



SANTA CRUZ MID-COUNTY GROUNDWATER AGENCY

Thursday, November 21, 2019 - 7:00 p.m.

Simpkins Family Swim Center

979 17th Avenue, Santa Cruz, California

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 by Chair LaHue.

2. Roll Call

Directors present: Curt Abramson, David Baskin, Bruce Daniels, Zach Friend, Jon Kennedy, Jim Kerr, Chair LaHue, Rob Marani, Cynthia Mathews, Marco Romanini.

Directors absent: John Leopold.

Alternate Director present: Allyson Violante.

Staff present: Ralph Bracamonte, Ron Duncan, Rosemary Menard, John Ricker, Tim Carson, Sierra Ryan, Darcy Pruitt, Laura Partch.

Others present: A representative of the Department of Water Resources (DWR) and approximately 3 members of the public.

3. Public Hearing

3.1 Receive Report from Board Committee on Public Comments Received on the Draft Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP or Plan)

Staff reported the Comment Committee, which included five directors appointed by the Chair, met twice. After comments were compiled and evaluated, staff was directed to incorporate into the Plan those that would improve the Plan.

Thirty-one comments were received from 23 individuals and organizations, many with comments on several issues. Of roughly 175 individually identified comments, about 100 generated revisions to the Plan. Most of these concerned surface water resources. The biggest change from the draft Plan was to the surface water aspects

of the water budget. Compared to other draft GSPs and alternates, the Plan appears to have the most detailed water budget.

Comments not addressed in the Plan were either questions, comments in support or opposition to the Plan, or comments not relevant to the Plan.

A member the Comment Committee respected staff's ability to organize and manage a very complex comment process, and noted that many comments focused on the surface water connection, confirming that the Plan had focused on the right issues. Staff's recommendation to respond to each comment was also appreciated.

Staff stated that there are some typos and various minor errors to be corrected before submittal to DWR.

No further questions or comments from the Board.

Staff noted that consistent with the MGA's standard guidelines for public comment, once the public hearing was opened, individuals would 3 minutes to comment. Once public hearing was closed, the Board would move for approval of the GSP.

3.2 Public Hearing to Consider Adoption of Groundwater Sustainability Plan for the Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin

Chair La Hue opened the public hearing.

Member of the public Becky Steinbruner thanked the group for their hard work on creating a Plan that represents many opinions and excellent work. She requested a strike out/underline copy of the Plan, expressed concern for financial aspects of Plan implementation, and hoped there would be not be an undue burden on smaller well owners. She mentioned a cap and trade water transfer model used in a Fox Canyon GSP might be helpful in the future. She was pleased the Plan addressed climate change, and expressed confidence that the Board will watch over the Basin.

MOTION: Director Daniels; Second, Director Baskin. To close the public hearing. Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Director Matthews; Second, Director Baskin. To approve adoption of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin GSP. Motion passed unanimously.

Congratulations were offered for all the hard work that went into the Plan, as well as appreciation for the comparison document detailing changes to the draft Plan.

4. Oral Communications Related to Items Not on the Agenda

Member of the public Becky Steinbruner stated her petition against Soquel Creek Water District (SqCWD) and the Pure Water Soquel Groundwater Replenishment and Seawater Intrusion Prevention Project (PWS) was denied. She is appealing.

Ron Duncan reported that the 17-page opinion in Ms. Steinbruner's case held that SqCWD's alternative analysis in its Environmental Impact Report complied with the California Environmental Quality Act and other allegations were insufficient.

SqCWD was awarded \$50 million in grants and \$36 million in low-interest loans from the state and \$49 million low-interest loan from the federal government for PWS, which is indicative of the support for this project. The funds will benefit SqCWD customers and the MGA.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1 Approve Minutes from September 19, 2019, Board Meeting (no memo)

MOTION: Director Baskin; Second, Director Kennedy. To approve the minutes from the September 19, 2019, Board meeting. Motion passed unanimously with two abstentions (Directors LaHue and Romanini).
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6. General Business

6.1 Approve Proposed Policy on Response to Requests from Other Agencies for MGA Written Support, Comment or Position

Staff reported the MGA had received three requests for letters of support for grant funding with deadlines before the November Board meeting, two in support of Prop. 68 funding for adjacent groundwater basins, and the third in support of PWS.

When the MGA was formed, it was decided that in the absence of an MGA policy, the MGA would default to the policy of its parent agency, SqCWD. A SqCWD policy provides that a decision to provide a letter in support of a grant application is within the discretion of the SqCWD General Manager.

The Executive Team unanimously approved providing the three letters of support. The Board Chair and/or Vice Chair were informed of the letters and one signed each letter. The letter in support of PWS noted the MGA Board's unanimous decision to include in the Plan projects being pursued by the MGA member agencies. Copies of each letter were included in the Board packet.

