 2024**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – The Communications and Customer Service Committee Meeting of the Rainbow Municipal Water District on May 21, 2024, was called to order by Vice Chairperson Stewart at 1:02 p.m. in the Board Room of the District, 3707 Old Highway 395, Fallbrook, CA 92028. Vice Chairperson Stewart, presiding.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **ROLL CALL:** Member Stewart, Member Hamilton

**Also Present:** General Manager Wiley, Billing Specialist Kilmer, Information Technology Manager Khattab, Administrative Analyst Weber, Chief Financial Officer Aragon, Alternate Harp, Operations Manager Gutierrez, James Kozak

**Absent:** Member Shute

**Also Present Via Teleconference or Video Conference:**

Administrative Services Manager Harp, District Secretary Quintanar, Construction and Meters Supervisor Lagunas, Engineering and CIP Manager Williams and Administrative Assistant Montano. No members of the public were present in person, via teleconference or video conference.

4. **SEATING OF ALTERNATES**

With two of the three committee members present, there was no need to seat an alternate.

5. **ADDITIONS/DELETIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA**

There were none.

6. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

***Motion:***

***To approve the Agenda as presented.***

***Action: Approve, Moved by Member Hamilton, Seconded by Member Stewart***

***Vote: Motion carried by unanimous vote (summary: Ayes = 2)***

***Ayes: Member Hamilton, Member Stewart***

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No members of the public were present in person, via teleconference or video conference.

8. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. April 16, 2024

***Motion:***

***To approve the minutes as presented***

***Action: Approve, Moved by Member Hamilton, Seconded by Member Stewart***

***Vote: Motion carried by unanimous vote (summary: Ayes = 2)***

***Ayes: Member Hamilton, Member Stewart***

**9. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON**

***Motion:***

***To approve appointment of Bill Shute as Chairperson***

***Action: Approve, Moved by Member Hamilton, Seconded by Member Stewart***

***Vote: Motion carried by unanimous vote (summary: Ayes = 2)***

***Ayes: Member Hamilton, Member Stewart***

**10. COMMENTS & REQUESTS**

- A. General Manager's Comments
- B. Committee Member's Comments

Mr. Wiley provided an update on the pump station construction. Good progress is being made at all three sites. The Rancho Amigos Pump Station is furthest along but deliveries of roofs and generators have been made for all three locations, and more deliveries are anticipated. In early June, we may set the Rancho Amigos building and install the pumps. This pump station is on schedule for completion in mid-October. Staff are continuing communications with the associated agencies for the development of the Operations Plan. MWD is doing some work to get water service agreements and revisions into place, and staff will continue to work through the details to move things along. Positive comments were made about the Pump Station Package Plants and the good reputation of Pacific Hydrotech.

**11. FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET PLANNING PROCESS UPDATE & OUTREACH**

Mr. Wiley reported on budget workshops over the past two months, including the Engineering and Operations and Budget and Finance Committees.

At the May 14, 2024, Special Meeting, there was discussion of the partial year of savings in wholesale water purchases, following finalization of the detachment. However, an exit fee payment for the detachment will have to be made to the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) so we have those up-front costs. There are a lot of expenses that are beyond our control, such as SDG&E's rate increases, and supply cost increases. There have been double-digit increases announced by some agencies, and we will avoid some of those increases planned for January 2025. At the last special meeting, we spoke of the need for a 6.5% increase, but some discretionary items are being postponed in the effort to bring that proposed rate increase down. More information will be presented on May 28, 2024. Overall, we'll need a modest increase in July and MWD will adjust its rates in January, which will affect us by about 3.6%. Our plan is to not have to implement another rate increase until January 2026.

As far as messaging, we need to explain what we're up against and what we're doing to minimize impact on customers. Member Stewart commented on how different our projections for the rate increase are now, from a month ago. Member Hamilton commented that now that we have the information from other agencies, we can provide a side by side comparison to customers to show the cost savings related to detachment.

Mr. Kozak addressed the Committee and recalled where the District was ten years ago and how the detachment is a great solution to what the rates would have been.

## **12. CROPSWAP UPDATE**

Mr. Wiley reported that the application window was opened for this program. More information can be found at [Regionalcropswap.com](http://Regionalcropswap.com). Rancho California Water District is administering the program. At this point, Rainbow Municipal Water District is in the lead and has exceeded the initial \$200,000 reserved for each of the five participating agencies. There is more funding available, on a first come-first served basis. Funding for this was through a grant from the Department of Water Resources (DWR), and more funding will be sought once the funds are depleted. This Committee has done a great job getting the word out and creating interest. A postcard was also sent to all of our eligible agricultural accounts. Mr. Kozak opined that Rainbow MWD is doing a lot to encourage growers to keep growing. The successful outreach is a reflection of the District's efforts to expand our communication methods. Amanda Weber was credited with much of this improvement.

