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## SANTA CRUZ MID-COUNTY GROUNDWATER AGENCY

### Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, June 15, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.  
Capitola Library, 2005 Wharf Road, Capitola

## MINUTES

### 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Kennedy

### 2. Roll Call

Directors present: Curt Abramson (late arrival), David Baskin, Carla Christensen, Jon Kennedy, Jim Kerr, Manu Koenig (late arrival), Tom LaHue, Rob Marani, and Marco Romanini

Directors absent: Fred Keeley, Zach Friend

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

Consultants present: Tim Carson, Rob Swartz, and Laura Partch, Regional Water Management Foundation (RWMF), Georgina King (Montgomery & Associates (M&A), remote)

Others: One member 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 March 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Director Kerr; Second, Director Baskin, to approve the consent agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

### 5. General Business

5.1 Consideration of Annual Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Staff reviewed changes to the preliminary budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 that was presented to the Board in March, as summarized in the Board memo and attachments. Changes include an increase in the projected total revenues for the current fiscal year due to earlier grant reimbursement than was expected under the Sustainable Groundwater Planning grant (SGWP Grant), and a slight increase in Monitoring Network Improvements to include installation of the Olive Springs Well. The budgeted amount for the 5-Year Update (\$200,000) is higher than the amount proposed in the M&A scope of work (\$127,000). The higher number was kept in the budget because the MGA is still anticipating guidance from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) on the requirements for the 5-Year Update. Although it is unlikely the update will require the full \$200,000, without certainty as to what tasks will be included, staff was hesitant to reduce this amount.

Public Comment: Becky Steinbruner had comments and questions.

MOTION: Director LaHue; Second, Director Romanini, to approve the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024. Motion passed unanimously.

## 5.2 Consideration of Contract Amendment with Montgomery & Associates and Proposed Services for Fiscal Year 2023-2024

In 2020 the MGA Board approved a three-year contract with M&A with the possibility of a two-year extension. The proposed two-year extension includes, in addition to other technical support, the 5-Year Evaluation of the Santa Cruz Mid-County Groundwater Basin (Basin) Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), due January 31, 2025, and the Olive Springs Shallow Well as an optional task.

Specific guidance from DWR for the 5-Year Evaluation is not expected until September. Georgina King of M&A described the expected elements which are identified in the M&A schedule for Year 5 GSP Annual Report (Page 30 of the Board packet).

Ms. King highlighted the schedule for the development of the 5-Year Evaluation. The work will begin in July 2023, include a public review period, and end with the upload to DWR's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) portal by January 31, 2025. Significant changes to characteristics in the Basin may require an amendment to the GSP.

Concerns regarding water levels in East and South County wells along the coast due to private pumping will be considered under M&A tasks separate from the 5-Year Evaluation, but would be considered under the 5-Year Evaluation if changes are required.

Public Comment: Becky Steinbruner requested information on chloride levels be made available to

MOTION: Director Baskin; Second, Director Romanini, to authorize the Board Chair to execute a contract amendment with Errol L. Montgomery and Associates to extend the term by two (2) years, approve the Scope of Services in Attachment 1, and authorize the General Manager of Soquel Creek Water District to sign the associated purchase order for a total amount not to exceed \$329,610. Motion passed unanimously.

the public (*that information is in the Annual Report for Water Year 2022 on the MGA website*) and other comments.

5.3 Consideration of Grant Administration Services from Regional Water Management Foundation for Sustainable Groundwater Management Implementation Grant in Fiscal Year 2023-2024 (Contract Year 2)

In June 2022 a three-year contract was awarded to RWMF for Sustainable Groundwater Management Implementation grant (SGMI Grant) administration. Staff will return to the Board annually to authorize a purchase order for that fiscal year.

Public Comment: None.

MOTION: Director Baskin; Second, Director Marani, to authorize a purchase order for Grant Administration Services from RWMF for Sustainable Groundwater Management Implementation Grant in Fiscal Year 2023-2024 (Contract Year 2) not to exceed \$80,000. Motion passed unanimously.

