

April 4, 2024
Special Meeting
5:02 p.m.

The Board of Directors of the San Benito County Water District convened in special session on Thursday, April 4, 2024 at 5:02 p.m. at the San Benito County Water District office at 30 Mansfield Road, Hollister, California. Members present were: President Andrew Shelton, Vice President Doug Williams and Directors Sonny Flores, Joe Tonascia and Mark Wright. Also present were District Counsel Jeremy T. Liem, Manager of Administration, Finance and Business Services Megan Holland, Deputy District Engineer Rob Hillebrecht, Senior Engineer David Macdonald, Water Conservation Program Manager Shawn Novack, Office Specialist I Jennifer Cosio Arellano and Executive Assistant/Board Clerk Barbara Mauro. There were other District staff also in attendance.

CALL TO ORDER

President Shelton called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

a. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

President Shelton led the Pledge of Allegiance.

b. Roll Call

Mrs. Mauro called roll; members present were: President Shelton, Vice President Williams and Directors Flores, Tonascia and Wright.

c. Speakers will be limited to 5 minutes to address the Board

Megan Holland, a District staff member, asked to read a statement and asked that it be on the record verbatim.

“I would like to request that this be included verbatim in the minutes...

President Shelton & Members of the Board of Directors, and the community, on behalf of the dedicated staff of the San Benito County Water District and myself, I would like to share a statement...

We believe that the District remains strong in large part because of the dedication and loyalty of the staff who come in every day to get the job done, and although we all came into public service at different times and with different stories, we want to continue to serve this community and continue to build trust within government agencies.

We believe that a position of alignment with the Board around vision of the organization is key and we want to open the door for further communication and discussion between the board and staff to create a work environment that is conducive to the highest quality work and successful delivery of water.

We are committed to the vision statement of the District - to deliver and manage safe and reliable water supply, maintain a sustainable enterprise, and provide excellent customer service to the community. And we come to work every day to give our best and do our best. We are not willing to go backwards, we the staff have come to appreciate and thrive within a value-based work environment and would like to bring forward these values for the Board’s consideration and inclusion in future decisions and activities.

The values that we wish to be considered – that most represent us and the work we do every day are:

Trust & Respect – for each other, from board members to staff, to community partners and customers, that we treat each other with respect, trust each other’s best intention and learn from our mistakes to improve our organization.

Teamwork & Collaboration – we work together to accomplish the aims of the organization.

Excellence & Accountability – we do our best, we learn from mistakes, we hold each other accountable, and we reduce risks to the district.

We are here to work with you, communicate with you and support this future environment. Thank you.”

Rob Hillebrecht, a District staff member. asked to read a statement and asked that it also be on the record, verbatim:

“San Benito County Water District Board of Directors, I thank you for the opportunity to speak before you tonight. I know that you feel the incredibly heavy weight of responsibility that has been placed upon your shoulders. The words that are said and decisions that are made will have significant and lasting repercussions for the future of San Benito County Water District and its staff and its customers and the entire community. Thank you for faithfully serving the public and diligently bearing this difficult load. I appreciate your willingness to really hear and deeply consider the views and perspectives of the district staff members. They have dedicated their careers to the same public service that you have taken upon yourself. Like you, we love this District and want only the best for its future. I am proud to be a part of this team and work alongside such talented and committed individuals. We look to you for leadership, but we also work to empower you with the information and perspective you need to lead well. I truly value the trust and concern you have for the staff.

Thank you for the time and attention you have kindly afforded me.”

Shawn Novack, a District staff member, stated he is retiring in June, after 20 years. He noted Mr. Cattaneo was participating via Zoom. He stated he and Mrs. Singleton were bad managers. He further stated that District staff all work really hard and he feels the District needs to go forward and not backward. He is committed to doing job, as are others, and bringing Mr. Cattaneo back will limit the District’s productivity.

Leo Vasquez, a District staff member, stated he has been employed for 20 years. He further stated he felt the move to terminate Mr. Wittry was unfair and it was unfortunate because under Mr. Wittry morale was really good and Mr. Wittry was easy to work with.

There were no further public comments.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Director Flores stated he would like to add an item to the agenda, a Closed Session item, but there isn’t an approval of the agenda listed. Mr. Liem stated the Government Code to modify an agenda is GC 545954.2.b.c, which states there is pertinent information now that was not available at the time the agenda was posted.

