

Water Wrights

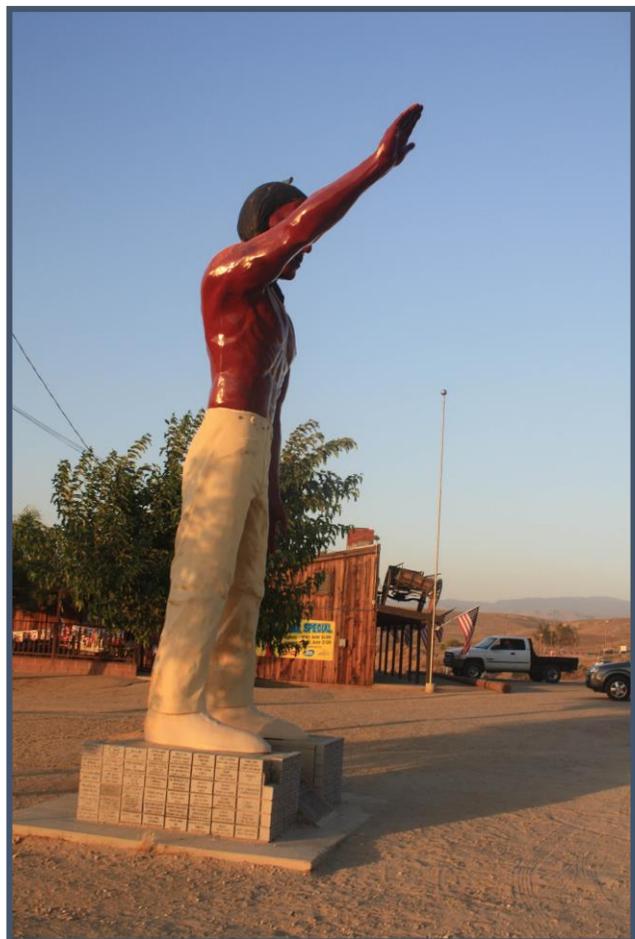
Buena Vista Water Storage District September 16, 2020

By Don A. Wright

The Buena Vista Water Storage District held its Wednesday, September 16, 2020 board of directors meeting at its Buttonwillow headquarters. It was a Zoom meeting. Something new to me happened at the end of the meeting. When the board went into closed session attendees were invited to hang out in a Zoom waiting room and when closed session ended the meeting would open for a report out of closed session and maybe a little chat. So, OK, let's do that. I was working away trying to clean up this report and the Zoom screen showed the agenda and announced to me I was in a waiting room. Then the entire screen went white with the Zoom logo in the middle. There were no icons at the bottom like you usually get in Windows 10 and the Zoom option tab to exit full screen was gone. I had to use the control/alt/delete move to get out of the room. They should change the name to the "Don't Sass Me, Go To Your Zoom Room Young Man (or Lady)!!!" Probably include a caveat, "Don't try to sneak out the window with the control/alt/delete and climb down the tree branch to go hang out with your stoner friends."

Chairman **John Vidovich** runs amongst the tightest of meetings I've attended. He called this one at 8:30am and things get rolling pretty fast. There was a full quorum and the minutes were approved. I didn't hear any public comments and the consent calendar was approved with a couple of items pulled. The way BVWSD handles a consent calendar is unique to my experience. Instead of lumping all the items together it places an asterisk next to individual items throughout the agenda signifying they are part of the consent calendar. If a board member or member of the public wishes to pull an item from consent for a closer look they can do so. As an example today Item 7 (c) *Canal Abandonment was pulled from consent. All other items, usually routine was approved in one vote.

The board looked at the Angelo Ditch and a portion of the School House B canal abandonment. There were some maps on the screen and a bit of discussion and the item was approved. **BVWSD** General Manager **Tim Ashlock** and his staff do a pretty good job with presenting helpful images online. Ashlock is an engineer and attorney with unusually affable social skills for one possessing such training.



The Treasurer's report was given by Controller **Marybeth Brooks** and approved. BVWSD is planning on spending a good amount of money on capital improvements. A budget committee of Vidovich, Directors **Terry Chicca** and **Jeff Wyrick** was assigned to keep an eye on capital expenditures.

The district has been shopping around for a favorable line of credit and if I understood correctly Chicca was tasked with representing the district in obtaining an agreement with Rabo Bank for the board to consider.

Next there were two resolutions for the board's consideration: Number 4393 and 4394. The first, 4393 was a neg dec, a negative declaration under the California Environmental Quality Act was found for the Kern Fan Authority's Integration Project. Buena Vista is acting as the lead agency and found the project poses no harm to the environment. The resolution was approved.

