

## **CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL – MINUTES – MARCH 9, 2021**

**CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** General Manager Mark Ban called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. via Zoom.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Barbara Delph, Karen Tracy, Frank Coate, Karyn Sernka, David Carrillo, Shari Long.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Mark Ban, General Manager and Jim Corbin, Director of Operations

**CONSULTANTS PRESENT:** None

**GUESTS:** Dawn Davis, Hannah Campbell, and Kathy Carrillo

### **RE-ELECTION OF OFFICERS –**

Nomination for Chairperson: Barbara Delph- motion made by Karen Tracy; seconded by Shari Long. Motion carried unanimously.

Nomination for Vice Chair: David Carrillo-motion made by Barbara Delph; seconded by Karen Tracy. Motion carried unanimously.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:** Motioned to approve the Agenda. Motion passed.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** No public comment

**APPROVE MINUTES OF LAST MEETING-** Motioned to approve the minutes of December 8, 2020. Motion passed.

### **NEW CAC MEMBER APPLICATIONS -**

Barbara Delph introduced Hannah Campbell and Kathy Carrillo and asked for any questions by CAC members prior to the applications going to the Board.

Karen Tracy asked to hear from both on the motivation that brings them to this position.

- Hannah Campbell responded that she frequently speaks with Kathleen Radnich at the farmers market and hears a lot about the District. She was told about the CAC , its needs for more members, and she finds it interesting.
- Kathy Carrillo responded that she sees water as the most important resource here and would love to contribute to this issue and the community. She has become interested through hearing things from her husband David Carrillo and would like to learn more.

Barbara Delph asked what both think the biggest challenge we have is with water in our desert.

- Kathy Carrillo responded issues of conservation, cost, and helping rate payers understand the increases and why.
- Hannah Campbell responded that replacing pipes and the system would be a difficult thing. Also getting people to pay their bills could be a problem, as she works with a population of kids with families that struggle to pay bills.

Frank Coate asked how willing each are to go out once they learn about what's going on within the District and share that with constituents, such as the Wastewater Facility project.

- Hannah Campbell responded that she likes talking to people and sharing information.

- Kathy Carrillo responded that once she is informed and could provide answers to questions, she would have no problem.

Barbara Delph asked if both are willing to give the time to attend the CAC meetings, bring ideas that could benefit the District, help the Board, and help rate payers understand what's going on in the District.

- Hannah Campbell stated she could do that.
- Kathy Carrillo stated she could as well.

Frank Coate asked if anything has to be done in order to put the new applicants on the CAC, or does the CAC automatically approve them.

Barbara Delph responded that it goes to the Board and added that the CAC now submits this as a recommendation to the Board for their consideration.

Barbara Delph recommended both get nominated and their applications go over to the Board. Motion was seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

### **CITIZEN ADVISORY COUNCIL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES -**

General Manager apologized for the short agenda, adding that a couple of his family members passed away over the past month, and he did not have a lot of opportunity to jump back on the Wastewater Treatment Strategy, although it is getting near to completion to bring back before the Committee. He brought up the May 11, 2021 meeting on calendar and suggested we put one in for April. The strategy should be prepared by then for view and presentation with the goal of meeting once a month.

General Manager Mark Ban stated it's a good plan to bring forth before the new members as well. At times, the CAC will review staff presentations and reports to be released to the public, as well as receive the presentations and thoughts from some of the District's consultants. A task of the CAC is to provide support to the Board, and the Chairperson of the CAC is to report to the Board during the Board meetings. It is important that CAC members bring their thoughts and what they are hearing from the public back to the staff so those issues can be addressed. Reach out to neighbors and ask their opinions on issues -- phone systems, water, bills, project work, customer service, pipeline replacement, recharged water, future wastewater system, roads, or any issues that could be added to the agenda for Roundtable comments.

