

Regular Meeting  
January 21, 2025  
6:00 pm

Meiners Oaks Water District  
202 W. El Roblar Drive  
Ojai, CA 93023-2211

## Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm.

### 1. Call to Order

The Board President, Mike Etchart, called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm. The meeting was also available via teleconference.

### 2. Roll Call

**Present:** Board President, Mike Etchart, Board Directors: Christian Oakland, Joe Pangea, and Christy Cooper. Staff Present: General Manager, Justin Martinez, Summer Ward, Board Secretary. Attorney Present: Stuart Nielson.

**Absent:** Director James Kentosh

### 3. Approval of the Minutes

**Approval of the December 17, 2024, Regular Board Meeting minutes.**

Director Pangea made the motion to approve the December 17, 2024 meeting minutes. Director Cooper seconded the motion.

No Public Comment.

Pangea/Cooper

(4) Ayes – M/S/C

(1) Absent - Kentosh

### 4. Public Comments

None.

**\*\*The Board went into closed session at 6:02 pm.\*\***

### 5. Closed Session: The Board of Directors held a closed session to discuss litigation, pursuant to the attorney/client privilege, as authorized by Government Code Sections §54957 & 54956.8, 54956.9, and 54957.

- CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL—EXISTING LITIGATION  
(Paragraph (1) of subdivision (d) of Gov. Code § 54956.9)  
Name of case: *Santa Barbara Channelkeeper v. State Water Resources Control Board, et al.*,  
Los Angeles County Superior Court Case No. 19STCP01176

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**\*\*The Board ended closed session at 6:08 pm.\*\***

Attorney Nielson reported that the Board discussed pending litigation, and there are no reportable actions to report.

**6. Financial Matters**

**a) Approval of Payroll and Payables from December 16, 2024, to January 15, 2025, in the amount of:**

Payables:	\$ 263,644.50
Payroll:	<u>\$ 57,875.84</u>
Total:	\$ 321,520.34

Director Cooper made the motion to approve the Payroll and Payables from December 16, 2024, to January 15, 2025. Director Oakland seconded the motion.

No Public Comment.

Cooper/Oakland

(4) Ayes – M/S/C

(1) Absent- Kentosh

**b) Capitalization of Emergency Generator Purchase.**

Director Cooper requested the Emergency Generator Purchase be capitalized. Ms. Ward stated it would be capitalized according to the approved policy.

**7. Board Discussion/Actions**

**a) Election of the Board Officers.**

Director Etchart introduced the agenda item to nominate and vote on the Board President and Vice President. Director Cooper expressed her appreciation for the work that Directors Etchart and Oakland have put in and would like to nominate them both to continue in those positions.

Director Cooper made the motion to nominate Director Etchart to the position of Board President and Director Oakland to the position of Vice President for 2025. Director Pangea seconded the motion.

No Public Comment.

Cooper/Pangea

(4) Ayes – MSC

(1) Absent – Kentosh

b) **Review and nominate Board Committee Memberships and Representatives.**

Director Etchart reviewed the existing Board Committee members and representatives. He asked if there were any recommended changes. No changes were requested; Director Etchart reaffirmed all committee memberships and representatives.

No Public Comment.

No Motion.

c) **Approve the emergency purchase of a CAT XQ230 generator for \$174,268.14.**

Mr. Martinez stated that in light of recent emergency events in Southern California and escalating power outages by SCE, Meiners Oaks Water District recognizes the need to fortify its operation against potential disruptions further. Currently, the District owns one larger generator (Caterpillar XQ230) capable of powering most facilities individually and a smaller generator (Multiquip) for the District Office. In an emergency, management must choose between utilizing the larger generator to operate wells or deploying it to a booster site for fire protection, as both could not be powered simultaneously. The surge in demand has exhausted generator supplies at rental and sale yards. The local Caterpillar dealer was able to source a suitable solution, and only one unit was in stock. The vendor stated that due to the significant demand for generators in the areas directly affected by recent disasters, it is unlikely that generators will be in stock and available for at least 1-2 years. After deliberations, Management and the Executive Committee proactively acquired the one available unit, a Caterpillar XQ230, for \$174,268.14. The emergency purchase significantly bolsters the District's resilience during natural disasters or fire emergencies.

Management and the Executive Committee recommend that the MOWD Board of Directors retroactively vote to approve the emergency purchase of the Caterpillar XQ230 for \$174,268.14. The District FY24-25 budget allocated \$140,000 for a fixed office generator that should be reallocated to this larger portable generator, with the remaining \$34,268.14 coming from District reserves.

Mr. Martinez reported that the new portable CAT XQ230 generator was delivered on January 19, 2025, and the custom color-coded leads (connectors) are expected to be delivered within a week.

Director Oakland made the motion to approve the emergency purchase of the CATXQ230 generator for \$174,268.14. Director Pangea seconded the motion.

No Public Comment.