The next resolution, 4394 dealt with the Kern Integrated Regional Water Management Plan, IRWMP and approved an update to meet a grant requirement for the McAlister Ranch Project. The resolution showed BV adopted the update and that made it official clearing the way for the grant funds. So the board adopted the resolution.

The next item was interesting, not that the previous items weren't interesting if you like that kind of stuff. This item 7(b) Land Fallow Program has some implications beyond BV as GSPs near implementation. Directors Chicca and **Julian Parsons** were the members of the Fallow Land Committee. They and staff met with growers to take a look at how to best put together and implement a program to take land out of production and save water.

There was a letter to landowners in the packet that needed some modifications. The dates were confusing; the letter was dated August 28, 2020 and referred to actions the board *had* taken today that will apply to the December 31, 2021 through December 31, 2023. Here's what I gathered from the discussion; The start and stop dates were changed to October 31st to follow the crop season and not the calendar year. This also follows the water year a little closer.

Some of the features include an upper limit of 4,000 acres per grower. Vidovich said he was planning on participating and he owns a lot of land. That may be why the acreage limit was put in place. It's a voluntary program and one can enroll one's land but voluntarily eschew payments for whatever reason one would have for not accepting payment. Tax purposes maybe? The program will last three years but growers sign up annually. A payment to fallow of \$500 per acre (up to 4,000) acres will be given the first year. If a grower signs up the next year that amount increases to \$550 and the third year to \$600 per acre. But if you skip a year the amount reverts to \$500. I don't know what would happen if additional land was included after the first year. If I fallow 400 acres the first year for \$500 a pop, and fallow 600 acres the next year would the additional 200 acres get \$550 or \$500? Perhaps someone at BV knows the answer.

Landowner **Steve Houchin** asked if it has to be the same land or rotate the same amount of acreage. The answer was you don't have to fallow the exact same land. If you want to fallow one 400 acre field one year and a different 400 acres the next you can. He also suggested changing the dates to follow the crop year as opposed to the calendar year. After consulting amongst themselves the board thought following the crop year would be better so they changed the date to October 31st to November 1st which is a bit closer to the water year as well.

Another landowner **Rod Stiefvater** suggested the first come first serve could be a problem if there are oversubscriptions. In that case there would be a proration. With those changes the board approved the program.

Next was project development and related programs. Item 9(a) i passed without comment and the 7th Standard Pipeline IS-Mitigated Neg Dec was approved. Easements were accepted on the

Belridge South connection. The Corn Camp Reservoir and Pump Station Resolution 4395 to approve a recharge pond project initial study and Neg Dec ran into some questions. Houchin said the Florida Drain easement was lumped in there and should be a separate action from Corn Camp and the Cord Pipeline Extensions easements. Houchin commented saying the Florida Drain drawing was grouped in with the rest of this and that one has nothing to do with the other. He believed recording all actions simultaneous would be great but would like both deals confirmed. There was a vote to separate the actions while keeping the recordings simultaneous. Someone asked Houchin if he had the authority over easements for the entity he's representing. He recalls the easement followed the road and no trees would be pulled. I heard someone else (Ashlock?) say that is true. A committee was formed to deal with easements to take a closer look. With that in place a motion was made to accept the easement on the Florida Drain and that passed. I also believe all the other easements acceptance passed as well as the resolution but don't hold me to it.

Next the board looked at putting in about 800 acres of solar on some open ground. This was well received by the board members and we'll see what happens with that. This meeting lasted 27-minutes and that was pretty efficient for a district not having met for the past three months. The meeting went into closed session and you already know what that was like.

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BUENA VISTA WATER STORAGE DISTRICT was organized in 1924 to manage the irrigation, drainage systems and water rights originally held by Miller & Lux. The district controls an average 130,000 a/f of Kern River water and approximately 21,000 a/f of supplies from the State Water Project. BVWSD is its own GSA. Board of Directors meetings are held the 3rd Wednesday of the month at district headquarters located at: 525 North Main Street, Buttonwillow, CA 93206. Phone: 661/324-1101 www.bvh20.com General Manager/Engineer: Tim Ashlock, Engineer Andrew Bell, Controller: Marybeth Brooks, Attorney: Robert Hartsock or Isaac St. Lawrence
Board-President: John Vidovich, **VP:** Terry Chicca, **Secretary:** Jeof Wyrick, Julien Parsons, Larry Ritchie