

Borrego Water District
MINUTES
Groundwater Management Standing Committee
Wednesday, January 13, 2010, 9:15 a.m.
806 Palm Canyon Drive
Borrego Springs, CA 92004

Attendance: Directors: Mendenhall, Smiley
Staff: Richard Williamson, General Manager
 Jerry Rolwing, Operations Manager
 Wendy Quinn, Recording Secretary
Public: Jim Engelke, Viking Marshal Brecht
 Lance Lundberg, Viking Lane Sharman, Borrego Water Exchange

CALL TO ORDER
INTRODUCTION OF PARTICIPANTS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Jerry Rolwing requested that Item 2 of the December 9 Minutes be clarified by deleting the first sentence of the second paragraph regarding funds for the Clark Lake monitor well and deleting the "also" in the second sentence. Rich Williamson requested that a sentence in Item 1 be amended to read, "Mr. Engelke said that based on calculated water savings and ultimate development of the Viking Ranch, the project should ~~save money~~ pay for itself. The Minutes of December 9, 2009 were approved as corrected.

CURRENT AGENDA ITEMS

1. Viking Ranch – Discuss Status of Water Credit opportunities. Mr. Williamson announced that the Negotiating Committee would meet later today to discuss water credit opportunities for the Viking Ranch. Lane Sharman recommended that the District set aside money each year to purchase and retire credits as part of its water conservation effort.

2. Status of Financing/Grant Requests. Mr. Williamson reported that the I-Bank loan approval process is nearing completion. Our CEQA documents will be published this week, and the District has submitted the requested financial data. Approval will be on the I-Bank Board agenda for January or February, and Mr. Williamson and Allison Burns will attend. We are still awaiting response from the EPA on our STAG grant application.

Mr. Rolwing reported that the District has applied for funding from the Department of Public Health to reduce man-made contaminants by obtaining a water-restrictive easement over agricultural land near Well 18, thereby eliminating the addition of nitrates and other chemical fertilizers into the soil.

A public kick-off meeting for the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan has been scheduled for January 21 at 10:00 a.m. Director Mendenhall asked about Brown Act requirements relative to Board member attendance. Mr. Rolwing explained that no decisions would be made, and Mr. Williamson added that Directors should not discuss the issues among themselves and only two of them should speak during the meeting.

Another round of Proposition 303 applications will be invited soon. BWD has funded two monitor wells through this program in the past. Bill Mills will assist with the new request.

Mr. Williamson reported on the USGS/DWR study. An update will be presented at the town hall meeting, probably in March. Their model will be critical in water resource planning. Mr. Williamson explained that we can look at the aquifer overdraft as an asset, because we have underground storage capacity in a confined basin with good quality water. The capacity could be rented out, and the lessee would be responsible for transmission, recharge, recovery and provision of water to Borrego Springs.

3. Update on Groundwater Management Study. Mr. Rolwing suggested the District may want to update its Groundwater Management Plan to adjust priorities (conservation, fallowing and importation) so as to better position ourselves for grant funds. He suggested inviting Bill Mills to the next GWM Committee meeting, and agreed to obtain a copy of the latest GWM Plan. It is also available on the District's website.

4. Discussion regarding solar power proposals for Borrego Valley in relationship to Groundwater Management. Mr. Williamson noted that the fallowing program has been slow because of lack of development. With the advent of solar energy proposals, we may have an opportunity to use agricultural land for these facilities. Surrounding groves would create a buffer between the solar array and the surrounding community as well as protecting the panels from dust. Mr. Williamson had met with one solar provider, the Eurus Group. The Services Committee will meet tomorrow at 1:30 and consider their proposal. Glenn Reiter will assist with the financial model. Director Smiley suggested some of the power generated might be used for desalination plant requirements in exchange for water. Lance Lundberg, who lives near a principal in the Poseidon organization (a desalination provider), offered to assist.

5. Discussion: Integrated Water Resource Management Plan.

a. Groundwater Banking option Development.

b. Stakeholder Involvement/process.

This item was covered previously.

6. Status of applications for water credits. Mr. Williamson reported that the District is finalizing the water credits for the dragon fruit farm. As to the pepper farm, the Board had requested a letter from the County confirming that the property qualifies as a farm. The owners are negotiating with the County, and the District has offered to assist. So far the County has only communicated by e-mail, and the two responses differed.

Mr. Williamson reported that the Mesquite Trails RV Park is looking for water credits to purchase.

7. Financing options for future water credit purchases. Mr. Williamson suggested that a parcel fee might be used to purchase agricultural land and fallow it. This strategy could be combined with a lease to a solar energy provider, generating income to offset bonds. Mr. Sharman suggested seeking assistance from Senator Feinstein. He further requested that the Negotiating Committee meet with another solar provider in addition to Eurus, and Mr. Williamson assured him the District would solicit bids.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m. The next regular Groundwater Management Committee Meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, February 10, 2010 at 9:15 a.m.