Barbara Delph commented that she and GM Ban discussed if it would be valuable if anyone could attend other meetings, like Board, Finance, etc. Then at the CAC meetings there would be more familiarity with information, and the CAC would not be entirely dependent on GM Ban to explain everything and therefore lead to more informed discussions and feedback. She also brought up the importance of monitoring social media and requested the CAC keep tabs if possible, on comments regarding the District from Facebook, Nextdoor, and local groups, and bring those comments to the Roundtable discussion at every CAC meeting. She continued on to state that if CAC members have ideas or suggestions to make the CAC better, that's what the Roundtable is for. This includes talking to rate payers and inviting them to attend a CAC meeting where they can bring up issues during the public comment section. CAC members are supposed to bridge the gap between rate payers and the District. She also suggested going to the District's booth at the farmers market when possible, and talk to Kathleen, listen to rate payers' questions, learn what's going on and get to know the Board members.

## **ROUNDTABLE COMMENTS:**

Karen Tracy brought up an interaction she had with a neighbor and the comments received. The neighbor was uninformed about the rate increase but did notice that her water bill was going up and up. Her neighbor shared that it had become a pivotal moment to them, and they are going to have to let their trees die now. It underscored how information about the District escapes a lot of the rate payers.

Karen Tracy agreed in the value of CAC members going to the District booth at the farmers market, even for 20-30 minutes, and listening to what goes on there, and suggested it be discussed further with Kathleen.

Hannah Campbell asked how information about rate increases gets distributed, as she noticed while at the farmers market booth, that the rate increase is a top question.

GM Ban explained that there is a lengthy public outreach process before the rate increase takes effect, a Prop 218 hearing to give the public the ability to contest the increases, information goes out about two months before the increase in the monthly newsletter and on Facebook, as well as on the website.

David Carrillo asked if an insert is put in with the bill regarding increases. There was a response that on the monthly bill statement, there is a notation announcing the rate change about two months prior to the increase.

Frank Coate added that the rate studies are quite lengthy and go through several public Board meetings, and that people should be going to these meetings instead of showing up after the rates are raised to complain. He continued that this is part of the CAC's job in explaining to the public this has to be done to fix our infrastructure and maintain the District.

GM Ban added that the final increase just took effect this past January, so another water rate study will be coming up this next fiscal year. Perhaps in the future the additional fees could be added to the bills on a separate line specifying the reason and amount.

David Carrillo asked if there was any way a fee could be charged to vehicles entering the National Park to subsidize the District, as the number of visitors surpasses the local Joshua Tree population.

It was confirmed by multiple members that such a process would be impossible because of federal guidelines.

Hannah Campbell inquired if the District receives any government funding.

GM Ban responded that the District is just finishing up a grant it received about two years ago for designing one of the pipeline projects. This money will more likely come from the state than the fed.

Frank Coate added that the District is basically self-sufficient, even though it does receive some grants.

David Carrillo inquired about the grant, and GM Ban answered with particulars of the most recent project grant and added if the wastewater infrastructure is built, the County could put forth a measure that would allow some of the sales tax they receive from all these visitors to funnel towards the District's project every year.

Barbara Delph brought up a subject she discussed with GM Ban -- having a CAC meeting every month to help with participation and stir up ideas.

Karen Tracy commented that she could testify from the past that a meeting every other month was not in the best interest of those involved and the District as a whole, and that the CAC should have more frequent meetings. She would be in favor of having a meeting every month.

Frank Coate shared his opinion that as long as there are things to work on, monthly is good. But if there are no things for the agenda than there's no reason for a meeting.

It was agreed to plan for a monthly meeting, and GM Ban added if there is downtime then that could be used to bide some training for the CAC as well.

Karen Tracy asked if Dawn Davis got her consideration responded to.

Dawn Davis responded that the issue was covered thanks to the efforts of Jim Corbin and expressed her appreciation.

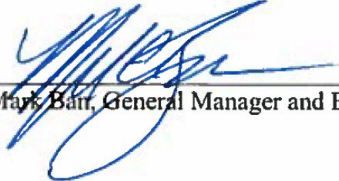
Barbara Delph confirmed that should be discussed with GM Ban and is a District office matter. It is a good idea so that people are not calling in and complaining about their water bills, as they would have advance notice.

There was a comment added that it might help to put who their Water Board representative is, so if they have any questions, they can feed them through there instead of calling the District office – head off complaints and concerns at the pass with information upfront.

**NEXT MEETING:** May 11, 2020 – with potential April meeting TBD

**ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Mark Barr, General Manager and Board Secretary