The item to be added, which would come before the first agenda item listed, would be a Closed Session, Appointment of an Interim General Manager. The addition of this item was made with a motion by Director Flores and a second by Director Tonascia, adding a Closed Session item to discuss Appointment of an Interim General Manager was approved by 5 affirmative votes, Shelton, Williams, Flores, Tonascia and Wright.

1(a) CLOSED SESSION:

Appointment of Public Employee –

Consider the Appointment of a public employee

Title: Interim General Manager

Authority: California Government Code Section 54957(b)(1), 54957(b)(4)

(The Board convened in Closed Session at 5:12 p.m.)

OPEN SESSION:

Report of action, if any, from Closed Session

(The Board reconvened in Open Session at 6:15 p.m.)

President Shelton stated there was no action to report from Closed Session.

1. Discuss and Consider:

1) General Manager Position

Director Flores reported the Personnel Committee met to discuss an Interim General Manager. The committee reached out to Don Ridenhour, former General Manager of Sunnyslope and Jeff Cattaneo, former District Manager of San Benito County Water District regarding the position. Also, Director Flores reported the committee received a letter from Brett Miller, former City Manager of the City of Hollister, who also expressed interest in the position. The committee is recommending that Counsel conduct contract negotiations with Mr. Cattaneo as their first choice and Mr. Ridenhour as their second choice.

With a motion by Director Flores and a second by Vice President Williams, the Board of Directors approved moving forward with negotiating a contract for Interim General Manager, with the first choice being Mr. Cattaneo and the second choice being Mr. Ridenhour.

Before the vote was taken, Mr. Hillebrecht asked to make a public comment regarding this item before the vote.

“Honorable Directors of the San Benito County Water District, I thank you for the opportunity to humbly present to you my thoughts and perspective regarding this significant matter of the General Manager position and the appointment of an Interim General Manager. It has been my experience that there are two traits that are foundational to being an effective General Manager. The ability to empower staff to grow and succeed and the ability to guide an organization by strong ethical values. Excelling in these traits as a leader is more important than any experience or qualifications. Ms. Megan Holland has clearly

demonstrated these leadership qualities. She has succeeded in encouraging and motivating staff to shine in each of their individual roles. She has fostered a culture of openness and respect in which staff are free to develop and share their ideas and perspectives, which ultimately strengthens the District. She conducts herself with poise and class as an example to staff, even when she is under stressful situations. Ms. Holland is also guided in by her uncompromising ethical values. Her dedication to honesty, accuracy, and transparency are vital to maintain the community's trust. Her insistence that respect and civility are maintained continue the District's reputation of honor. Her perseverance and integrity ensure her commitment to these qualities, even when compromise would be easy. In light of this, I respectfully recommend that the Board consider the appointment of Ms. Megan Holland as the Interim General Manager. Thank you.”

With a motion and second in place, the Board of Directors approved negotiating a contract for Interim General Manager, with the first choice being Mr. Cattaneo and the second choice being Mr. Ridenhour with 5 affirmative votes, Shelton, Williams, Flores, Tonascia and Wright.

2) Appointment of Interim General Manager

Director Shelton reported the Board of Directors has directed Counsel to negotiate a contract for this position.

2. Consider Resolution Appointing Interim Contracting Officer for Banking Transactions

Ms. Holland reported there are two different drafts before the Board for this item. Ms. Holland is recommending the second draft, which also adds two directors for signatory purposes and well as District staff. Further, it lists the District staff positions rather than the staff members' names. Discussion ensued and the second draft was selected as the one to take forward and accept.

With a motion by Vice President Williams and seconded by Director Tonascia, the Board of Directors approved Resolution #2024-05, *A Resolution of the Board of Directors of the San Benito County Appointing an Interim Contracting Office for Banking Transactions* by 5 affirmative votes, Shelton, Williams, Flores, Tonascia and Wright.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to report, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Approved at the April 24, 2024 Board meeting and signed by the presiding board member.

/s/Andrew Shelton
Andrew Shelton, President

/s/Barbara L. Mauro
Barbara L. Mauro, Executive Assistant/Board Clerk