

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
OF
THE IRRIGATION COMMITTEE**

6425 Main Street,
Georgetown, California 95634
**Thursday, July 20, 2023
2:00 P.M.**

Irrigation Committee

Ray Griffiths, Chairman
Bill Threlkel, Vice Chair
Carla Sutton, Secretary
Fran Todd

Alexandra Duarte
Kristy McKay
Eric Mead

Board of Directors Liaison

Donna Seaman
Mike Thornbrough

MISSION STATEMENT

It is the purpose of the Georgetown Divide Public Utility District to:

- Provide reliable water supplies.
 - Ensure high-quality drinking water.
 - Promote stewardship to protect community resources, public health, and quality of life.
 - Provide excellent and responsive customer services through dedicated and valued staff.
 - Ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability are observed by balancing immediate and long-term needs.
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1. CALL TO ORDER — ROLL CALL — PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Griffiths called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call was taken.

Present: Threlkel, Sutton, Todd, and Griffiths

Absent: Duarte, McKay, and Mead

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Member Todd motioned to adopt the agenda. Member Sutton seconded the motion.

3. PUBLIC FORUM

Bonnie Neeley, I am curious that the agenda doesn't appear to talk about the fact that irrigation season apparently was late this year quite a bit, and a lot of people still don't have irrigation. Why they don't call, I have no idea, but a lot of people in Garden Valley are without it. Some in Kelsey still don't have it. One happens to be an AT&T tech who was repairing my phone. I said something about GDPUD and he goes into this whole thing about the water coming out late. Then it came out and just squashed his strawberries. His crop is ruined. He didn't want to tell me where he lived. There are a

number of people without irrigation. So, the man who came to the last meeting and sat in the corner and was going to speak and then he decided he was nervous. I was talking to him outside. He hasn't gotten water and he called and asked for his money back and they said no you signed a contract. So, he came to talk to you all, but it was finance or something and he didn't find a place to speak, so he just went back outside.

Stephen Dowd, my wife, and I went to Stumpy Meadows a couple of nights ago. The water is perfect, but it is about 6 inches below the spillway top. There are many logs and debris on the side you can't walk anywhere. Normally you can go over where the booms are and sit, but you can't get to them. There is too much debris. I told my wife in the kayak to go over there, and she couldn't make it because there was so much stuff, unbelievable. It is up against the booms. I have never seen it like that.

Chris Campbell, I have general questions. What is the status of the water use survey? Several months ago, there was mention of some form of a survey to landowners regarding the type of crops they are growing and stuff like that. What is the status of the development of that land use, water use summary? Is that something that is intended to be a questionnaire that will be distributed before the beginning of the next irrigation season? Somewhat related to that and the start of the irrigation season for next year, maybe something to explore, what is the possibility for say those landowners or water users that are lower down in elevation versus those that are higher up in elevation to potentially have the water turned on May 1? Then those landowners that are higher up or water users that are higher up in elevation and don't necessarily need that water to start May 1 have it start on June 1st. What's the possibility of having a tiered or staggered irrigation start schedule across your water users? The ground I am on is basically near the bottom of the system. Any excess dumps into Pilot Creek and then on to Folsom.

Bonnie Neeley asked excuse me do we have rights to Pilot Creek? I know I asked you before, but I can't remember.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 20, 2023

Member Todd motioned to approve the minutes. Member Threlkel seconded the motion.

Ayes: Threlkel, Sutton, Todd, and Griffiths

Nays: None

5. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS

A. Water Resources Update

Water Resources Manager Alexis Elliott reviewed the report. The seasonal outlook remains the same as last month. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is forecasting equal chances for both precipitation and temperature highs or lows. The reports have seen the inclusion of a five-year rainfall average. The measurements are gathered from the Sweetwater Water Treatment Plant location.

6. ACTION ITEMS

A. Review Historic Irrigation Sales Data

It was shared that there were questions regarding the history and the future of Irrigation water. Public and Committee interest levels surrounding this issue led to this item

coming before the committee. Data from the last 6 years was gathered regarding sales and revenue. In 2019 there was a rate increase since there has been a steady decrease of about \$30,000 in revenue. From 2018 to now the District lost approximately 60 inches in irrigation water sales. The questions are, how do we get back some of those inches? Is there a methodology to do this? There was a noticeable drop in irrigation customers when the rates went up. Last year the District lost approximately 13 inches in sales. There are about 500 acre-feet of water which are not being sold. There is a rate study planned to assist with understanding the Irrigation service. The service must be self-sustaining per Proposition 218.