Oakland/Pangea

(4) Ayes – MSC

(1) Absent – Kentosh

d) **Approve reallocating \$8,500 from the Valve Replacement budget to the Safety budget for purchasing Chlorine Safety equipment.**

Mr. Martinez shared that the District has been enhancing its safety procedures regarding Chlorine gas treatment. MOWD has collaborated with local emergency services, Fire Station 22, and Jones Chemical Inc. to ensure staff readiness and safety during a Chlorine emergency, emphasizing public safety. Since 2021, MOWD has acquired a Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) for field staff handling Chlorine gas equipment. Chlorine gas alarms are operational at each well, with plans to integrate them with SCADA. Continued safety development is vital to the District. MOWD needs a Chlorine Emergency Kit A and five safety eye wash stations with showers for Chlorine gas facility sites.

Mr. Martinez stated that as GM, he is authorized to make the purchase; the request is to reallocate \$8,500 from the Valve Replacement budget to the Safety budget to cover the equipment purchase cost.

Director Oakland made the motion to approve the reallocation of \$8,500 from the Valve Replacement budget to the Safety budget for the purchase of Chlorine Safety equipment. Director Pangea seconded the motion.

No Public Comment.

Oakland/Pangea

(4) Ayes – MSC

(1) Absent – Kentosh

e) **Discuss the District's late penalty rate and timing, consider adopting Resolution 20250121: Water Service Policy, reduce the late penalty from 25% to 10% of unpaid balances, and move the penalty date from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the last business day of each month.**

Ms. Ward requested the Board to review and discuss the District's current late penalty and timing. Recently, the District Office received customer feedback with concerns about the 25% penalty and without a grace period. As a result, the staff did a comprehensive review, with consultation from Attorney Nielson. The late penalty was changed from a flat \$35 fee to 25% of the unpaid balance in 2017. Ms. Ward noted that the District suspended late penalties from April 2020 through March 2022 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff assessed local water agencies' late penalty processes. Ms. Ward reported that Casitas MWD charges 10%, applied on the 2nd to last business day of the month; Ventura River WD charges a flat \$35, applied 40 days after the bill date; City of Ventura Water charges 10%, applied 30 days after the bill date; and Carpenteria WD charges \$34, applied 35 days after the bill date. Ms. Ward noted MOWD charges 25%, applied 26 days after the bill date. The fiscal impact of reducing the late penalty

from 25% to 10% would reduce annual income by approximately \$5,700. The late penalty policy is within the Board's discretion to change and does not require a Prop 218 process.

The Board discussed the costs associated with the late letters and related processes, and customer payment options. Ms. Ward stated that the office processes an average of 100 late letters each month, a portion of which are emailed, with a total processing time of about 1-2 hours. The District does offer multiple payment options, including auto-pay. Ms. Ward noted that not all MOWD customers are in a financial position to use the auto-pay option.

Director Pangea requested that if the Board approves the recommended changes, Ms. Ward would report back in six months with an update. Ms. Ward affirmed that she would report back with an update in six months.

Director Pangea made the motion to approve Resolution 20250121: Policies for Water Service. Director Oakland seconded the motion.

No Public Comment.

Oakland/Pangea

(4) Ayes – MSC

(1) Absent – Kentosh

#### 8. **General Manager's Report**

Mr. Martinez reported that the Casitas Lake level is at 96%. The MOWD mainline on Hwy 33 has been installed and put back into service; staff will be working to bring the Treatment Plant back online in the coming weeks.

No Public Comment.

#### 9. **Board Secretary's Report**

Ms. Ward presented the monthly Board Secretary report. The biennial pumping and well-level interval data were submitted to the UVRGA on December 6. MOWD's quarterly PCI compliance control scan for online bill payment and credit card processing passed on November 26.

No Public Comment.

#### 10. **Board Committee Reports**

- Executive & Personnel Committee: No report.

- UVRGA: The January meeting was canceled.
- Budget/Rate Committee: No report.
- Emergency Management Committee: No report.
- Allocations, New Meters & Expansion of Services Committee: No report.
- Grants: Director Cooper shared that 500 pages were submitted to the state for review regarding the replacement treatment plant grant. The state is actively reviewing and requesting additional details; it's too soon to know, but it feels promising.
- Treatment Plant Design Ad Hoc Committee: No report.

11. **Old Business**

- State Water: No report.
- Matilija Dam Removal Update: No report.

12. **Director Announcements/Reports**

- Director Kentosh: No report
- Director Oakland: Stated he will be out of the country for work and absent from the February regular meeting.
- Director Pangea: No report
- Director Cooper: No report
- Director Etchart: No report

13. **Meeting Adjournment**

The next meeting will be held on February 18, 2025, at 6:00 pm. Since there was no further business to conduct, Board President Mike Etchart adjourned the meeting at 7:09 pm.

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**Board Secretary**

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**Board President**