

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING
& PUBLIC HEARING

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
INDIAN WELLS VALLEY WATER DISTRICT

FEBRUARY 10, 2025

The Regular Meeting and Public Hearing of the Board of Directors of the Indian Wells Valley Water District was called to order by President Saint-Amand at 4:30 p.m. in the Board of Directors Hearing Room, 500 West Ridgecrest Boulevard, Ridgecrest, California.

CALL TO ORDER

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Ty Staheli.

PLEDGE

DIRECTORS PRESENT: President David C.H. Saint-Amand
Vice President Charles D. Griffin
Director Mallory J. Boyd
Director Ronald R. Kicinski
Director Stan G. Rajtora

ROLL CALL

DIRECTORS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: George Croll, General Manager
Jim Worth, Attorney
Jason Lillion, Operations Manager
Renée Morquecho, Chief Engineer
Tyrell Staheli, Chief Financial Officer
Lauren Smith, Recording Secretary

**AGENDA
DECLARATION**

AGENDA DECLARATION

Recording Secretary, Lauren Smith, reported that the agenda for today's Regular Board Meeting & Public Hearing was posted on Thursday, February 6, 2025.

Jim Worth announced a need arose to add an agenda item for approval this meeting.

MOTION: was made by Director Boyd and seconded by Director Kicinski adding an item to the agenda regarding the emergency purchasing of pipeline for Brady. Motion was carried, unanimously, by the following roll call vote:

President Saint-Amand:	Aye
Vice President Griffin:	Aye
Director Boyd:	Aye
Director Kicinski:	Aye
Director Rajtora:	Aye

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

None.

**CONFLICT OF
INTEREST**

PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS ON CLOSED SESSION

**PUBLIC
COMMENTS**

None.

With no further Board or Public comments, President Saint-Amand recessed the meeting and adjourned to Closed Session at 4:32 p.m.

CLOSED SESSION

The meeting was reconvened in Closed Session at 4:36 p.m.

Closed Session was adjourned at 5:51 p.m.

**CLOSED
SESSION**

The meeting was reconvened to Open Session at 6:00 p.m.

No action was taken that requires disclosure under the Brown Act.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Judie Decker, Jill Ezell, Mike Neel, Shirley Kirkpatrick, and Arturo Ochoa.

**PUBLIC
COMMENTS**

PRESENTATION BY C.J. BROWN & ASSOCIATES

A PowerPoint of the 2023-2024 Audit results was presented to the Board by Chris Brown of C.J. Brown & Associates. Mr. Brown reported on the financial highlights of the District such as current assets, current liabilities, total net assets, total revenues, total expenses, capital contributions, and total expenses vs. total revenues.

**2023-2024
AUDIT REPORT**

The Board heard public comment from Wayne Doucette and Renee Westa-Lusk.

MOTION: was made by Director Kicinski and seconded by Director Boyd to receive and file the 2023-2024 Audit Report. Motion was carried, by the following roll call vote:

President Saint-Amand:	Aye
Vice President Griffin:	Aye
Director Boyd:	Aye
Director Kicinski:	Aye
Director Rajtora:	Aye

PUBLIC HEARING

President Saint-Amand opened the Public Hearing at 6:39 p.m.

Mark Hildebrand, of Hildebrand Consulting, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed Rate Study. (Presentation available on website.)

**PUBLIC
HEARING**

PRESENTATION

The presentation provided Scope of Work and objectives, Financial Plan Findings, and Project Schedule. The proposed rate changes would go into effect on March 1, 2025, at 12.0% increase, 10% in 2026, and then 8% in 2027, 2028, and 2029.

The Board stressed that it is possible for the rate increase amount to lower, depending on the District's financial standing at that time.

The Board heard public comment from Jill Ezell, Wayne Doucette, Arturo Ochoa, Judie Decker, Katie N., Mike Weis, Renee Westa-Lusk, and Mike Neel (handout attached). PUBLIC COMMENTS

President Saint-Amand closed the Public Hearing at 8:24 p.m.

The Board asked clarifying questions to better understand the proposed rate increases. BOARD COMMENTS

Ty Staheli announced that there were 17 written protests received, and two verbal. ORDINANCE 109

MOTION: was made by Director Kicinski and seconded by Director Boyd adopting Ordinance No. 109, rescinding Ordinance No. 106 and Ordinance No. 107 in its entirety and providing for a reference document entitled Water Sales and Service Policy Manual effective March 1, 2025, as presented. Motion was carried, by the following roll call vote:

President Saint-Amand: Aye
Vice President Griffin: Aye
Director Kicinski: Aye
Director Rajtora: Aye
Director Saint-Amand: Aye

The Board recessed the meeting at 8:25 p.m.

