

Borrego Water District
CORRECTED MINUTES
Conservation Standing Committee
Wednesday, January 6, 2010, 9:00 a.m.
806 Palm Canyon Drive, Borrego Springs, CA 92004

Attendance: Directors: Andersen, Shimeall
Staff: Richard Williamson, General Manager
 Jerry Rolwing, Operations Manager
Public: Jim Engelke

CALL TO ORDER
INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Director Shimeall requested the insertion of a statement at the end of Section 2 of the December Minutes, that the Committee approved the transfer of funds to cover toilet rebates for Stanlunds Resort. The Minutes of December 2, 2009 were approved as corrected.

CURRENT AGENDA ITEMS:

1. IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

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

Jerry Rolwing invited input for the content of future workshops. Possibilities include providing a list of recommended plants and perhaps offering some for sale. Director Andersen suggested showcasing the plants surrounding the District office. Mr. Rolwing also planned to offer information on new types of irrigation equipment. The next workshop will tentatively be held in March. Our irrigation auditors and other local landscapers may be invited to speak. Mr. Rolwing will come back to the Committee with a plan.

- Update Budget for FYE 2010

Rich Williamson reported that 33 percent of the conservation budget has been expended, and we are under budget overall. The irrigation improvement budget has \$60,000 out of \$75,000 remaining.

- Water use under Tiered Rates

Mr. Williamson noted that the De Anza Country Club area was traditionally the biggest water user, but there has been significant reduction with the conservation program. Consequently District revenue has declined, but is in line with projections.

Mr. Rolwing reported he had informed Stanlunds of the approval of rebates for half their toilet replacements. The other half will be addressed later.

Discussion followed regarding the fact that the conservation incentive rebates had been budgeted as capital items, because water saved means less water we will need to acquire. However, the auditors preferred to list them as operations and maintenance. Mr. Rolwing stated he had inquired about this at the American Waterworks Association meeting and was told it could be accounted for either way.

The Committee went on to discuss possible adjustments to the tiers. Director Shimeall felt they should be lowered, but Director Andersen disagreed. Mr. Williamson pointed out that the District's goal is to reduce water use by 15 percent in five years, and the State is calling for a 20-percent reduction by 2020. The usage will be reviewed annually.

Mr. Rolwing recommended that residents who had occupied their homes for less than four years be charged the tiered rates, using their average use since their occupancy. Mr. Williamson suggested that if this change is subject to Proposition 218 procedures, maybe a new tier for high users, such as three times the Tier 1 rate, could be added simultaneously. He asked that these issues be placed on the next Agenda. Director Andersen suggested bringing it up during the Committee report at the next Board meeting.

Mr. Rolwing stated he would like to begin testing some of the smart irrigation controllers.

Director Shimeall noted that the Committee had previously discussed contacting the largest water users and offering to assist them to conserve. Jim Engelke asked whether the District might impose a maximum usage, above which the water would be disconnected.

- Awards program to recognize business owner conservation landscape

Mr. Williamson referred to Mr. Engelke's suggested that Palm Canyon Resort be recognized for its accomplishment in redoing its landscape and irrigation system to conserve water. Mr. Williamson suggested presenting a plaque at the Town Hall Meeting. Mr. Rolwing suggested taking "before" and "after" pictures of conservation improvements with which the District has been involved, displaying them in the lobby and having the Committee select honorees periodically. Mr. Williamson asked that the idea be presented during the Committee report at the next Board meeting. Mr. Rolwing will announce it in the newspaper and on the District website.

- Signage for Palm Canyon Resort

Mr. Williamson reported that Mr. Rolwing had selected a location for the District's sign at Palm Canyon Resort. Mr. Rolwing stated that it would be on Palm Canyon Drive, in front of the laundromat. Discussion followed regarding the design and wording of the sign. Mr. Williamson suggested "Borrego Springs, a water-saving community." Director Shimeall suggested including the District's logo. Mr. Engelke prepared a sketch of a suggested sign, proposing raised lettering, the logo at the top and the words "water conservation community." Mr. Williamson will seek concurrence from the Resort once the easement has been executed.

2. CONSERVATION COMMITTEE MONITORING DUTIES

- Review of irrigation audits

Information on recent irrigation audits was included in the Agenda packet.

- Turf removal approvals

Director Shimeall inquired about the possible conversion of the Club Circle Golf Course to a target course, and Mr. Williamson replied that the Services Committee was investigating. The District would need to own the property or secure a long-term lease. As it is, we are losing money maintaining the course and are not contractually obligated to maintain it after February. Mr. Engelke noted that a developer is planning to build ten units in the area and will need mitigation credits.

The Committee agreed that a back-flow preventer or anti-siphon valve will be required for eligibility for irrigation retrofits.

- Irrigation retrofit approvals

Mr. Rolwing reported that Scott Messersmith had submitted a bid on an irrigation retrofit for the St. Barnabas rectory. The District's share would be \$495.

Tom Fredericks had completed improvements to Christine Tate's yard in June, and the District's share is \$1,821. The Committee approved both projects subject to Mr. Rolwing's inspection. Director Andersen questioned why Ms. Tate's water use had increased since her retrofit, and Mr. Rolwing explained that the savings often aren't immediately realized because the new plants need additional water to get established. He agreed to photograph the planting and bring the pictures to the next Committee meeting.

3. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Director Shimeall inquired about the low flow shower heads discussed at the last meeting. Mr. Williamson reported that he had the catalog, and recalled we had contemplated selling them for \$10 and then giving a \$25 credit if water use declines. Director Andersen felt that would be too complicated and the shower heads should be given free of charge. Director Shimeall concurred. Mr. Rolwing noted there is extra money in the turf removal account that could be used to purchase them. The Committee agreed to purchase 100 and advertise them for free.

Director Shimeall inquired about the status of the Viking Ranch following proposal, and Mr. Engelke replied that it was before the Negotiating Committee. Their next meeting is January 13 following the Groundwater Management Committee meeting.

Mr. Engelke reported that a committee of the Community Sponsor Group met yesterday and discussed the Water District's participation in reduction of agricultural lands. At the Group's meeting tomorrow, Abby King plans to propose an amendment to the draft community plan to express support for solar arrays as a replacement for citrus groves.

Mr. Williamson reported that he met with financial advisors yesterday to discuss a proposed parcel fee. One option would be for the District to purchase agricultural land and then lease it to a solar provider. A two-thirds vote of the landowners would be required.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m. The next regular Conservation Committee Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 3, 2010.