

Regular Meeting
September 16, 2025
6:00 pm

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

Minutes

1. Call to Order

The Board President, Mike Etchart, called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. The meeting was also available via teleconference.

2. Roll Call

Present: Board President, Mike Etchart, Board Directors: Christian Oakland, James Kentosh, Christy Cooper, and Joe Pangea. Staff Present: General Manager, Justin Martinez, and Board Secretary, Summer Ward. Attorney Present: Stuart Nielson and Jeanne Zolezzi (closed-session only via teleconference).

Absent: None.

3. Approval of the Minutes

Approval of the August 19, 2025, Regular Board Meeting minutes.

Director Oakland made the motion to approve the minutes from the August 19, 2025, meeting. Director Cooper seconded the motion.

No Public Comment.

Oakland/Cooper

(5) Ayes – M/S/C

4. Public Comments

None.

*****The Board went into closed session at 6:03 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

*****The Board ended closed session at 6:33 pm.*****

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

6. **Financial Matters**

a) **Approval of Payroll and Payables from August 16, 2025, to September 15, 2025, in the amount of:**

Payables:	\$ 147,991.22
Payroll:	<u>\$ 63,554.39</u>
Total:	\$ 211,545.61

Director Oakland made the motion to approve the Payroll and Payables from August 16, 2025, to September 15, 2025. Director Cooper seconded the motion.

Director Cooper noted that the District paid \$92,000 for purchased Casitas water. Ms. Ward noted that the "Casitas Surcharge" revenue will never precisely match the "Purchased Water" expense. It was reviewed that the District bills all customers at the MOWD flat rate per unit, plus a Casitas Surcharge to offset the cost. Part of the cost of service is reduced by not running the MOWD facilities while purchasing Casitas water. Revenue is captured through water sales and the surcharge income lines.

No Public Comment.

Oakland/Cooper

(5) Ayes – M/S/C

7. **Board Discussion/Actions**

a) **Approve a water rate study consulting firm based on the proposals received.**

Ms. Ward reviewed the timeline of the previous Prop 218 Rate Hearing, the Budget/Rate Committee's recommendation to conduct a rate study, and the publishing of the RFP for water rate study consultants. The District received three proposals. The

firms reviewed were Robert D. Niehaus, Inc. (RDN), Raftelis, and LT Municipal Consultants. Ms. Ward noted that all firms were pleasant, responsive, and provided excellent proposals. There is a wide range of experience, size, and pricing among the proposals. Ms. Ward noted that RDN is local, located in Santa Barbara, has worked with local agencies, including the Ventura River Water District, and was very proactive in reaching out during the process of publishing the RFP and submission of the proposal.

Director Cooper was pleased with the wide range of proposals and support approving RDN for the MOWD rate study.

Director Kentosh stated that the Board needs to update its 5-10 year capital project plan and make a decision on the direction of the replacement treatment plant. Ms. Ward will schedule a Treatment Plant Committee meeting to review and update the project plan and discuss the treatment plant project. The Committee will present its recommendations at the next board meeting.

Director Kentosh made a motion to approve Robert D. Niehaus for an amount not to exceed \$34,000, and authorizes staff to sign the service agreement in consultation with Attorney Nielson. Director Pangea seconded the motion.

No Public Comment.

Kentosh/Pangea

(5) Ayes – M/S/C

8. General Manager's Report

Mr. Martinez reported that the Casitas Lake level is at 93.8%, a 1/2ft drop in a month. Mr. Martinez noted that the static water levels at Wells 4a & 7 dropped 10ft. All wells remain offline due to the rehabilitation of Well 4a. Cascade informed us that the manufacturer supplied inferior materials that did not meet the specifications. Cascade is attempting to work with the manufacturer but may ultimately switch to a new company. In the meantime, Cascade wants to get the District back online, so it has purchased temporary equipment at no cost to the District. Today, Cascade ran the rehabbed well to waste, and it was producing at 560 gallons per minute (gpm). After Well 4a was drilled and before rehabilitation, it was running at a rate below 400 gpm. For reference, the old Well 4 produced up to 850 gpm. The District has contracted with Resource Compliance to complete MOWD's CalARP enrollment. A site assessment is scheduled for September 18. Staff will schedule a Safety Committee meeting following the assessment.

No Public Comment.

9. **Board Secretary's Report**

Ms. Ward noted that the new Backflow Program is up and running. The District went live with BSI on July 1. So far, 15 tests have been uploaded for device owners, out of 80 total, which are scheduled throughout the calendar year. The Backflow Prevention Program Plan is still pending final approval with the State. The FY24-25 financial audit is underway. Ms. Ward reminded two Directors that they need to complete their biennial training. Ms. Ward stated that there are some pending bills with the State that, if passed and signed by the Governor, would impact the Brown Act, as well as potentially require additional Financial Responsibility training for elected officials.

No Public Comment.

10. **Board Committee Reports**

- Executive & Personnel Committee: No report.
- UVRGA: Met, Jeff Palmer, the former OV Sanitation District GM, was nominated for the County Director seat.
- Budget/Rate Committee: No report.
- Emergency Management Committee: No report.
- Allocations, New Meters & Expansion of Services Committee: No report.
- Grants: No report.
- 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: No report
- Director Pangea: No report
- Director Cooper: No report
- Director Etchart: No report.

13. **Meeting Adjournment**

The next meeting will be held on October 21, 2025, at 6:00 pm. Since there was no further business to conduct, Board President Mike Etchart adjourned the meeting at 7:16 pm.

Board Secretary

Board President