The meeting was reconvened at 8:37 p.m.

CONSENT CALENDAR

CONSENT CALENDAR

MOTION: was made by Vice President Griffin and seconded by Director Kicinski approving the Minutes of the January 13, 2025, Regular Board Meeting, Minutes of the January 23, 2025, Special Board Workshop, and Payment of Accounts Payable totaling \$713,299.83. Motion was carried, unanimously. (Ayes: Boyd, Griffin, Kicinski, Rajtora, Saint-Amand. Nays: None. Absent: None.)

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEM

Staff assessed the damage to the pipeline on Brady that occurred on February 6th. The failure seems to be caused by a corrosion in the steel underneath the concrete. The plan is to dig back and try to weld flanges and make the repair. If this does not work, staff will go from valve to valve, from Drummond to Ridgecrest Blvd., which is a mile of pipe, and replace it with brand new pipe. Staff requests authorization to purchase the pipe not to exceed \$500,000 out of the COP funds. PURCHASE OF 24" PIPELINE ON BRADY

The Board heard public comment from Mike Neel.

MOTION: was made by Vice President Griffin and seconded by Director Kicinski granting the emergency the purchase of 1-mile of 24" pipeline to not to exceed \$500,000. Motion was carried, by the following roll call vote:

President Saint-Amand: Aye
 Vice President Griffin: Aye
 Director Kicinski: Aye
 Director Rajtora: Aye
 Director Saint-Amand: Aye

K&S PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING ANALYSIS

Chuck Krieger, of Krieger & Stewart (K&S), provided an overview of Work Order 83A with the Board. (Included in packet.) The Engineering Analysis is for Recycled Water Treatment/Conveyance/Replenishment Project. WORK ORDER 83A

The Board unanimously agreed to table this agenda item and discussion until an agreement between the City of Ridgecrest and the District is in place for effluent rights from the City's Waste Water Treatment Plant.

George Croll presented a letter to the City of Ridgecrest at their City Council Meeting held on February 5th. The letter is a request for formal discussions regarding this topic.

PLANT & EQUIPMENT COMMITTEE

The District received one bid for this project from Eric Onstott Construction (Onstott) for \$187,730.00. Onstott did not change their per ton price for asphalt since 2022. There was a slight increase in the mobilize/demobilize charge.

P&E CM:
 AWARD OF
 CONTRACT:
 TRENCH
 PAVEMENT
 REPLACEMENT

MOTION: was made by Director Kicinski and seconded by Director Boyd approving Award of Contract to Eric Onstott Construction in the amount of \$187,730.00. Motion was carried. (Ayes: Boyd, Kicinski, Rajtora, Saint-Amand. Nays: None. Abstain: Griffin.)

On January 28, 2025, two water well contractors responded to the District's Request for Proposal for Maintenance, Repair and Rehabilitation of Water Wells and Booster Pumps. Each contractor submitted hourly rates for regular and emergency labor and hourly rates for equipment. Based on the rates submitted, staff is recommending the District sign contracts with both Layne Christensen (primary) and Best Drilling and Pump (secondary). When the primary contractor is not available, the secondary contractor will be contacted.

AWARD OF
 CONTRACT:
 MASTER
 SERVICE
 AGREEMENT
 WELLS/BOOSTER

MOTION: was made by Vice President Griffin and seconded by Director Rajtora Awarding Contracts to both Layne Christensen and Best Drilling and Pump. Motion was carried, unanimously. (Ayes: Boyd, Griffin, Kicinski, Rajtora, Saint-Amand. Nays: None. Abstain: None.)

GHD is an engineering consulting firm that will be handling the Dune 3 Mutual Water Company consolidation project. GHD has been working with the State to apply for the funding and complete the design. The agreement between the District and GHD will be for project and grant management as well as construction inspection, bidding, grant administration and construction administration. GHD will be paid by the grant funding. Their proposal also includes compaction testing which will be performed by a third party. The amount of their proposal is \$746,664.00. The projected is estimated to take a total of 8 months with 6 months of field work.

AWARD OF
 CONTRACT: GHD
 FOR DUNE 3

MOTION: was made by Director Kicinski and seconded by Director Boyd to sign the agreement with GHD for the Dune 3 consolidation project. Motion was carried, unanimously. (Ayes: Boyd, Griffin, Kicinski, Rajtora, Saint-Amand. Nays: None. Abstain: None.)

