

Water Wrights

Fresno Irrigation District October 20, 2020

By Don A. Wright

The **Fresno Irrigation District** held its board of directors meeting at its Fresno headquarters on Tuesday, October 20, 2020 remotely from its Fresno headquarters on GoToMeetings. When I tuned in there was a discussion about how FID has started using Board Effect software to help keep things tidier. I think the district can now offer board packets with very little hassle. At least I hope so. The staff is very excited about this with Special Projects Manager **Kassy Chauhan** calling **Lynn Rowe** a “superhero.” Of course anyone who has dealt with FID knows Rowe is a superhero but it was nice to hear it spoken out loud.

Chairman **Ryan Jacobsen** called the meeting to order at 4:05pm. Chauhan read through the public comment policy and apologized as it has become a bit tedious. She then called roll and Director **George Porter** was absent. She also called roll on the staff present which was interesting and unique to FID.

There were not changes to the agenda and there was nobody wanting to speak during public comment. There were no conflicts of interest and the consent calendar was approved without discussion or any item being pulled.

Finances & Budgets

Controller **DeAnn Hailey** gave her report and said the budget review reveals things are on track for the most part. Some consultant fees were a little higher than initially projected. Director **Jerry Prieto** asked if there was enough funding left in the consulting fund. He apologized for his eyesight saying he is the oldest board member but it looked to him like there wasn't nearly enough to finish the year. Hailey said there is the option to transfer within the budget to finish out the year if I understood. Director **Greg Berberian** asked if the overrun was due to the Centennial Celebration or other professional services and Hailey said there have been extra costs from the China Virus. The board approved her report. She wrapped things up by telling the board FID's investments did rather well considering the climate.

Water Ops

FID Assistant General Manager **Adam Claes** said the Friant Kern Canal will need some work done on it upstream of the Kings River crossing. The FKC will be shut down this winter and supplies to the City of Fresno Surface Water Treatment Plant will have to come from Pine Flat.



Claes said the area has only received 10 percent of its average precipitation in the past nine months. We're also in hotter than average temperatures and in an expected drought condition. There is a large patch of colder than usual water along the equator in the Pacific Ocean. El Nino and La Nina conditions have proven to be worthless as predictors of rain and snow. The general consensus is we're looking at a dry year. Jacobsen reported our friends in Nebraska, **Les and Marilyn Wright** had snow and temperatures close to zero recently.

O&M

FID Engineer **Lawrence Kimura** reported on work being engaged and completed throughout the district. I couldn't keep up with him. Recharge ponds, ditches, canals and other needs are being addressed. His report on High Speed Rail was quick so maybe those boys are behaving better. The urban trails in Fresno and Clovis are coming along. That takes a good deal of coordination between local government entities. The trails will follow FID canals in some areas. I think this is a good thing as currently most of the canals real estate is being enjoyed exclusively by the homeless camping associates.

Construction Report

Claes said crews have been working with a slopping machine towed by two Cats. There was also a forest of eucalyptus trees south of town that had to be cleared for a ponding basin. There was also a "giant" root ball in a canal west of town. In the photo it looked like it was more than a yard in diameter. Claes also showed the board his proposed schedule of hours per task for the winter. There appears to be a lot of work to be completed before next year's season.

Next Claes gave the board a report on the efforts to get some new and needed trucks for the district. He said the bidding process was unusual in there were fewer than usual participants. However, the bids that came in were at or under the expected prices. Claes gave a breakdown of the various models, makes and features of the different trucks. The committee found not advantage in purchasing mid-sized trucks as opposed to standard size. There wasn't much difference in mileage efficiency and the gain in power was good. The Gradall also needed a new bucket.

Jacobsen said truck prices have gone up recently so it was a pleasant development to find the prices were lower than they very well could have been. The board approved purchasing six new trucks and a bucket.

Administration

Chauhan started with a SGMA report saying one of FID's project made the cut as a North Kings GSA recommendation was agreed by the entire sub basin. Dr. **Scott Hamilton** of the San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint gave the NKGSA a talk and made them aware of the importance of the Blueprint. Monitoring wells are starting to line up with help from FID. Collaboration at the sub basin level on public outreach is improving.

The NKGSA is in line from some Prop 68 grant money. Each GSA in the Kings Sub Basin has agreed to adjust for its share of the overdraft. They are still working on an agreement allocating shares between the GSAs, but they are working on it and it sounded like Chauhan was hopeful.

The Export Policy of the McMullin Area GSA impacts one of FID's basins located outside of FID's boundaries. Chauhan said NKGSA has been on the record on this matter. Comments on the new well policy are being received. The Kings River Conservation District has been very helpful on bringing together the GSAs for public outreach to good success.

The month of October has within it Water Professionals Week. I didn't know that but Claes was recognized for being a good guy, I guess. I didn't follow that part of Miss Kassy's report.

Chauhan said folks with an obligation to monitor nitrates in domestic wells have to get it done soon. The Kings Water Alliance is in the works. A seven member board will be seated. Chauhan, **Justin Mendez** and **Mark McKean** will represent irrigated ag. This is a water quality organization.

The External Affairs report was shorter as the blue crested blowhards have migrated from their Sacramento nesting grounds to their home districts. Damage done at the last minute was the vetoing of SB 559 and the Gov giving an executive wish, I'm sorry, order to conserve 30 percent of the state's land and coastal waters by 2030. This echoes a failed bill from a Bay Area assemblyman who represents a densely populated area.

Chauhan has been staying engaged with the SJVW Blueprint. Again Hamilton gave a presentation to the Kings Sub Basin and the Blueprint can be a big help.

Under public relations Chauhan said the FID Century of Excellence mailer piece will go out next month after the elections to avoid confusion with political mail. The great newspaperman and historian **Randy McFarland** is working on the FID newsletter.