Committee Discussion:

There was discussion and interest in surveying current past and potential irrigation customers. It was discussed that many existing customers have reduced their inches in recent years. Informing residents that sharing is an option if done correctly was pitched as a tactic to increase sales. Public perception is often that inches aren't available. It was suggested that a study around the idea of lower rates be conducted to learn if that would increase sales. System reliability and water delivery issues to the customers were examined as potential points of negativity impacting interest in continuing service. A new customer letter could be developed to send out when escrows and property sales occur. Targeted lettering was suggested to be sent out in areas with inches available. In terms of Outreach the mail, newspaper, and social media were identified by the Committee as the best vehicles for public outreach on the Divide. There was a discussion surrounding the possibility of longer season water availability. Certain legs of the ditches are being identified and examined for potential extended-season offerings.

Public Comment:

Stephen Dowd, the flaw was the 218-rate study that we had. That was flawed and it sent everybody in the wrong direction. We all knew that if the rates went up on the irrigation, we were going to lose customers. We told everybody right there. If you lower the rates now, you guys have some good ideas. You are doing good. Lower the rates then you will get customers back and more money in. It is like taxes; nobody wants to pay taxes, so they cut back on what they are doing so that they don't have a rate increase. We were for the treated water increase, but not as much. We thought yeah, we will pay more, but not like what it ended up being. That to irrigation we knew it was a killer, and it did it. If you lower it you will get money and customers back. You will be happy.

Bonnie Neeley, in terms of announcing that you might have more water, you might know how to increase sales. The irrigation water does not flow down the same waterways as the ditch water. It is all always running because it goes to the two treatment plants. The irrigation water comes down like five little tributaries. You know Cool, Pilot Hill all the way around, each one only has a certain depth or width. Some of them maybe you can only sell to three customers and another one you may have fifteen customers and then if part of the fifteen customers leave that water is available only in that tributary. You can't assume that Joe Schmo over here can get more. Whenever you talk about selling more inches be careful that the customer understands that each tributary can only afford so many inches. If you say decide that you are not going to pay it or pay less, it changes the level of the water. So, the ditch guys are always out there checking the levels of the water. That's why they want you to take water 24 hours a day. So, if you don't that means more water is going and maybe the next guy gets flooded. Then they correct it and you, it's a very antiquated system. It is hands-on most of the time.

Chris Campbell, in order to be self-sustaining is there an annual revenue threshold that

must be targeted? At present is there enough buffer between what that is and where we are at right now with the revenue? It was shared that the buffer is very limited there is no buffer it is neck and neck. Mr. Campbell asked if it was possible to go from five months to six months. Can another month of irrigation be squeezed out and probably generate considerable revenue? The land that I am leasing is close to Pilot Creek Ranch in Pilot Hill. I spoke with the landowner out there. I know that it requires an upgrade in the pipe system in order for them to take tens of inches of water. That is a significant ranch down here at the bottom of the system that would require delivery upgrades to the antiquated system. Pilot Creek Ranch is a sizeable operation down there.

Cherie Carlyon, the half inch is probably from Garden Valley because you can get an inch and a half or a half inch in Garden Valley because of being on pipes. Nick does not have the expense budget for irrigation currently based on the expense that was put in the last 218. It was shared that there is an expense for the raw water budget though some of that crosses over into other categories as well. Looking at account 5200, that would be a general idea of what expenses are for irrigation. Based on the previous 218, they get a certain amount, of percentages from each ditch. Have you not calculated that out at the current rate, expenses by the formula from 218? They did a certain percent of each ditch were irrigation and a certain percent was treated. They had a calculation because they had a separate irrigation budget in the 218 separate from treated. At the time when they were selling over 617 inches, they just broke even with the expenses and income. Now we are actually below 116 inches, not 60 inches because of the rate increases. It's not 60, it's 116 because you have to go by the 2017 irrigation season. So, I am assuming you don't have a current full irrigation budget.

Stephen Dowd wondered if the amount of revenue from irrigation in 2018 before the rate increase and before the customers were lost how much money would we have made if we had not lost those customers? How much money would we have maintained? Would it be in the positive? It was shared that there is more revenue coming in currently than when the rate increase initially took effect by approximately \$37,000 annually.

