

MINUTES

County of Inyo WATER COMMISSION

April 25, 2022

The Chairperson called the Water Commission meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. via videoconference. Water Commissioners in attendance were Teri Red Owl, Randy Keller, Nate Gratz, Paul Huette, and Holly Alpert. Present from the Water Department were Aaron Steinwand and Laura Piper

1. Pledge of Allegiance

The Chairperson led the pledge of allegiance.

2. Public Comment

Sally Manning stated Randy Keller had attended the last Standing Committee meeting hosted by LADWP and was a panelist when he had not been reappointed yet.

3. Election of Water Commission Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

Motion by Randy Keller to elect Teri Red Owl as Chairperson, seconded by Nate Gratz. The Chairperson called a roll call vote; Teri Red Owl – abstain, Randy Keller - Y Nate Grate – Y, Paul Huette – Y, Holly Alpert – Y. Motion passed.

Motion by Holly Alpert to elect Randy Keller as Vice Chairperson, seconded by Nate Gratz. The Chairperson called a roll call vote; Teri Red Owl – Y, Randy Keller – abstain, Nate Grate – Y, Paul Huette – Y, Holly Alpert – Y. Motion passed.

4. Approval of minutes from February 24, 2022, March 17, 2022, and April 11, 2022

Motion to approve the February 24, 2022 minutes by Nate Gratz, seconded by Holly Alpert. The Chairperson called a roll call vote; Teri Red Owl – Y, Randy Keller – abstain, Nate Grate – Y, Paul Huette – Y, Holly Alpert – Y. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion to approve the March 17, 2022 and April 11, 2022 minutes by Holly Alpert, seconded by Nate Gratz. The Chairperson called a roll call vote; Teri Red Owl – Y, Randy Keller – Y, Nate Grate – Y, Paul Huette – Y, Holly Alpert – Y. Motion passed.

5. Request that the Water Commission adopt findings pursuant to AB 361 that: A) the Commission considered the circumstances of the existing State of Emergency issued on March 4, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and B) local officials continue to recommend measures to promote social distancing, and/or the state of emergency continues to directly impact the ability of the members to meet safely in person.

Dr. Steinwand provided a brief overview of the current emergency status and the legislation driving AB 361. Motion by Commissioner Gratz, seconded by Commissioner Huette to find A) the Commission considered the circumstances of the existing State of Emergency issued on March 4, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and B) local officials continue to recommend measures to promote social distancing, and/or the state of emergency continues to directly impact the ability of the members to meet safely in person. The Chairperson called a roll call vote; Teri Red Owl – Y, Randy Keller - Y Nate Grate – Y, Paul Huette – Y, Holly Alpert – Y. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Commissioners' reports

Teri Red Owl stated more precipitation was received from the recent storm but we are still not where we should be.

7. Discussion of LADWP's 2022/23 Draft Annual Operations Plan

Dr. Steinwand provided a PowerPoint presentation and gave an in-depth review of LADWP's 2022/23 Draft Annual Operations Plan. Dr. Steinwand and the Commissioners discussed this item in detail and at length. He stated LADWP requested a reduction in irrigation capping at 4 af per acre which would have to be approved by the Board acting through the Standing Committee; the next Standing Committee meeting will be held May 12, 2022; and runoff is 47% of normal. Sally Manning provided her opinion on the depth to water conditions map in the wellfields and stated she doesn't feel it represents all the information; as well as the water table management model graph and individual wellfield maps. Edie Trimmer inquired if the composition vs. shrubs are also measured and what are the trends. Sally Manning stated we could see climate change coming and what is missing are the controls and provided her opinion on local pumping, and irrigation, etc.; she doesn't buy the recommendation; they are going to have to get off the path they've been on for years and years; this is not what the Water Agreement envisioned; and every page of the pumping plan is nonsense. Edie Trimmer stated when she looks at LADWP estimates of in-valley uses they state something about operational losses; does the County agree with these figures. Nancy Masters thanked the Water Commission for dealing with the issue of climate change; stated there are hard decisions to make in the future; and what is the long term strategy to make sure watersheds are protected in rural areas. Daris Moxley stated LADWP puts out the plan, we make a recommendation, have they ever listened to our recommendation or just do what they want?; when is Inyo County vegetation going to remain like 81/82 like the Water Agreement states. Lynn Boulton stated we don't have to take the full brunt of the water LADWP wants to deliver to Los Angeles, they can speed up their Urban Water Management Plan action items, do more conservation; stated the hit doesn't have to be to the Owens Valley; and was all the mitigation projects supposed to be supplied by groundwater? Jon Klusmire stated the staff at the Eastern California Museum was recently told the mitigation measure that diverts water from the creek to the pond and back to the creek was shut off because of the threat of Independence Creek going dry and killing fish is something they don't want to do; he stated soon dust, Fish & Wildlife and mitigation are all going to come up and there won't be enough water for all of them; and inquired about exempt wells. Nancy Masters stated LADWP can make all the water accounting they want but under CEQA they are obligated to fulfill their obligation to mitigation per the 1991 EIR, whether they provide it with surface or pumped water. She stated Jon is right, the conflicts will grow and we will have to share and reduce. Sally Manning stated she doesn't recall the Water Agreement stating anything about fish. Lynn Boulton stated well 349 is tied to a well on the other side of the river; isn't the river a hydrological game changer. The Commissioner's requested the following recommendation to the Board: "The Inyo County Water Commission requests that LADWP pumping be in range of in-valley uses only, that staff investigates using exempted well pumping discharge in areas where it is pumped, and begin strategic planning for climate change considering the current paradigm we are in".

Motion by Holly Alpert to approve the above recommendation to the Inyo County Board of Supervisors, seconded by Paul Huetter. The Chairperson called a roll call vote; Teri Red Owl – Y, Randy Keller – Y, Nate Grate – Y, Paul Huetter – Y, Holly Alpert – Y. Motion passed unanimously.

Sally Manning stated the workshop and the Water Dept. item for tomorrow's Board meeting are in two different places on the agenda so hopefully they aren't wasting their time and hopefully the recommendation gets the attention it needs. Leslie Chapman stated at approximately 10:15am Dr. Steinwand will give his presentation to provide the Board background on the issues; after that the Commission will have opportunity to speak, each Commissioner 10 minutes; then public comment limited to 3 minutes each. After the workshop portion, they will go straight to Item 16 which is the Board discussion and the Board will have the opportunity to discuss all the information presented, then they provide direction to the Water Department for what comments they wish to see in the letter to LADWP.

8. Future meeting schedule

The Board chose to schedule a meeting in late August and Dr. Steinwand stated he would discuss the AB361 with Counsel.

9. Adjourn

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 8:58 p.m.