



## Semitropic Water Storage District December 9, 2020

By Don A. Wright

**T**he **Semitropic Water Storage District** board of directors held its Wednesday, December 9, 2020 meeting remotely from its Wasco headquarters by GoToMeeting. **SWSD** usually draws a crowd with its pretty good lunches. There were 20-people attending today. Chairman **Dan Waterhouse** was informed by General Manager **Jason Gianquinto** there was a quorum at 12:30pm and guests were invited to make a public comment. None were made and a late addition to the agenda, item K was added. Waterhouse commented on how he misses joining with everyone in the flag salute. I agree. It's unifying in this age when diversity has been pushed to the extreme. I believe I'd rather be part of a unifying force than a diverse group when trying to achieve something. **Marsha Payne** was keeping track of roll call and each vote's result. The minutes were approved.

### Financials

Next on the agenda was the financial matters and Controller **Bobby Salinas** gave his reports. He said cash on hand was a bit higher than usual but there are still invoices coming in. The board had no questions and Salinas led them through the list of bills it owed. The board took some time reviewing the bills and agreed to pay them.

Engineer **Isela Medina** reported on the need of an emergency contract without bids because the High Speed Rail authority started work on an overpass over a Semitropic pipeline and access for the district won't be possible without immediate construction to move the pipeline. Has the world gone insane? Yes, yes it has gone insane and HSR is proof. W.M. Lyles was chosen to complete the project. There were some problems with audio continuity for the meeting. Some folks couldn't hear others and visa verse.

Next Medina explained to the board the particulars of two design build agreements for the XYZ (that's the real name) Intertie extension. Director **Phil Portwood** asked why the district is continually pursuing expanding facilities until the water supply is stabilized. He wants to know if there is enough recharge. Gianquinto said that does need be considered but this project is already in production for lands with supplies. The board approved.



## Consultants Reports

The first report was what W.M. Lyles has been up to. It was said the treatment plant used for treating banked water that is then pumped back into the California Aqueduct was going to be shut down but there were some more orders that came in and they were able to use up almost all the chemicals on hand. The rest were cleaned up and taken care of along with the rest of the plant. He also said folks were waiting on PG&E for some work that needs to be completed for a solar farm.

**Larry Rodriguez** of GEI reported there was some routine activity on three pages of activities so he skipped that portion of the presentation. He said Semitropic and Shafter Wasco ID worked together to get some funds from the Natural Resource Conservation Service. He said GEI has been working on implementation support for SGMA projects. He said there has been a hick up with the groundwater model. The water system analysis tool is working better and he's working with the district on improvements. The Leonard System Extension ran into a need for workorder updates and GEI's working on that.

Former General Manager **Will Boschman** gave his report on groundwater storage and marketing. He said there have been some delays due to the China Virus and the ability of partners to meet. On November 19<sup>th</sup> the State Water Contractors met and had a lengthy report on Democrat written legislation. With Congressman **David Valadao** retaking his seat some of that talk may change. There was a lot of talk about Oroville Dam and there are plans to spend an additional \$3.7 billion on the structure over time. The state system is looking at bromide as the next big damn water quality problem. They are planning a board retreat in January and a meeting with our friends in the South Delta.

Boschman also reported the Southern California Water Banking Authority has met and will again meet next month. The SCWBA has the third best workman's comp record in the state. He said there was some back patting going on.

## Politics

Next former state senator **Dean Florez** gave his legislation report saying the China Virus has dominated everything this past year. The dems have had a super majority in both the assembly and senate. The budget is now a simple majority budget so spend away. He didn't say that but you know what's going to happen. The "Me Too" movement dominated the first part of 2019 until a different panic that resembles germ warfare took over. Again, Florez didn't call it germ warfare but *if* you were trying to derail a nation's economy. . .

Florez reported 1,042 bills reached Governor **Gavin Newsom's** desk. Remember SB One? Senate leader **Traci Atkins** and allies tried to stymie any changes to environmental policy to Obama era standards regardless of the science behind it. Newsom vetoed to everyone's surprise. A bill impacting the Leroy Anderson Dam was vetoed and that was a bummer to Silicone Valley, home to our friends in the Santa Clara Valley Water District. There were several billion dollars for climate change that didn't make it out of the legislature. That was also a bit of a surprise.