ADMINISTRATION/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Effective January 1, 2025, California's Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) included provisions that prohibit employers from requiring job applicants and existing employees to possess a driver's license when the job does not require them to drive. Staff is currently working on a driver policy to present to the Board at a future date. **ADMIN/EXEC CM: SB 1100 - FEHA**

MOTION: was made by Vice President Griffin and seconded by Director Kicinski approving revisions made to presented job descriptions in accordance with SB 1100. Motion was carried, unanimously. (Ayes: Boyd, Griffin, Kicinski, Rajtora, Saint-Amand. Nays: None. Abstain: None.)

Staff requests Board to consider and approve additional temporary position for an M/R/C employee in the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year Budget. **ADDITION OF MRC TEMP POSITION**

The Committee recommended approving the additional position. After Board deliberation, the following motion was made:

MOTION: was made by Vice President Griffin and seconded by Director Boyd approving an additional Temp MRC position to be filled at staff's discretion and as needed. Motion was carried, unanimously. (Ayes: Boyd, Griffin, Kicinski, Rajtora, Saint-Amand. Nays: None. Abstain: None.)

INDIAN WELLS VALLEY GROUNDWATER AUTHORITY (IWVGA)

The Board discussed items on the February 12th IWVGA Board meeting agenda. The meeting for the Periodic Evaluation and Amendment of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) was postponed until further notice. **IWVGA**

COMPREHENSIVE ADJUDICATION

The Court granted the motion for Searles Valley Minerals for a Safe Yield Trial, which is set for March 30, 2026. The IWVGA filed a petition with the Appellate Court for writ of mandate, asking for the trial court's decision to be overturned and authority for determination of safe yield, independent of the GSP. The Court denied the IWVGA's petition for writ of mandate. The IWVGA then filed a petition with the Supreme Court to hear it, or at least direct the Appellate Court to. The request submitted to the Supreme Court was denied. **COMPREHENSIVE ADJUDICATION**

Phase 1 trial is to quantify the federal reserve water rights and is scheduled for April 28, 2025. Discovery is ongoing.

GENERAL MANAGER AND STAFF UPDATE

**GENERAL
MANAGER AND
STAFF UPDATE**

Mr. Croll reported on the District's previous and upcoming outreach efforts. He also mentioned the annual Economic Outlook Conference scheduled for February 27th, at which the District will have a table. Mr. Croll updated the Board on water consumption/production for the month of January.

Mr. Croll summarized the topics of discussion on the Committee agendas, including Investment Reports, Rademacher update, Solar Sites Security, and Public Records Request updates. (Committee Reports included in Board packet.)

**COMMITTEE
MEETING
UPDATES**

The contractor is currently coordinating fencing repairs with their subcontractor and Navy security. The District is negotiating the final items needed to finish the project, including removal of a trash bag that was sucked into the pipeline during a flushing event. Staff met with the contractor and came up with a plan that will be presented to State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB).

**NW TRANSM.
PIPELINE**

The District has signed agreements with the State for both the Hometown Water and Dune 3 grants. Staff and legal are reviewing the language for the agreements between the District and each water system. Krieger & Stewart continues working on design of Phase 2 for the Rademacher Way project. Potholing was completed. Staff will soon be scheduling pipe installation for Phase 1. The plan is to get everything installed except for the connection to Springer Ave which can occur when the NW Transmission line is available. Staff spoke with Stetson and Self-Help Enterprises about another small water system (Stark Street) and the possibility of consolidation. They are located southwest of Dune 3 and the IWVGA is considering funding their consolidation due to the well going dry.

**CONSOLIDATION
PROJECTS**

Ty Staheli reported the estimated year-to-date revenues as of January 31, 2025, are \$10,204,137 and expenses are \$11,049,901. Expenditures exceeded revenues by \$845,764, which is better than budget by \$738,146. To date, the District has paid \$16,691,540 in GA Fees to the Groundwater Authority.

**FINANCIAL
STATUS**

Both Plants are winterized. Plant 2 media removal is in process.

**ARSENIC
TREATMENT**

For the month of January, 26 services were repaired and 20 were replaced. The NO-DES truck made two runs in January. Since inception, the NO-DES truck has filtered 9,501,562 gallons. 13 valves were exercised. GIS system continues Water Supply Testing.

OPERATIONS

BOARD COMMENTS/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

**BOARD
COMMENTS**

The Board collectively thanked staff for their hard work and response to the recent pipeline break on Brady, as well as thanked the public for their participation in tonight's meeting.

DATE OF NEXT REGULAR BOARD MEETING

**DATE OF NEXT
BOARD MEETING**

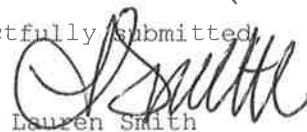
The date of the next Regular Board Meeting is Monday, March 10, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully submitted,



Lauren Smith

Recording Secretary

APPROVED: 3/10/25

Lowered Fixed Meter Charge User Monthly Cost

