

# Water Wrights



Fresno Irrigation District July 21, 2020

By Don A. Wright

The **Fresno Irrigation District** held its board of directors meeting remotely at its Fresno headquarters on Tuesday, July 21, 2020. The meeting was scheduled to start at 4:00pm. Westlands had just ended. Our man and Chairman of the Board **Ryan Jacobsen** is stickler for punctuality and by my clock things didn't start until one after. There was a flag salute and **FID** Assistant General Manager **Kassy Chauhan** read the rules needing to be observed for a smooth meeting. There was a role call and no public comments were entered.

There were no changes to the agenda and Jacobsen said ACWA will be a virtual conference next week. There were no conflicts of interest which was nice. The consent calendar was next and no items were pulled. The board voted assent to the consent. Chauhan called role.

Financial reports were given by **DeAnn Hailey** who said Fresno County sent a big, fat \$3.9 million assessment check. Also more than \$8 million in water sales have taken place this year. It sounded like Director **George Porter** was asking a question about five-year bonds called early.

It was hard to hear him. Interest rates had dropped and the bonds ended up being refinanced. The board approved the financial reports.

Hailey asked to retain the same auditors for another year as there are some special bond figures that should be assembled. Having an auditor with knowledge of these reports and knowledge of FID. The current auditors have been working well and this would be a help to Hailey. Director **Greg Beberian** asked has there been enough changes in CPAs and why. Hailey said keeping a different set of eyes on the books is the reason for changing things around. The current auditor will be allowed to help this year but next year an RFP will go out.

FID's **Adam Claes** gave his report saying Pine Flat has less than half a million a/f in storage. FID, Alta ID, Consolidated ID and assorted lower river districts is drawing down storage. The Kings River Water Association expects 150,000 a/f of storage left at the end of September. That's enough to keep the temperature control pool in good shape and keep deliveries to the surface water treatment plants. Late snow melts on the Kings River watershed are a benefit to FID. It gets more water longer.

Claes put the routing chart on screen. This chart shows how much water has been used and how much is expected to be used and that impact on storage. Director **Jerry Prieto** represents the east side of the district including where I live. Claes said it would be a benefit for the district to extend the eastside water run by two weeks. It is upgradient to the rest of the district and the aquifer is weaker. That's where I live. General Manager **Bill Stretch** said FID has traditionally held a hardship run instead of that it makes sense to extra water the eastside. He said studies show east siders use less



water. Beberian asked what would it take to run the entire district for an extra two weeks. Claes said there just isn't enough water in Pine Flat to do so. It would take out the TCP. So, there will be a two week extension on the eastside and no hardship water. The board agreed. Claes added there will be 11,000 a/f going to an area that missed out on some deliveries this year because High Speed Rail construction damaged an FID pipe on the Oleander South Line. HSR strikes again.

Lawrence Kimura is the top dog, head bull goose, wheel hos of the entire FID engineering gang. He gave his report saying he's working with developers to qualify for some grant funding. He said something about the Wagner site and said he won't be bringing that one back to the board until August. Which makes sense. Kimura said HSR has been keeping at it, lots of meetings and lots of changes. Staff is looking at the Herndon Canal refurbishing. A video of what mischief HSR has been up to was shown without any sound. It looked like the state in all its wisdom is building a station near Wasco in the middle of an almond orchard. It was also announced one of the engineers at FID has gone to manage Cal Trans in the San Joaquin Valley. It was hard to tell but everyone is happy to have someone working for the state who understands ag and ag water.

Kimura said the City of Fresno has a grant to plan another trail. This time for five miles along Fancher Creek as part of the urban trails. He also reported there is a master agreement with the City of Clovis coming together.

Kimura put up a map of basins being developed. There are four of them on the westside of Fresno. The Wagner Basin is 60 acres and the Central Basin has three site for a total of 90 acres. Kimura was reporting by phone and until today I wasn't aware he raised geese. Good for him. At least it sounded like a goose wandering around. Jacobsen said there is a basin going in at Orange and Lincoln Avenues that has a peninsula with a house on it. He said it really looks cool. Turns out the home owner is an FID employee.

