

Minutes

County of Inyo Water Commission

February 24, 2014

The Chairperson called the Water Commission meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Inyo County Water Department, Independence, CA. Water Commissioners in attendance were Chairperson Mike Prather, Teri Red Owl, Bruce Dishion, Craig Patten, and Jim Stroh. Present from the Water Department were Bob Harrington and Laura Piper.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Prather led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Comment

Commissioner Prather requested to acknowledge a letter received from Philip Anaya who was unable to attend the meeting regarding the water situation on the Bishop Cone and water levels of Sabrina and South Lakes.

Daris Moxley – Ms. Moxley requested an update on the Van Norman Field/FFA progress. Commissioner Prather stated that would be covered in Dr. Harrington's upcoming Directors report.

Sally Manning – Big Pine Paiute Tribe – Ms. Manning stated the Bartell parcel was not on the agenda and she would like to know what the status of that would be.

3. Approval of minutes from January 6, 2014 meeting

Moved by Commissioner Patten and seconded by Commissioner Dishion to approve the minutes as amended correcting Item 8, last paragraph, from "with respect to whether or not the Owens's Lake comes under the Water Agreement" to "that the Long Term Water Agreement does apply to Owen's Lake". Motion carried unanimously.

4. Directors report on Water Department activities

Dr. Harrington provided an update and bulletin regarding the upcoming storms later in the week, an update on Inyo County's closing report for the BLK 94 arbitration resolution panel, the 2-7-14 Standing Committee meeting and FFA Farm in Lone Pine, the west Bishop private well issues, and the Board of Supervisors letter to LADWP regarding the Owen's Lake Agreement. Dr. Harrington also provided a detailed update on the discussions involving the Owen's Lake Agreement.

Public Comment – Daris Moxley – Ms. Moxley stated she was under the impression that it was voted on that Tom Noland (Spainhower Ranch) would allow FFA to use 10 acres of their lease and that LADWP stated they would provide the structures, fencing, and irrigation for the 10 acre FFA farm. Dr. Harrington stated that was not agreed to by the Standing Committee but a discussion between LADWP, Brenda Lacey, and Tom Noland.

Public Comment – Gabe Fogerty – Spainhower Ranch – Mr. Fogerty stated there is a potential plan in place and they will see how it works out.

Public Comment – Sally Manning – Ms. Manning stated she heard at the Standing Committee meeting LADWP stated they wanted things to be water neutral. She stated if there is some deal outside of the jurisdiction of EM projects happening on rancher's leases where they are taking away water and giving it somewhere else, that is not allowable under the water agreement. She stated it is important for the County to keep an eye on this deal.

5. Commissioner's reports

Commissioner Stroh provided an update on the Independence Regreening Project and discussion regarding the Chandler Decree. Commissioner Patten provided an update on the ditch system in the west Bishop area.

Public Comment – Sally Manning – Ms. Manning stated in her opinion, Inyo County Water Department is supposed to look out for water distribution on the Bishop Cone because it does provide habitat for fish and plants. She stated LADWP continue to point to the Chandler Decree as being the bull in the room and stated maybe Bob Prendergast could explain at the next meeting what it is about this that is such a problem. She suggests a public workshop to help people understand the Chandler Decree. Commissioner Red Owl pointed out that it is part of their goals to have two annual workshops and this could be one of them.

The Commissioner's and Dr. Harrington discussed the Owen's Lake Master Plan and its inconsistencies.

6. Action: Approval of Water Commission priorities and work plan

Moved by Commissioner Stroh and seconded by Commission Dishion to approve the Water Commission goals. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Action: Approval of letter to Board requesting letter of support for recovery of South Lake and Lake Sabrina

Moved by Commissioner Red Owl and seconded by Commissioner Patten to draft a letter to the Board of Supervisors urging them to support the South Lake and Lake Sabrina recovery effort. Motion passed.

Public Comment – Sally Manning – Ms. Manning said it would be nice if they could write a letter and ask them to fill up the lakes but it's not that simple. She stated it will take several years to fill those lakes. Ms. Manning stated Mr. Anaya suggested we all "come together" as a group to figure out a solution to this issue and everyone should work together.

8. Drought Emergency Proclamation

Dr. Harrington stated the Board of Supervisors declared a local emergency and provided the Resolution to the Commission with a brief summary. He stated since this was adopted (January) County staff have been working on various items to implement the Resolution. Commissioner Red Owl inquired if the County is still in disagreement with LADWP over the Drought Recovery Policy and Dr. Harrington states yes. He stated there are several things the Drought Recovery Policy doesn't address which he discussed with the Board such as surface water management, Owens Lake, water for ranches and farms. Dr. Harrington stated they will be having discussions with LADWP regarding these issues.

Public Comment – Sally Manning – Ms. Manning stated the Drought Recovery Policy does not address water for ranches and farmers Type E vegetation or surface water because that was in the Water Agreement. She stated what was experimental was the on/off procedures on groundwater dependent vegetation and how that would affect pumping and pump management. Ms. Manning discussed the water tables, discharge and recharge with the Commission. Ms. Manning stated drought does not cause water tables to go down. Ms. Manning provided a graph to the Commission and provided discussion. Dr. Harrington stated this information was provided at the last meeting regarding the situation in west Bishop.

Public Comment – Earl Wilson – Mr. Wilson inquired as to the depth of the replacement well and was there other replacement wells and was the same thing going on.

Public Comment – Daris Moxley – Ms. Moxley stated she had heard the wells on Sunset are drying up and asked if there are any test wells that can be checked. Dr. Harrington stated there is one east of Sunset.

9. Inyo County comments on Southern Owens Valley Solar Ranch

Dr. Harrington provided a summary of the comments and discussions regarding the Southern Owens Valley Solar Ranch. Commissioner Stroh stated he was getting questions regarding the LORP and the possible solar ranch and Dr. Harrington provided the clarification.

10. Planning next ICWC meeting in the field in southern OV – LP and Owens Lake (Lone Pine, Owens Lake, Van Norman Field, LORP burn area, northwest seep, and FFA farm)

The Commission discussed various areas in the Lone Pine area for a Water Commission meeting/tour in early May to include the following; Van Norman Field, FFA Farm, Kaiser, northwest seep, and the LORP burn area.

Public Comment – Earl Wilson – Mr. Wilson stated from the South off 136 there is a road out to a monitoring well that LADWP installed that has a good overlook of the valley from the Keeler Bridge area.

11. Public Comment

Public Comment – Earl Wilson – The turnout for the Alabama Hills has been blocked off for over a year now and is only partially running and he believes this is one of the sources of the water disappearing under Lone Pine and the big trees dying.

12. Schedule next Water Commission Meeting

The next Water Commission Meeting was tentatively scheduled for the week of March 24, 2014.

13. Adjourn

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 7:52