

Water Wrights

Madera Irrigation District and Groundwater Sustainability Agency Board of Directors Special Meetings – August 6, 2020

By Joel Hastings

After an hour-long scheduled executive session, the Madera Irrigation District Board open meeting was called to order via Zoom at 2:13 p.m. by **President Jim Erickson**. The Pledge was said first, and all directors were present. In closed session, the agenda said there were two anticipated and three existing items of litigation. One reportable item coming out of the session was regarding the joint agreement with the City of Madera regarding the use of the land near the airport for a recharge basin. The matter was discussed later in the meeting and is described below. The chairman invited public comment, but none was forthcoming.

MID Board adjourned and the GSA was convened. The coordination agreement for the Subbasin was signed by all seven agencies and submitted to the state. There has been no formal acknowledgement but the \$500,000 grant that had been suspended has been reinstated with \$400,000 provided already.

The MID GSA adjourned and the MID Board reconvened. Meeting minutes for June 16 and June 19 were approved.

Controller **Jen Furstenburg** gave the financial report noting that water deliveries and invoices were in order and that bond payments are due as scheduled

on September 1st. Furstenburg praised her two new employees and is pleased with the operations of the finance department.

HR Director **Tanesha Welch** said the new finance employees had been brought on board. A focus continues maintaining proper procedures in the face of COVID-19 to safeguard the health and safety of all staff.

In his engineering, operations and maintenance report, **Charles Contreras** described at long list of new construction and repair projects completed and in progress. He presented a handout with details and photos showing work on piping, gates, turnouts and fencing. He said mapping is being done so that employees can more quickly and conveniently locate items for work when necessary. The system has much old infrastructure that takes lots of replacement work. The board expressed appreciation for these ongoing efforts.



In his General Manager's report, **Tommy Greci** said the Friant North Authority has been dissolved, previously agreed with MID and now Fresno ID. It no longer served a purpose since several agencies have withdrawn and the Friant Water Authority is working well.

As of July 15th, MID is administering the MCWPA (Madera Chowchilla Water & Power Authority) taking over all duties. Invoicing is now current, and policies and procedures are being updated. He said there had been a useful meeting with a representative of the Bureau of Reclamation to prioritize improvements in the Madera Canal, which serves the MID and the Chowchilla ID, delivering water from Friant Dam. For example, the BOR is providing an underwater "drone" to examine the canal bottom for damage or obstructions.

The MID Centennial celebration postponed due to COVID-19 from spring to fall is now being reformatted. Directors and staff will host members of the public in one-hour time slots between noon and 6 p.m. This allows smaller groups as required by the COVID-19 rules for public gatherings. The session is set for Friday, Oct. 2 at the San Joaquin Winery in Madera. It's free and attendees will be able to speak with board members and to meet the author of the MID history book, which will be available early next month. The staff is hoping this will provide a friendly environment to share the accomplishments of the District in its 100th year.

Greci said the 2020 water year is winding down and that shut down of the system will begin Aug. 8. After that, water will only be offered on an "as available" basis. The goal is to get as many as 10,000 acre/feet out of the system as it is shut down, trying to deliver every drop. During the season this year that began in May, 100,000 acre/feet were delivered to growers.

He said he saw a reduction in demand beginning earlier than usual, a week and a half ago. Several grower board members observed that the nut crops were a little earlier and harvest is underway.

Andrea Sandoval, executive assistant, reported on the new digital water management tool... Water UI... that is now online available to all MID customers. She put up several slides on the Zoom screen depicting the dashboard that shows customers' water usage, account balance, turnout status, and a map. Deliveries are listed in both numerical and graphical format. Also shown is parcel use, owned or leased and location. Landowners with difference accounts can link them, too. It's free and mobile friendly.

"I think it's an awesome tool," she said. Letters are being sent with water statements to let growers know about it. There are already 116 accounts being used, some ten percent of the total. Directors commented that there will likely be more uptake after harvest and for all those needing to get it on their computers a lot of people didn't know about Zoom, either, but they do now.

New Business

A resolution was approved unanimously to submit an application to Madera County LAFCo to annex a 400-acre parcel that had been in the Gravelly Ford Water District, adjacent to MID. All parties agree on the change.

A three-month easement was granted to PG & E to park construction equipment an available space at the MID facilities along Hwy. 12. The utility is working on a gas line and will pay \$500 a month.

The General Manager was authorized to manage water supplies that might result from recirculation of water released from Friant Dam that could become available. The resolution allows him to reach agreements with not only IDs but also other entities. It was noted that this resolution is passed every year and it was suggested that it stay in place as long as Greci is GM. He said he would keep the board apprised of all agreements.

Coming out of Executive Session, the board moved to notify the city of Madera that it would terminate the current agreement between MID and the City working together on a 12.2 acre parcel near the airport that can be used as a recharge basin. MID proposes an updated agreement in its place that also does not charge the city but brings it up to date.

Director Loquaci said he had watched the city council meeting on Zoom the night before and was frustrated the Council did not approve the agreement and instead sent it back to staff. This, after some 10 years of trying to get this nailed down.

Two city council members and the city manager were present on Zoom and at this point spoke up. The council members said they were new to their positions and did not understand the nature of the agreement or the amount of time that had already been spent. They assured the MID board they did want to work together constructively. City Manager **Arnoldo Rodrigues** supported his council members saying they wanted to approve the new agreement and would no doubt do so once provided more information. He took responsibility for any lack of information, but said he was new to his position, too. He said he respectfully asked if the MID board resolution could be amended to provide a bit more time for the Council to act.

After discussion, the MID Board passed the resolution unanimously to approve the new agreement at its September 16th meeting providing the city had acted in favor. Manager Rodrigues expressed his appreciation and gave assurances things would move forward on the city side.

Directors' Reports

Richard Cosyns – It's been a pretty good water season, considering the year. Between construction and maintenance, Charles (Contreras) has had a lot going on. Director Cosyns is getting feedback from growers about ditch maintenance, too. A grower only sees his ditch. It's a difficult balance between construction and routine maintenance.

Brian Davis – no report

Carl Janzen – He reported on a recent Friant Power Authority meeting working on purchasing and replacing transformers. Replacement can't happen by December. The equipment won't be delivered until next year, but it should be installed by December 2021. He said \$83,000 had been earned from power generation. Millerton Lake had dropped 25 feet which makes a big difference in how much power can be generated.

Dave Loquaci – Everybody stay safe and have a good harvest.

James Erickson – He had attended the Friant Exec Board and regular meeting but had no news. During harvest keep yourselves and your employees safe.

The next meeting was set for Sept. 15 and at 3:34 p.m. the Board went back into executive session. No reportable actions came out of that session and the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

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Staff: General Manager -Thomas Greci, Assistant GM – Dina Nolan

Board: Dave Loquaci, Rick Cosyns, Brian Davis, Jim Erickson and Carl Janzen

HISTORY: From www.madera-id.org The Madera Irrigation District (MID or District) encompasses an area of approximately 139,665 acres. MID operates a primarily gravity irrigation distribution system with approximately 300 miles of open flow canal systems as well as 150 miles of large diameter pipelines.

The District has a Central Valley Project (CVP) repayment contract with United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) providing up to 85,000 acre feet (AF) of Class 1 and 186,000 AF of Class 2 water per year from the Friant Division (Millerton Lake). The CVP water is released from Millerton Lake through the Friant Dam, and then conveyed through the Madera Canal for delivery into the District's service area. The District also entered into a CVP repayment contract with the USBR for the yield from the Hidden Unit (Hensley Lake). Under the Hidden Unit contract, the average annual supply available to the District is approximately 24,000 AF per year.

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