

SANTA CRUZ MID-COUNTY GROUNDWATER AGENCY

Thursday, January 16, 2020 - 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 7:00 by Chair LaHue.

2. Roll Call

Directors present: Curt Abramson, David Baskin, Bruce Daniels (arrived late), Jon Kennedy, Jim Kerr, Tom LaHue, Cynthia Mathews, and Marco Romanini.

Directors absent: Zach Friend, John Leopold, Rob Marani.

Staff present: Ralph Bracamonte, Ron Duncan, Tim Carson, Sierra Ryan, Darcy Pruitt, Leslie Strohm, Laura Partch.

Others present: Approximately 2 members of the public.

3. Oral Communications Related to Items Not on the Agenda

Issues within the purview of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Agency (MGA). Guidelines attached.

Member of the public Becky Steinbruner reported that her action against the Soquel Creek Water District (SqCWD) and Pure Water Soquel (PWS) is now before the Sixth District Court of Appeal. She attended a State Water Resources Control Board conference on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). As the state has made it easier to get water rights and has reduced the filing fees for obtaining water rights, she encouraged the pursuit of more surface water transfers.

Vice Chair Matthews noted that at the end of January the City of Santa Cruz would make appointments to the MGA, and invited communications to the Mayor in support of the reappointment of Director Baskin.

4. Consent Agenda

4.1 Approve Minutes from November 21, 2019 Meeting (no memo)

4.2 Accept Audited 2018/19 Financial Statements

4.3 Approve Guidance for Written and Oral Communications at MGA Board Meetings

MOTION: Vice Chair Mathews; Second, Director Romanini. To approve the consent agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

5. General Business

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

Staff reported the revised proposed policy incorporates direction from the Board at the November 2019 meeting. The proposed policy now requires that the Chair, Vice Chair, and each member of the Executive Team approve any letter of support for a grant application or comment on California Environmental Quality Act documents, and authorizes the signing of the letter or comment. Comments on pending legislation require full Board approval.

It was clarified that the full Board would need to act on legislative action. No other questions.

Director Daniels arrived.

Motion: Vice Chair Mathews; Second, Director Baskin. To approve proposed Policy on Response to Requests From Other Agencies for MGA Written Support, Comment, or Position. Motion passed unanimously.

5.2 Approve Meeting Schedule for 2020

Staff reported the remaining meeting dates for 2020 have been updated. Simpkins Family Swim Center will not be available as of November, and the September date has not been confirmed. Staff expects to have updates on 2020 meeting locations at the next meeting.

Motion: Director Daniels; Second, Director Romanini. To approve the meeting schedule for 2020. Motion passed unanimously

6. Informational Updates

6.1 Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Leslie Strohm was present; there were no substantive questions regarding the Treasurer's Report.

6.2 Staff Reports

6.2.1 Montgomery & Associates Scope of Work and Cost to Prepare Groundwater Sustainability Plan Annual Reporting (Water Year 2019)

Staff provided an update on work by Montgomery & Associates to prepare the first annual report on the Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin (Basin) Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), which is due by April 1, 2020. This work was anticipated and \$50,000 was included as a line item in the annual budget. In December, Montgomery & Associates submitted a proposal for this work, which is in the Board packet.

When the MGA does not have a specific policy it follows the policy of the SqCWD. Under SqCWD policy, the General Manager is authorized to approve items up to certain dollar thresholds if it was included in the approved annual budget. As this work met this criteria, the SqCWD General Manager has authorized the work, and it appears here as an informational item rather than a general business item. Four main tasks are identified in the scope of work, as well as optional tasks. The approved work did not include the optional tasks, and is not yet clear if staff or Montgomery & Associates will be responsible for those tasks.

Has it been decided yet whether staff will handle the optional items?

- The optional items are not being considered at this time. Staff wanted to be transparent, but the optional items may come back to the Board.

Will the annual report come to the Board?

- Yes. Whether staff or Montgomery and Associates handle the optional tasks, either way the report will come to Board at the March meeting, prior to submittal to DWR on April 1st.

Member of the public Becky Steinbruner asked if the annual report will include certain information required in the annual report, and if the MGA has identified specific wells to be included.

Staff provided monitoring updates. In recent years, the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD) contracted with Trout Unlimited to conduct monitoring on

Soquel Creek. The monitoring locations correlate loosely with the proposed monitoring locations in the GSP. The RCD's grant funding for this work has ended and absent new funding Trout Unlimited will have to discontinue this monitoring. As these sites have rating curves already established, and may turn out to be good sites for GSP monitoring, staff proposed that the MGA contract with and fund Trout Unlimited to continue to conduct this monitoring. The cost is estimated to be \$25,000, and there is funding remaining in the GSP monitoring budget. The data will inform assessments of streamflow conditions and serve to inform the MGA's ongoing assessments of Basin conditions.

Staff reported that a short-summary version of the GSP (approximately 8 pages) is currently being reviewed and will be available for the next Board meeting. Also, the transition from planning to implementation has resulted in limited, if any, public participation at the monthly Community Drop-In hours. Staff anticipates transitioning to an as-needed approach, perhaps offering information sessions on specific topics of interest to the public.

Will the GSP summary be available online?

- Yes. It will be posted on the MGA website, sent via e-blast to the MGA subscriber list, and about 500 copies will be printed, since it is meant to last for several years.

Will it be available online before next meeting?

- Yes. It should be ready in February and could go out once it is done.

A request was made that the summary be sent to Board members before being posted online.

It was recommended that staff outreach be designed to enable community members to identify issues of interest.

- Previous surveys identified metering as a key issue of interest; once that was not on the table, participation levels dropped significantly.

Staff reported on submittal of the GSP through the SGMA portal, which involved several changes to the portal along the way. The decision to include all public comments and MGA responses was a detailed process, including review of responses by legal counsel. Montgomery & Associates and MGA staff is working together on submitting the final GSP to the Department of Water Resources via the online SGMA portal. While on track for submittal before the January 31 deadline, there several items that need to be finalized before submitting to DWR.

Staff reminded directors that all Form 700 filings, which are due April 1st, must be made electronically with the County this year. Directors with questions should contact Laura Partch or the County.

Member of the public Becky Steinbruner requested verification that California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring (CASGEM) well information would migrate to the GSP, and asked if the MGA will respond to public comments on the Basin GSP submitted through the DWR website.

- The MGA intends to report to DWR any of the required well information. The question of whether the MGA will respond to public comments on the Basin GSP submitted through the DWR website has not been discussed yet. The decision may be based on whether the comments are duplicative of questions already responded to by the MGA. The Executive Team will discuss this a future MGA Executive Team meeting.
- DWR must post a GSP within 20 days of submittal, after which there is a 60-day public comment period.

Staff reported that as MGA shifts from planning to implementation, staffing levels are changing. Darcy Pruitt's position is ending. Darcy was thanked her for all her hard work on the development of the Plan, and she expressed appreciation for the team effort.

Staff reported on a DWR update that they had received grant requests totaling \$53 million for \$50 million in funds, so that MGA chances of funding are very good.

7. Future Agenda Items

The Board will be taking an initial look at the MGA's annual budget for fiscal year 2020/21 at the March meeting, with budget approval for 2020/21 anticipated for the June 2020 Board meeting.

The Executive Team is looking at community engagement, what kinds of things the MGA can be doing and how to incorporate these activities as the MGA plans for the future.

8. Written Communications and Submitted Materials

No comments.

9. Adjournment at 7:34.