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SANTA CRUZ MID-COUNTY GROUNDWATER AGENCY

Board of Directors Remote-Access Meeting Thursday, September 15, 2022

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 by Chair LaHue.

2. Roll Call

Directors present: Curt Abramson, Zach Friend, Bruce Jaffe, Jim Kerr, Tom LaHue, and Marco Romanini; Alternative Directors Doug Engfer and Robert Schultz.

Directors absent: David Baskin, Jon Kennedy, Manu Koenig, Rob Marani, and Donna Meyers.

Staff present: Ralph Bracamonte, Ron Duncan, Rosemary Menard, Sierra Ryan.

Consultants present: Tim Carson and Laura Partch (RWMF), Gordon Thrup (Geosyntec)

Others: Sarah Perez (City of Santa Cruz), and several 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.*

None.

4. Consent Agenda

- 4.1 Approve Minutes of August 18, 2022 Special Board Meeting
- 4.2 Biennial Review of Conflict of Interest Code
- 4.3 Approve Memorandum of Understanding with Santa Cruz Public Libraries
- 4.4 Consider Board Resolution No. 22-04 to Authorize Remote Meeting

MOTION: Director Friend; Second, Director Engfer. To approve the consent agenda as amended with modifications outlined by Mr. Carson on minor, non-substantive language changes to Item 4.3. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote; Director Jaffe and Alternate Director Schultz abstained on Item 4.1.

5. General Business

5.1 Conduct Annual Election of Officers

Pursuant to the First Amended Bylaws, officer elections now take place at the first meeting of each calendar year and will be held in March 2023.

5.2 Approve Local Project Sponsor Agreements under Sustainable Groundwater Management Implementation Grant

The MGA is the grantee for the \$7.6 million dollar Sustainable Groundwater Management Implementation grant (SGMI Grant). The three Local Sponsor Agreements, which follow the structure of the SGMI Grant and include the grant terms and conditions, are with the MGA Member Agencies implementing components or projects under the grant. Each agreement requires final approval from the Member Agencies, so while no substantive changes are anticipated, the possibility exists for mutually agreeable changes as the documents are finalized. In response to a Board question, Mr. Carson stated if the Department of Water Resources (DWR) determined that certain costs were ineligible or otherwise inconsistent with the grant agreement, the Local Project Sponsor, rather than the MGA, would be responsible for those costs.

MOTION: Director Romanini; Second, Director Jaffe. To approve the Local Project Sponsor Agreement with the Soquel Creek Water District. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

MOTION: Director Romanini; Second, Director Jaffe. To approve the Local Project Sponsor Agreement with the City of Santa Cruz. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

MOTION: Director Romanini; Second, Director Jaffe. To approve the Local Project Sponsor Agreement with the County of Santa Cruz. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

5.3 Provide Guidance and Authorize Policy Framework to Respond to Well Permit Applications Under Executive Order N-7-22

Staff sought final direction from the Board on the policy framework because although the policy will come back to the Board in December on the consent agenda, it will go into effect immediately. Legislation intended to make this permanent failed to advance, so this is deemed a temporary measure while Executive Order N-7-22 is in effect. The language regarding replacement wells has been removed and will be left to the discretion of the RWMF Senior Planner in reviewing the well application.

In response to Board questions, staff clarified that if the Executive Team does not reach a unanimous decision regarding a well permit application the issue would go to the Board and be decided by a majority vote, that the final policy will clarify throughout that it applies only to non-*de minimis* wells, and that an applicant hearing before the Board will serve as the functional equivalent of an appeal. Staff determined the 10-acre feet criteria provided a good representation of large water users and is used by Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency to require metering. All wells under this policy will require metering.

MOTION: Director Friend; Second, Director Kerr. To approve Policy Framework and authorize staff to finalize a policy, effective immediately, to respond to MGA responsibilities under Executive Order N-7-22. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

5.4 Provide Guidance on Draft Metering Plan

The Basin GSP calls for certain non-*de minimis* wells to be metered and requires a Metering Plan. Staff and consultant Geosyntec have been working on the Metering Plan, but issues regarding the confidentiality of water usage and the use of the term “ordinance” need to be reviewed by legal counsel. Funds are allocated in the SGMI Grant for implementing the Metering Plan. It is anticipated that the Metering Plan will include approximately 60 parcels, but whether the plan will apply to parcels or wells needs to be resolved. State law designates enforcement to Groundwater Sustainability Agencies, but this will be a new role for the MGA in setting penalties and enforcing violations of its code. The MGA will also be creating a system for well identification. The policy will come back to the Board for final adoption at the December Board meeting.

5.5 Demonstration of the Data Management System (no memo)

The Data Management System (DMS) is a countywide system with a public-facing portal that represents years of work by member agency staff of both the MGA and Santa Margarita Groundwater Agencies, consultant KISTERS with its water information system WISKI, and Montgomery & Associates. An introduction to the DMS, the demonstration, and responses to Board questions can be viewed at minutes 42:20 to 55:20 of the meeting recording.

6. Informational Updates

6.1 Treasurer’s Report

No comments.

6.2 Staff Reports

The MGA will be releasing a Request for Proposals for a multi-year monitoring contract to oversee recently installed stream gages, finalize rating curves, ongoing data collection, calibrations, work with WISKI, and contributing a discussion of the data for the annual report. Staff will bring a selected contractor to the Board in December.

A summary report from Trout Unlimited was provided in the packet.

There has been ongoing coordination with DWR regarding airborne electromagnetic surveys planned for this fall.

For the monitoring network, six stream gages have been installed, and seven monitoring wells should be installed by the end of October.

7. Future Agenda Items

None.

8. Written Communications and Submitted Materials

Information received related to fog harvesting and posted on website.

8. Adjournment

Chair LaHue adjourned the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Next Board Meeting: December 15, 2022