B. Review of Resolution, Irrigation Committee Roles, and Responsibilities.

This item was tabled for return at the next meeting.

C. Review of Current and Future Water Seasons

The Committee inquired about customer complaints regarding the irrigation season start date this year. The comments received by the District from customers were regarding communication. The District followed up on those complaints and found that the customers were contacted using four different modes of delivery. The discussion surrounding the season start date had been ongoing for three months before the Committee recommendation was sent to the Board of Directors.

Public Comment:

Chris Campbell, I was late to the conversation regarding the delay in the irrigation season. I lease land for cattle and the landowner has irrigation service, which is within the utility district, Pilot Hill. Can those who live lower in the system start in May versus those who live higher up in the system? Can the five-month season be extended to six months? My irrigated pasture was in a moisture deficit after the first week of May. By June I was making up for lost time as the soil and the grass were stressed at that point in time. Hopefully, the survey will yield some benefit in terms of identifying those who would benefit from earlier and later season start dates. Could a tiered schedule be implemented?

Bonnie Neeley, with respect to whether you start in May, or end in October when I was on the Board and checking with people like Norm Kriszle, who has had grapes forever, or the Duartes. The grape people need to have water early. They need it May 1, because the water has to be down ten inches before their grape plants will grow. On the other end, you get people who need it. I know when there were discussions before, how do you sort? Each person will either gain or lose depending on what the month is. Staff shared that for the record the Duartes were one of the voices asking for a June first start date.

D. Review the Proposed Ordinance

The changes to the Irrigation Ordinance were reviewed. The length of irrigation service interruption during which water delivery has been unavailable before District responsibility and customer refunds are issued was examined. The Committee agreed and compromised over 3 days on the issue. The antiquated infrastructure has been a challenge. This paired with weekend staffing were reasons for the need to give the District 3 days to remedy water delivery issues.

Section six was added to the end of the Ordinance titled additional irrigation sales. This addition will allow flexibility in irrigation season length and water sales possibilities and exploration.

Public Comment:

Cherie Carlyon inquired about the definitions appendix at the end and shared that it was not included. It was shared that the definitions are now located at the beginning of the Ordinance comprising section one.

Member Threlkel motioned to approve the referral of the Ordinance 2005-01 to the Board of Directors for approval and adoption. Member Todd seconded the motion.

Ayes: Threlkel, Sutton, Todd, and Griffiths

Nayes: None

E. Recommend Removal of Eric Mead to The Board of Directors:

It was shared that Mr. Mead has not been in attendance at committee meetings. There has also been a lack of communication. Within District by laws, it is stated that once a committee member has missed three meetings they may be removed.

Member Sutton motioned to refer the recommendation for the removal of Member Eric Mead to the Board of Directors. Member Todd seconded the motion.

Ayes: Threlkel, Sutton, Todd, and Griffiths

Nayes: None

7. IRRIGATION COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS AND REPORTS

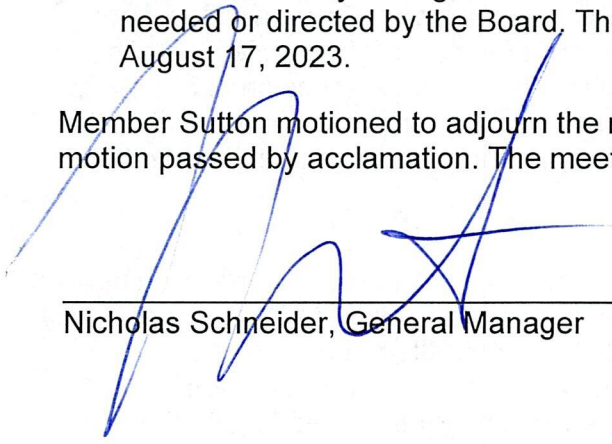
There were no reports to deliver.

8. AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE NEXT IRRIGATION COMMITTEE MEETING

It was requested to bring back the officer selection item for the next meeting.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE AND ADJOURNMENT – The Irrigation Committee set the 3rd Thursday for regular committee meetings during the Irrigation season, and as needed or directed by the Board. The next regular Irrigation Committee meeting is August 17, 2023.

Member Sutton motioned to adjourn the meeting. Member Threlkel seconded the motion. The motion passed by acclamation. The meeting adjourned at 3:20 PM.



Nicholas Schneider, General Manager

9-21-23
Date