Claes gave the construction report and said the Fresno County Sheriff Rescue Team likes to practice in one of FID's faster flowing canals on the eastside. That'd be fun to watch. Claes continued saying trash in the canals continue to be a big deal. He said crews pull about 25 tons of junk out of the canals every month. That's a lot. He showed some pipe repair in an area where there is rarely a call on water but there was this year. They found a big leak.

Claes reported due to the Chinese Commie Virus the district installed new time clocks that you don't touch. Cards with codes are issued and waved in front of the time clock. There are also seepage on a major canal that runs right through town. It's a raised, lined on the side and open on the bottom but there is standing water in abutting backyards. Staff recommends spending about a quarter of a million dollars to reline about 400 feet. They also find a 67 year old pipeline that wasn't all that well known. A grower was taking out raisin vines and accidentally hit it. The pipe was not very deep. Beberian asked if the district has right of way and the answer is yes. He asked if it is policy to go and fix this type of break. Stretch said Beberian is correct that FID doesn't have the resources to fix all of the possible similar scenarios. There are few good solutions to this problem. There was also a church north of Kerman that's basement floods every time FID charges the nearby canal. So, that's something that has to be fixed. They stuck a band aid on it to get through the season. And east of town a grower used a 2 ½ foot shank to rip up a FID pipe that was only two feet deep. Berberian pointed out when disking you can change the ground level half a foot. About 1,200 feet needs to be rebuilt. Altogether the repairs are going to be about a million bucks.

Prieto asked how to get a project on the to do list. There's an overflow valve that can flood a neighbor's home. Claes said staff is working on it. Beberian asked if any other director wants to develop policy when a grower changes land use and digs deeper who will pay for the damage. Stretch told him staff has direction to address this.

There is a canal that runs through Fresno's urban area. There is a siphon, a large siphon that runs under Belmont and Olive for more than 100 yards. Cars run into it and bodies get sucked into it. Rescue is one thing, of course do all you can. But if there is good suspicion a body has been swept under the road during deliveries there have been instances where the body had to stay. Now the district can do a "bumping" quickly lowering the water levels for a brief time to dislodge whatever might be there. Staff has refined the policy for an update and divided certain actions for board approval and actions that staff can undertake independently. The new policy includes the scenario of a body being trapped (remember not a living person) during the last 14 days of a delivery season there won't be an interruption. In-house council **Jeff Boswell** said when the original policy was written they didn't know about bumping. In the past 30-years the bumping has been effective and a system has never had to be shut down completely. He doesn't think the board will really be involved now or the future. Jacobsen suggested the board be disconnected and policy just stipulates the board be informed but staff's discretion be the sole determining factor. Berberian brought the subject up a while ago and he wanted the staff to be cognizant to getting the bodies out of the canals as fast as possible. Staff was ready to rewrite and resubmit.

Chauhan gave the SGMA update saying the Kings Sub Basin is working together to get the missing data recovered. There is an airborne electromagnetic mapping paid for by Stanford University. The flights will start in late August early September. Should be some excellent data for recharge. The North Kings GSA got a \$70,000 grant to be spent on monitoring. GSP comments total nine but one of them had a 500 page attachment. Groundwater dependent ecosystems, domestic wells and some (I think unwarranted) negative outreach criticism. NKGSA has done a good deal of outreach work. There are gripping complainers out there who spread this around to everyone. The NKGSA won't be directly addressing every comment letter. The Advisory Committee didn't want to get into the comment on the comment loop. The GSA is working to get access agreements from well owners. It takes a lot of effort to get this together due to legal documentation. Porter was sent a letter of request.

Chauhan continued saying Fresno County has adopted a policy that new well permits have to include GSA information. There will be a meeting with well drillers and the county to explain the process. I could see that happening in other counties.

I believe Chauhan is actually the Special Project Manager and Claes is the Assistant Manager. Perhaps someone will kindly straighten me out on this. In any event Chauhan didn't have a special project beyond reporting there is an opportunity to include a solar project for the headquarters campus. There is an old brick building known as the annex and it sounds like the files of the decades have been sent there to molder and staff is working on a way to digitize things.

The nitrate monitoring under the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program now requires domestic wells on farm property to be tested by the end of this year. It's causing some confusion but the Kings River Water Quality Coalition can help. There will be a July 29<sup>th</sup> webinar to explain things. It's hosted by the KRWQC so you need to register for it.