## **13. QUARTERLY CUSTOMER SERVICE CALL METRICS**

Mr. Aragon reported that call time and interactions with customers continue to improve. The average hold time last year was 1.06 minutes and we are averaging 30 seconds now. Average monthly call time has increased as our Customer Service staff have most recently spent more time providing information and answering customer questions, while still maintaining lower hold times. Ms. Harp relayed that staff have proven their dedication and commitment to providing superlative customer service to our customers.

## **14. CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY**

Ms. Weber explained that the Customer Service Survey was opened to the public. Feedback from a limited sample was that customers preferred to receive information through their bills, and to be notified of emergencies via text message. Our customers also enjoy our mailed materials. The Customer Service Department received excellent feedback and customers feel strongly that we care about them. She added that our water quality rating is also high. Member Stewart recalled a pleasing experience when he approached the front desk and that the quality of service has improved significantly.

## **15. NEWSLETTER CONTENT PLANNING**

Ms. Weber mentioned that the CropSWAP program will be included in the next newsletter, as well as a feature on the Bonsall High School Students Field trip, Garden Like a Pro, and the new survey. In June, we will include a Rates and Detachment update, Part 1 on Tips to grow a Sustainable Garden, rebates from MWD, advice on adjusting sprinklers for summer, Poster Contest winners and the Rainbow Run. In July, we'll have a feature on the Value of Water, a Summer Water Guide, encouragement to "Share Your Experience, Backflow Device information, and rebates that are available for Flume.

Mr. Wiley mentioned that MWD is offering rebates for a couple more devices that are similar to Flume. Ms. Weber commented that Flume is the most popular, County-wide.

Ms. Weber also provided a preview of the Consumer Confidence Report (CCR). There is a link to the report on the website, in English and Spanish.

Mr. Kozak commented that it might be helpful to provide information in our newsletter about backflow preventors. He noted finding a video on You Tube of a Rainbow MWD staff member which was very informative. He encouraged the inclusion of links in the newsletter to lead customers to tutorials. Ms. Harp added that You Tube is a primary opportunity for us and this is one reason we've asked for an intern to help get this information to the public. Vice Chairman Stewart commented on the excellent quality of the CCR.

## 16. COMMUNITY EVENTS & OUTREACH PLANNING UPDATE

Ms. Weber reported on the Bonsall High School field trip to the District. The MWD Community Services grant funded a STEM kit and other items for the group, which consisted of twelve students. Afterward, there was some interest in hearing more about how water industry careers incorporate chemistry and cyber security. Member Hamilton suggested expanding the reach by offering field trips to other communities in our District.

Mr. Kozak suggested a program to employ students during summer break to give them some experience and possibly some high school credits.

The Rainbow Run will be held June 15, and RMWD will sponsor the water station. There is a registration link on our website.

Ms. Weber also reported that a ribbon cutting event is being planned for the Thoroughbred Lift Station, with tentative dates in September or October. She also reported on the Avocado Festival. It was the 37<sup>th</sup> year, and the festival attracted thousands of spectators. Over 1,800 promotional items and over 300 pieces of collateral materials were distributed. The favorites were misters, avocado cold/hot packs, and water bottles. Stickers, tattoos and stress balls were popular with the younger crowd.

## 17. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATED MEDIA STORIES

Several articles were published by the village news, which were included in the meeting packet. Mr. Kozak suggested placing them on our website. Member Stewart commented on Village News; that they have been providing balanced articles.

## 18. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

James Kozak attended and had previously requested consideration for appointment as a member of this Committee.

Mr. Kozak explained that he moved to Fallbrook in 2021. He spent his professional career in land development, primarily in the Inland Empire and Coachella Valley. He also relayed his knowledge and appreciation for the detachment and our involvement with the community.

Members Stewart and Hamilton relayed their support, and commented on the progress made by the District on several fronts, over the past six or seven years.

### ***Motion:***

***To approve the Appointment of James Kozak.***

***Action: Approve, Moved by Member Stewart, Seconded by Hamilton***

***Vote: Motion carried by unanimous vote (summary: Ayes = 2)***

***Ayes: Member Hamilton, Member Stewart***

## 19. LIST OF SUGGESTED AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Staff will provide updates on the CropSWAP program and the budget planning process at the next meeting. Mr. Wiley also announced that all Committee and Regular Board Meetings will now be held on Tuesdays, at 1:00 p.m.


**20. ADJOURNMENT -To June 18, 2024 at 1:00 p.m.**

The meeting was adjourned by Vice Chairperson Stewart, at 2:32 p.m.



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**Terese Quintanar, District Secretary**



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**Bill Stewart, Committee Vice Chairperson**