



## Semitropic Water Storage District July 8, 2020

By Don A. Wright

**T**he **Semitropic Water Storage District** board of directors held its meeting remotely from its Wasco headquarters on Wednesday, July 8, 2020. The meeting was scheduled for 12:30pm on GoToMeeting. The first act was for Chairman **Dan Waterhouse** to call the meeting to order at exactly half past noon. One of the directors, **Todd Tracy**, was unable to attend due to his daughter was in the hospital. So, prayers were requested.

The flag salute and introduction of guests were waived and the agenda and minutes were approved. **SWSD's Marsha Payne** took roll call votes on action items. The treasurer's report was next and that was approved without comment. Payment of the bills and the financial statements were put on the screen. Controller **Bobby Salinas** said with the meeting falling earlier than usual this month there are some items yet to come in. General Manager **Jason Gianquinto** said there will be a dip in the cash fall early this fall as many capital improvement payments line up like the planets. But things will still be on track fiscally for the cumulative year. The board approved paying the bills.



### Action Items

The board then considered a resolution in support of filing a grant for \$750,000 from the US Bureau of Reclamation for a subsurface recharge project. There was a second grant for \$300,000 and district engineer **Isela Medina** wrapped them up together in her presentation. She said the recitals show the board willing to apply, manage and meet a cost match requirement. Both resolutions passed.

Medina reported there was a good deal of vandalism and theft at various sites around the district. One in particular is the District Reverse Flow Pumping Plants and it is very important to recovery operations. Quantum Electric is the contractor selected to fix things. Gianquinto said the district has armored the facilities and that caused the damage to be greater when the bad guys were successful in stealing the copper. He said it is possible to remove the wiring as a whole when not in use. There were thefts throughout the district over the Fourth of July weekend to growers as well. The no bail state of the state isn't helping. Waterhouse suggested hiring security for the remainder of pump back season. The board liked that and approved Quantum's bid.

Farmers Coop wants to lease 40-acres of property from SWSD for a gypsum spreading site. The district didn't want to worry about the egress to and from the property and said the lease needs to specify FC works that out with the private property owners. Sandridge Farms was listed as having a road that would work. There might have to be some gravel laid and such. The board approved under the conditions it doesn't have to fool with any of the egress issues.

## **GSA**

The next part of the meeting dealt with the SGMA matter. Gianquinto said Management Action One would be establishing a water budget and Management Action Two would be a tiered pricing structure. He also said there are ways of enforcing the budget. The GSA could charge \$500 an acre foot for over-pumping and a \$1,000 a day fine if a pumper doesn't knock it off right away. Developing the tier was approved.

**Larry Rodriguez** of GEI Engineering gave an update saying there are a bunch of monitoring wells set up and the first report went to DWR last month. He said there are 12 monitoring wells for elevation and water quality. Each well has a specific measurable object and minimum threshold. He also said there are a series of proposed well locations to enhance the monitoring as needed by SGMA. He reviewed the process for establishing MO and MT. Averages were made from surrounding areas and extrapolated for 2040 to find a minimum threshold and 2030 to find the measurable objective. The projection was created from 2015 backwards. There have been some wet years since then and reduction in irrigated acreage that has made the situation better. Measurements are taken spring and fall.

Gianquinto showed various hydrographic charts of wells throughout the district. It was also pointed out using the worst case scenario to set the minimum thresholds was criticized by some but it is early in the game and the thresholds can be still be raised. But interestingly the harsher initial goals has spurred responses earlier that have lessened the stress somewhat.

## **Consultants**

The WM Lyles report was first and the man said SWRU construction has progressed to the point all the plastic piping has been replaced and he expects it to be operational by sometime in August. There is a monitoring component waiting for PG&E to do something. There were also additional solar testing and analysis and it was determined a ramp up and down be added. Even though there isn't enough demand at the moment to keep the things running they can get a PG&E waiver to shift loads.