Not getting water storage and snow survey funds due to veto wasn't a surprise but was disappointing. I see state Senator **Stern's** bill made it through. I can't remember his first name but his dad is actor **Howard Stern**. SB559 by Senator **Melissa Hurtado** was shot out of the water by the govmeister's veto. That was money to help repairs on the Friant Kern Canal. Another guy, state Senator **Weiner**, not Anthony but the guy with San Francisco as his district, the one who authored the reduction in penalties for pedophiles got his bill through. Cal OSHA was able to get its nose and nuts in the middle of things and no more bunk beds for worker housing and masks required in the field. I hope I misheard that. I was speaking with a medical doctor who follows the COVID-19 issue and was

told a mask protects against the microscopic virus as well as a chain link fence protects against mosquitoes. Florez didn't mention it but I read an editorial today by Senators Hurtado and **Anna Caballero** about plans to give shepherders overtime pay for the time spent with the sheep – which is 24 hours a day. This could cripple the industry and as icing on the cake could quickly reduce the ability to control vegetative fuel in wildfire areas. But – Newsom is working to slow climate change and even though he vetoed San Jose Assemblyman **Ash Kalra's** bill to conserve 30 percent of the state's land and waters he tucked it into his executive order for some reason. AB 6 by Reyes and SB 946 are expected to be reintroduced and AB 6 at least takes further local control away and places a one size fits all for wildlife and water enforcement out of Sacramento.

A guy named **Joe** reported on matters in Washington DC. He was introduced as caller 18 and said partisan things. He said he looks forward to a more “functional” Department of Interior and Bureau of Reclamation. He said having a divided government party-wise is regarded as a positive thing in Washington. He didn't comment if that would be good in California but in fairness that wasn't what he was reporting on. With **Kamala Harris** being from California he thinks the office of the president will be more policy than politics driven. He offered to answer questions but the board didn't have any.

Gianquinto asked if having Valadao back and Harris in the White House will there be any opportunities for more California projects. Florez said having **Karla Nemeth** at DWR is a good thing because although the Biden team has no understanding of California water he hopes there can be some improvement because some of the cooperation between the state and feds was blocked during the Trump administration. Gianquinto said he hopes California will now drop its suit against the biological opinions. Good for him for saying so. Joe said he thinks there will be a clean slate for communication. I wish I shared his hope. He said he'd not been able to discuss with the feds water matters because of the partisanship. Now that AG **Xavier Becerra** may be going to Washington perhaps the cascade of lawsuits (more than 300 mostly peaceful) his office was filing as political theater against the feds may stop and that could help. The board had no questions or comments. I found it depressing as it sounds like the swamp is starting to fill back up for business as usual.

Waterhouse filled the board in on the fact consultant **Greg Allen** wouldn't be available to give his report today.

## **SGMA**

GEI's Rodriguez reported he had a good conversation with the Audubon Society about Kern Wildlife refuges and it sounded like a meeting of minds took place for water budgets. Gianquinto said water trading is also moving along. Land values are being figured in as of course land without water doesn't have much monetary value. He also said the Kern Groundwater Authority GSA is looking at satellite ET monitoring.

## **GM Report**

Gianquinto said no staff members have contracted the China Virus. He reported the Kern County Water Agency has taken action on its share of the Delta Tunnel project and it isn't as much as other State Water Project contractors had hoped. At one point Metropolitan WD was going to pick up the funding slack from Kern but opted not to at its last meeting. Nemeth wrote a letter stating there is probably enough funds for the time being to continue moving forward.

DWR made an initial allocation of 10 percent supplies and this is of great concern. It's the lowest in two decades but for 2014, in fact that might have been higher.

Medina said work on the intake canals are completed and there will be some more structural work to be completed. The Pond Poso lining project is complete. She said the TCP alternative analysis

evaluation is moving along and consultant **Dee Jasper** has received the data dump. She expects his report in the first half of 2021.

The meeting then went into closed session and that was that. Be good to each other.

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### **SEMITROPIC WATER STORAGE DISTRICT**

1101 Central Avenue, Wasco, CA 93280-0877 • 661-758-5113 • [mail@semitropic.com](mailto:mail@semitropic.com)

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**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)*