Chauhan reported the politicians' paycheck protection plan was passed in Sacramento, they got the state budget up there. Fresno ID received some props from the Greater Fresno Chamber of Commerce State of the City Address. FID got a big pump on its website.

FID turned 100 this year and it's a shame the party has to take place online. Stretch handed out gifts to the board – certificates and a plaque. There were many other displays showing the history and purpose of the district. There was a June Centennial Celebration for the staff. In addition to the Chinese Commie Virus distancing deliveries were going on so it took six separate meetings to include everyone. Unfortunately the CCV has caused cancellations of other centennial events. Director **Chris Woolf** suggested FID vehicles have My Job Depends on Ag decals. Sounds good. There will be a PBS

MJDOA television show. The Fresno County Historical Society is holding a virtual 19<sup>th</sup> Century Time Traveler event that can include some of FID's history.

Chauhan said the software package by BoardEffect is used by Friant Water Authority and Kern Tulare ID. It meets IT security and legal requirements with secure data. Evidently FID is upgrading its computer programs. She hopes to roll it out in August. It would be nice to have good access to not only agendas but also board packages. Although I think the focus is on FID employees, staff and board. Good for her.

HR Director **September Singh** gave a staffing update. She said FID has gone through the interview process and selected **David Borough** to train under Water Master **Jim Irwin**. **Chuck** will replace Borough. **Jose Jimenez** will replace Chuck. This has all been internal promotions from experienced employees. Stretch said all these men have shown initiative and loyalty to the FID.

Singh reported all indoor staff must now wear masks. And outdoor staff must wear masks when dealing with clients. She's staying on top of it by following the guidelines issued.

Stretch gave his GM report saying the recent Kings River Water Association remotely and he remarked the time has been cut in have from in person meetings. Jacobsen will be the new Fish & Wildlife Committee chair. That group will meet quarterly. The Airborne Snow Observatory had limited flights this year but the data has been good and extremely prompt. KRWA was on top of the forecasts thanks to ASO.

He next reported on Friant matters saying there is a lot going on in Friant right now and they do a good job sending reports. The Friant Kern Canal repairs and financing were included. This is such a huge project with outreach and so many moving parts. The next board meeting is on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. There was conveyance fee calculations discussed. The water quality of the FKC has a consultant and an ad hoc committee. The folks at the south downstream end of the canal are impacted the most. A policy may be arrived at this week. Stretch said he found it very reasonable. Gravely Ford WD has become a trial member and Stretch wished them well.

Friant had divided and reformed a few times. One such result was the Friant North Authority. Four Friant contractors on the north end of the canal formed FNA. It's not really needed anymore and everyone but FID has dropped out. The board was asked to pass a Resolution 2020-09 to unjoin. Stretch said back in the day there were a great deal of stress within Friant but since then Friant has really stepped up its game. The board approved dissolving the Northern Alliance.

Stretch reported **Allen Hoffman**, GM of Fresno Flood Control is retiring. He wishes Hoffman good will. He also announced **Tommy Esqueda** will be moving on from Fresno State due to budget cuts. Stretch expressed his hopes Esqueda stays in the area and I hope so too.

Directors' Reports were next and Prieto thanked the board for the extension for the east side. He thinks that will help a lot of growers. At a little past 7:00pm the meeting then went into closed session and that was that.

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**Fresno Irrigation District** - The Fresno Irrigation District is located at 2907 So. Maple Avenue, Fresno CA 93725 phone 559/233-7161 and meets at 4:00pm on the third Tuesday of the month at district headquarters. FID is part of the Kings River North GSA

**Board**

Ryan Jacobsen – President, Jerry Prieto - Vice President, Greg Beberian, Christopher Woolf & George Porter

**Staff**

Bill Stretch - General Manager

DeAnn Hailey – Controller

Laurence Kimura – Chief Engineer

Jeff Boswell – General Counsel

Summer Singh – Asst. GM Administration

Adam Claes – Asst. GM Operations

Jim Irwin – Water Master

Hugo Egle – Operations Manager

Mike Prestridge – Superintend Construction & Maintenance