

Borrego Water District
CORRECTED MINUTES
Conservation Standing Committee
Wednesday, December 2, 2009, 9:00 a.m.
806 Palm Canyon Drive, Borrego Springs, CA 92004

Attendance: Director: Shimeall
Staff: Jerry Rolwing, Operations Manager
Public: Jim Engelke Bob McKee

CALL TO ORDER
INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of November 4, 2009 were approved as written.

CURRENT AGENDA ITEMS:

1. IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

- CWAC Campaign

Jerry Rolwing reported on the California Water Awareness Campaign and the DWR statewide landscape ordinance. Counties may adopt their own ordinances, but they must be at least as stringent as the State's.

- Plans for future workshops (gardeners and/or general public)

Mr. Rolwing announced tentative plans for an irrigation seminar in March, geared to homeowners who do their own gardening and facilitated by new, local presenters who can focus on desert landscaping issues. Jim Engelke suggested including information on the new County landscape ordinance.

- Update Budget for FYE 2010

Mr. Rolwing reported he had met with the Camerons to discuss the Club Circle golf course, which is losing money. By removing 30 percent of the turf, most of which doesn't come into play, it could be converted to a target course. He suggested the Camerons might donate the course to the District in exchange for mitigation credits, and another meeting has been scheduled. With the addition of an interpretive trail and/or a bike path, County funding may be available.

Scott Messersmith has submitted his first bill for seven irrigation audits.

Sixty thousand dollars of the \$197,000 conservation budget has been expended.

- Water use under Tiered Rates

Mr. Engelke inquired about the low flow shower heads the District was considering offering to customers. Mr. Rolwing had been unable to reach the vendor, but will follow up.

Discussion followed regarding smart irrigation controllers. Mr. Rolwing suggested testing a few brands, perhaps distributing ten around the District, to see how they work. He pointed out that most homeowners do not know how to work their controllers, and Mr. Engelke suggested that the District offer training on seasonally resetting them.

- Update to the Tiered Water Rate program

Mr. Rolwing explained that Rich Williamson wants another year of data before tightening the tiered rate structure. However, Mr. Rolwing recommended addressing the five-year exemption at this time. Currently, an occupant is not subject to tiered rates until he/she has established a four-year record of water use. He suggested the record be tied to the

property, not the occupant, and will check with counsel regarding Proposition 218 requirements. Director Shimeall felt the tiers would eventually have to be changed, but it was the consensus we should wait another year. Mr. Rolwing suggested that at that time we also consider requiring a 15 or 20 percent reduction over the prior four years' usage, rather than the current 10, to qualify for a reduced rate even though not yet in Tier 1.

Mr. Engelke suggested targeting the 100 customers who are not yet in Tier 1. Mr. Rolwing suggested contacting them and suggesting irrigation audits.

2. CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MONITORING DUTIES

- Review of irrigation audits

Bob McKee suggested that the auditors follow up with homeowners after the audits to make sure their system is operating properly and they can adjust their controllers as necessary.

- Status of Conservation Incentive participants

Mr. Rolwing reported that following irrigation audits, some homeowners have chosen to have their retrofits performed by unlicensed contractors. Before presenting the project to the committee for possible rebate, he will inspect the work for quality.

- Toilet rebates, Irrigation audits, Turf removals

Mr. Rolwing reported that Mr. Pavlovich applied for a turf removal rebate for 2,100 square feet, but withdrew his request when he received a cost estimate. Mr. Rolwing suggested obtaining additional bids. The Committee conditionally approved the rebate, should he resubmit it.

Donna Hands has applied for retrofit assistance for a \$600 job (District's share would be \$120). The Committee approved it.

Mr. Rolwing reported he had denied two rebate requests, one for turf removal on a property which had no turf in 2005, and another for toilets already installed in a recently-purchased new home.

Discussion followed regarding Stanlund's request for 28 toilet rebates. We have 40 remaining in the budget, 30 of which have been promised to Palm Canyon. Mr. Rolwing suggested transferring funds from the irrigation retrofit budget (\$59,000 remaining), so Stanlund's could be offered rebates for at least half their toilets. The Committee approved the transfer.

3. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Director Shimeall announced that the Legislature has passed the water bill (SB 7X), which addresses the peripheral canal, the delta and groundwater management. Mr. Rolwing added that it will be before the voters in the spring.

Mr. Engelke brought up the Community Sponsor Group's proposed tree-planting project along Palm Canyon Drive and the issue of who will care for them. Mr. Rolwing mentioned a similar issue which arose during a meeting with Betsy Knaak regarding the ABDNHA property adjacent to Christmas Circle, suggested for use as an interpretive garden with walkways and irrigation requirements. Mr. Engelke pointed out that both public and private rights-of-way are involved in both projects. Options include establishment of an assessment district, creation of easements, requiring property owners to maintain landscaping in private rights-of-way, and use of the District water truck as is done with the traffic islands. Mr. Engelke reminded the Committee of the \$200,000 in County park funding earmarked for Borrego Springs, and suggested if a "par course" (exercise equipment along the walkways) were included, the projects might qualify.

Mr. Rolwing reported he had made a presentation to the middle school on how we get our water.

We need to develop a four-or-five-word message for the District sign at Palm Canyon Resort. One suggestion was "Water – Borrego's treasure" (as on the bracelets distributed during Borrego Days).

Mr. Engelke requested that the Viking Ranch project be included on the next Groundwater Management Committee Agenda.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m. The next regular Conservation Committee Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 6, 2010.