Right about then there was a sound of metal grinding against concrete followed by silence. It turns out there was a video being played showing the Gradall doing something for some reason. Chauhan came back saying stakeholders have been receiving awards for some reason. I'm thinking maybe it has something to do with the Centennial update. She urged everyone to keep the mailer. The Fresno County Board of Supervisors will be honoring FID for its 100-years of existence and that falls on election day.

General Manager **Bill Stretch** spoke up saying Chauhan is being extremely modest about her input on the Centennial work. Her, McFarland and the Rose Team have all done incredible work. He said due to the hard work and extensive history the document has bloomed to 75-pages. Due to China Virus the 100th anniversary celebration will take place on November 2nd in seven events that day. What a bummer. Both FID and Madera ID turned 100 this year and things have been toned down out of necessity.

HR Director **Summer Singh** presented the board with a resolution honoring longtime FID employee **Tim Pritchard** for his service. Pritchard is retiring.

Stretch said the fall ACWA conference will be virtual this time. It's cheaper, more staff and hopefully directors can participate. He said he expects it will be improved over the last one. He isn't planning on carving out two days of time to watch everything but he will tune in for some of the program.

GM's Report

Stretch continued by saying due to staff's efforts the open session is 15-minutes ahead of time. He said there will be a longer closed session to make up for it.

He attended the Kings River Water Association meeting earlier today. The topics include flood water and a new accounting system for imported water. More guidelines are being formed for the more challenging portions of these matter.

Stretch asked Claes for an update on the Creek Fire that burned up more than 50 percent of the San Joaquin River watershed in the 5,000 to 8,000 feet elevation. What's going to happen to the water quality from silt and other changes to the terrain besides denuding of vegetation? What's going to happen to the runoff with so much less shade? The SQF Fire further south could have some impact on the Kings River watershed and that could also impact the water supply. Stretch added Fresno County officials are concerned about the runoff causing culverts to wash out.

Stretch said the KRCD will be stocking the Kings River near the dam in the next few weeks. He was said to hear due to China Virus for the first time in history the Kings River electroshock fish roundup won't take place and without it what kind of a count can be achieved? KRWA has many

projects proposed for fishery improvements. A steering committee has been proposed to help guide [steer] what projects and resources should be prioritized. Jacobsen said it's been a slow process.

Next Stretch spoke about Resource Conservation District saying last month's LAFCo meeting featured the head of the State RDC. There are two in this area and the Tranquillity RCD has retained **Matt Hurley** to help revive and expand it to include most of Fresno County as far east as Highway 99. The Sierra RCD headed by **Steve Haze** has mostly covered the mountains and foothills but is looking to expand into the Valley as far west as Highway 99. Stretch said FID has sent a letter to LAFCo about opposing this expansion of RCDs as it believes the KRCD is already fulfilling this role.

Continuing his report Stretch spoke about Friant. He said since FID's representative to FWA, Porter isn't present at this meeting he'd like to move most of this talk about repairs to the Friant Kern Canal to next month. He said between the pushback to the idea of Zone Three funding and negotiations with the Eastern Tule GSA and related White Areas it would be better to wait. There is a FWA board meeting this coming Thursday.

Within the local area there is a Big Dry Creek Reservoir Operation Project. Stretch gave an update saying most of the folks involved want **Austin Ewell** to become a consultant to help guide things with federal agencies such as the Army Corps of Engineers. Stretch met with Ewell, Provost & Pritchard's **Ron Samuelian** and Chauhan to discuss what to do next. He said meetings are now being scheduled with some regularity and some documents are being prepared to further define the project. It sounds pretty interesting. I need to learn more but there are some great opportunities for enhancing groundwater. A study is needed and it could be expensive. Stretch said a better relationship with the Army Corps appears to be in order. Chauhan said having Ewell's input has been invaluable. Getting a highly populated group of interested parties and organizations is going to be a good thing.

Next Stretch spoke about the virtual science meeting put on by the San Joaquin River Restoration folks. I didn't attend but some good things came out of it. Stretch said the next board meeting will have a presentation showing what's happening with this.

Future board meeting dates in 2021 need some adjusting as the KRWA meetings have been overlapping and that makes things challenging for the FID board meeting. I'm all for moving the meeting myself. Westlands Water District meets the same day.

Also, Stretch said he has reason to expect there could be a stimulus package coming up soon and FID having a good "ask" prepared and having Ewell help with advice and introductions could be really good. He said it would be cool if the new stimulus rolled some money into existing grants.

Directors Reports

None of the directors had a report. Jacobsen called the open session at 5:51pm and that was that. But I did overhear someone say there was food available. I miss FID food.

DISCLAIMER OF RESPONSIBILITY; Waterwrights strives to provide clients with the most complete, up-to-date, and accurate information available. Nevertheless, Waterwrights does not serve as a guarantor of the accuracy or completeness of the information provided, and specifically disclaims any and all responsibility for information that is not accurate, up-to-date, or complete. Waterwrights' clients therefore rely on the accuracy, completeness and timeliness of information from Waterwrights entirely at their own risk. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not represent any advertisers or third parties.



ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Copyright © 2020 by WaterWrights.net/DAW

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 North Kings GSA DWR # 5-022.08

Board

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

Staff

Bill Stretch: General Manager

Adam Claes – Assistant General Manager – Operations

September Singh – Assistant General Manager – Administration
Laurence Kimura – Chief Engineer
Jeff Boswell – In-house Legal Counsel
Jim Irwin – Water Master
David Burrows – Water Master In Training
Michael Prestridge – Superintendent of Construction & Maintenance
DeAnn Hailey – Controller
Kassy Chauhan – Special Projects Manager/North Kings GSA Executive Officer