The proposed MGA policy authorizes the General Manager of SqCWD, the Chair, and/or Vice Chair to sign letters in support of applications.

The Board directed the following changes to the proposed policy: any letter of support be approved by the Board Chair and Vice Chair; if either object, the letter would come to the full Board for approval; Board approval be required for any letter of support of a legislative action; and "unanimous decision" be defined as approval of each representative of the MGA member agencies on the Executive Team.

Member of the public Becky Steinbruner questioned the need for the MGA to send letters of support.

Staff responded that the Sustainable Groundwater Management Grant Program Planning Grants (Proposition 68, Round 3) application included a specific question as to whether the grant request was supported by adjacent basins, and if so, to submit letters of support. The MGA application packet included letters of support from the Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency and the Pajaro Valley Groundwater Agency.

A discussion was held on the importance of the MGA supporting projects pertinent to the MGA's mission of sustainable groundwater management.

<p>MOTION, Director Friend; Second, Director Daniels. To continue consideration of the Proposed Policy on Response to Requests from Other Agencies for MGA Written Support, Comment or Position until the next meeting after staff had incorporated Board direction. Motion passed unanimously.</p>

6.2 Approve Montgomery & Associates, Inc. Contract No. 2017-4 Amendment 4

Item 6.2 was on the meeting agenda but omitted from the Board Packet. Consistent with the Brown Act, Board members and the public were given copies of the memo and proposed contract amendment at the same time and given time to review.

Staff confirmed that the newly requested \$29,000 for Montgomery and Associates was in addition to the \$40,000 approved Board in July 1919.

Member of the public Becky Steinbruner questioned whether Board action would violate the Brown Act. Staff reported it had consulted with MGA legal counsel, and a director read Section 54957.5(b)(1) of the Brown Act, establishing compliance.

MOTION: Director Kennedy; Second, Director Matthews. To approve the General Manager of the Soquel Creek Water District to authorize the final scope of work for Amendment 4, execute Contract No. 2017-04 Amendment 4 based upon the approved scope of work, and issue Purchase Order(s) Not to Exceed a total amount of \$29,000. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Informational Updates

7.1 Treasurer's Report

Staff noted the format of the report had been improved. No questions.

7.2 Staff Reports

Staff submitted a grant application to DWR's Sustainable Groundwater Management Grant Program (Round 3) requesting \$500,000 in grant funds and \$170,000 in local matching funds to support the MGA's implementation of the GSP. Proposed tasks include improvements to the data management system and addressing data gaps identified in the Plan by expanding the monitoring network and initiating a metering plan for non de minimus users (those using less than 2 acre feet per year) in specific management areas. DWR will announce the funding awards in a few months.

Sierra Ryan gave a presentation to the California State Water Resources Control Board on recharge potential in Santa Cruz County. The Board appeared to be impressed by all the collaborative work happening in Santa Cruz County.

Rosemary Menard reported the City of Santa Cruz (City) City Council and Water Commission met November 12th resulting in a major update to the City's water supply augmentation strategy. The Council moved big decisions to 2022, but authorized several actions, including the development of aquifer storage and recovery in the Beltz system using existing infrastructure. Upcoming work will include a project to establish and protect groundwater elevations at the coast, avoid seawater intrusion, and improve drought supply for the City. The Council also authorized investigations of climate change scenarios strategies and stress tests of

the system to understand its vulnerabilities. Other areas of focus are recycled water and work with Santa Margarita Groundwater Agency on storage and recovery in that basin that might address issues facing the City.

The Bylaws require that a regular meeting schedule be adopted by the Board after January 1st of each year. A Board memo on a proposed meeting schedule included incorrect dates. The next Board meeting is Thursday, January 16th. Staff will provide a proposed schedule for 2020 quarterly Board meetings at that meeting.

Staff noted that consideration of several revisions to the JPA and Bylaws had been put off until after the GSP had been completed. Staff expects to initiate work on these revisions in 2020.

8. Future Agenda Items

A request was made for an update on the current in lieu pilot project around Live Oak.

- Staff responded that the pilot project will not start until it rains.

SqCWD Board Director Bruce Jaffee stated that the Plan represents a phenomenal effort. Even though public participation at MGA Board meetings has been low, he urged the Board to showcase the Plan. A director stated the MGA is a high-functioning, effective agency and the public should be more aware of its work.

A request was made that once the MGA begins operating under an approved Plan, staff provide a primer for the Board on Plan administration.

An inquiry was made about the creation of a readable, summary version of the Plan. Staff noted the firm Miller-Maxfield is engaged to do this once the Plan is in its final stages.

9. Written Communications and Submitted Materials

Staff reported that one written communication was provided after the deadline and will be included in the packet for the January meeting.

A celebration of the final GSP was discussed, to include all those who worked on it, including the GSP Advisory Committee, member agency staff, and consultants.

10. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:40.