5.4 Consideration of a Temporary Subcommittee to Recommend Private Well Owner Representatives for Board Appointment

Staff provided information on the process for Board appointment of Private Well Owner (PWO) representatives as set out in the MGA Bylaws. The Bylaws provide for staggered terms, and so two appointments are needed. Staff requested that the Board create a temporary Board subcommittee to finalize the appointment schedule, set out criteria, screen applications and recommend appointments to the Board. The subcommittee would also evaluate the current process and propose any changes to the procedures for the next appointment process, which would require a change to the MGA bylaws.

An estimated timeline was set out in the Board memo, which would include Board consideration of the recommended appointments at the December 2023 Board meeting. If approved, the terms of the new directors would begin in January 2024. It was requested that the subcommittee include three or four Board members, including a PWO representative. RWMF staff will support the subcommittee, and interested members of the Executive Team may also be included.

Public Comment: Becky Steinbruner requested changes to the PWO selection process and thanked the PWO representatives.

MOTION: Director LaHue; Second, Director Baskin, to establish a temporary subcommittee to screen and nominate candidates for the appointments of one Director and one Alternate Director to represent Private Well Owners. Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: Director Romanini; Second, Director LaHue, to nominate Curt Abramson, Jon Kennedy, Carla Christensen and Sierra Ryan to participate on the temporary subcommittee. Motion passed unanimously.

The subcommittee will use the rubric and timeline set out in the Bylaws and the Board memo.

## **6. Informational Updates**

### 6.1 Treasurer's Report

No Board discussion or public comment.

### 6.2 Staff Reports

- GSP Implementation Status Update

Beginning May 1<sup>st</sup>, Trout Unlimited, under contract to perform monitoring in the Basin, visited each of the stream gage sites, repaired two damaged gages, and started dry season stream monitoring. The Olive Springs well will complete the data gaps identified in the GSP. Metering will be a priority in the summer and will involve looking at incentivizing the placement of meters on approximately 40 identified wells. Staff will also be collecting additional information and evaluating seawater intrusion and chloride levels in the Basin.

- SGWP Grant Update

All the work under this \$2 million dollar grant has been completed, final grant deliverables and materials have been submitted to DWR along with a request to release the grant funds (10%; \$200,000) withheld as retention until the completion of the grant.

- SGMI Grant Update

The five components included in the grant are: 1) Cunnison Lane Groundwater Well, 2) Aquifer Storage and Recovery, Beltz Well Field, 3) Park Avenue Transmission Main/Bottleneck Improvements, 4) Technical Development of GSP Project and Management Actions (Optimization Study), and 5) Sustainable Groundwater Management Evaluation and Planning. Staff will be reviewing recent DWR Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) data results to determine if more surveys are needed. While the SGMI Grant did not require MGA matching funds, both the City and the District are contributing significant work on their projects.

- Update on Remote Participation at Board Meeting

Staff will move forward with providing remote access to Board meetings for both the public and Board members. Feedback on the efforts taken so far is appreciated. One challenge is the MGA's reliance on the Information Technology (IT) of the Capitola Library. If a meeting was to be posted offering participation both in-person and teleconference (e.g., via Zoom or other online platform) and the internet service was down or other IT glitch prevented participation via teleconference, the MGA would not be able to proceed with the meeting. Streaming-only would allow the meeting to proceed (provided that there was the required quorum of Board members) even if a technology glitch prevented teleconference participation. Staff will come back to the Board with further developments.

- Other

Sierra Ryan reported on a coalition of small groundwater sustainability agencies working for state recognition of the financial burden of SGMA compliance for the smaller agencies. For small agencies pumping less water, with no economies of scale, the long term sustainability of these agencies is constrained by the high costs of compliance with SGMA. The coalition is not expecting traction this year, but will be sending a letter to state officials.

## **7. Future Agenda Items**

In response to a Board question regarding KISTERS' security, staff reported a letter was presented to KISTERS and security concerns was one of several issues raised. KISTERS recognized that they should have provided more information to their clients, and MGA staff is waiting on a more detailed response.

## **8. Written Communications and Submitted Materials**

## **9. Adjournment 7:10**

**Next Board Meeting:** September 21, 2023