A GEI update was listed next. Rodriguez said the Cox Canal Intertie bidding services and project management was completed. There was an engineering peer review for a canal modifications. There was a federal grant award and grant support on going. The groundwater model was completed if I understood correctly. Data is being entered.

Next one of my favorite people **Will Boschman** gave his report saying there is a meeting of Agua Via shareholders about the 45,000 a/f water purchase agreement. There is also an Aqua Planet 100,000 a/f agreement that has been hampered due to coronavirus travel restrictions. He said there are many water sellers but the price is pretty high. Boschman reported on the State Water Contractors meeting where nothing new was revealed. It was declared a dry year. It was predicted there will be 360,000 a/f transferred throughout the state, presumably supplies from Northern California. He said the San Luis Reservoir is at 66 percent capacity. If I understood correctly DWR was able to overcharge the state contractors about \$130 million in 2019.

**Dean Florez** gave his report saying there have been five assembly and one state senator have come down with coronavirus and are going to the hospital. The legislature was going to come back on July 13<sup>th</sup> with 500 bills on hold, but that's not going to happen. There have been some suggestions in Sacramento itself that California might survive without passing 500 more laws before December. Florez said something else amazing; there is a list of CEQA exemptions proposed that is gaining traffic. There's a bill that might require some kind of fiscal accountability on the enviro side. I don't know if I'm hearing correctly or not. State Senator **Melissa Hurtado** has started something with her support of fixing the Friant Kern Canal. The feds are requesting another \$71 million in the budget for a FKC fix. And the Central Valley Project won a court case throwing out certain temperature restrictions on Shasta releases. Florez predicted the losses from the virus thanks to accounting tricks in Sacramento won't hit the state all that hard – until next year. He said High Speed Rail is imploding on itself. Dems in Southern California want to take that money back south for electric trains. HSR is awaiting an audit. The state wants 70 percent of the workers on HSR to be state workers and right now it only has 30 percent. There are forces on the majority side want to shut it down. Florez was a state senator and a Democrat so to hear this much good news was a pleasant surprise.

### **GM Report**

Gianquinto said the office is still closed to the public and all staff are wearing masks. He said COVID has struck Wasco with some of the local growers having to deal with the ramifications. He said Delta exports in June were much higher on the federal side. The state side was reducing exports and not making releases while the feds were releasing more from Shasta. He heard from the Kern County Water Agency the state thinks it gets a bigger bank for the buck to delay releases until July. Both Metropolitan WD and Santa Clara Valley WD are reducing recovery requests for now.

Gianquinto reported there was no Kern Groundwater Authority meeting last month and GSP comment responses are ongoing. He reported at yesterday's Kern Water Bank meeting habitat credit prices were raised to \$20,000 per. He also reported the office phone system has been failing at greater and greater levels. He said staff will most likely be presenting the board will some upgrade options next month and as if on cue the audio quality got all itchy and scratchy. Which was good timing as the meeting went into closed session and that was that for this month.

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### **SEMITROPIC WATER STORAGE DISTRICT**

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**Board:** Rick Wegis - President, Philip W. Portwood - Vice President, Dan Waterhouse – Treasurer, Todd Tracy – Secretary, Jeff Fabbri, Tim Thomson, Tom Toretta

**Staff:** Jason Gianquinto-General Manager, Bobby Salinas-District Controller, Isela Medina-District Engineer, Executive Secretary-Marsha Payne, Consultant-Will Boschman, Superintendent-John Lynch & Attorney

**About:** Semitropic Water Storage District is one of eight water storage districts in California and is the largest in Kern County. The District delivers water to nearly 300 customers for the irrigation of approximately 140,000 acres for agricultural uses. Semitropic also supplies energy to a variety of users and provides groundwater banking and storage services. Established in 1958, Semitropic Water Storage District covers an area of more than 220,000 acres. It began as an irrigation district for the purpose of securing State Water Project supplies to reduce groundwater overdraft. *From [www.semitropic.com](http://www.semitropic.com)*