

MINUTES

RIO GRANDE REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY (RGRWA)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
9:00 A.M. – WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2009
LRGVDC TRANSPORTATION CENTER BOARD ROOM
510 S. PLEASANTVIEW DRIVE, WESLACO, TX

PRESIDING: JIM DARLING, PRESIDENT

The Rio Grande Regional Water Authority (RGRWA) Board of Directors held a meeting at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 3, 2009 at the LRGVDC Transportation Center Board Room in Weslaco, Texas. In attendance were:

RGRWA Board Members

President Jim Darling, Hidalgo County
Secretary-Treasurer Joe Barrera, Irrigation Dist.
Ms. Karran Westerman, Zapata County
Mr. Ricardo Gutierrez, Starr County
Mr. Fitzgerald Sanchez, Webb County
Mr. John Bruciak, Cameron County
Mr. Wayne Halbert, Irrigation Districts
Mr. Paul Heller, Irrigation Districts
Mr. Jimmie Steidinger, Irrigation Districts
Mr. Joe Pennington, Irrigation Districts
Mr. Jo Jo White, Irrigation Districts
Mr. Bobby Sparks, Irrigation Districts
Mr. Sonny Hinojosa, Irrigation Districts
Mr. Brian Macmanus, Water Supply Corporation
Mr. Roel Rodriguez, Municipal
Mr. D.V. Guerra, Public

Others

Mr. Victor Morales, LRGVDC
Mr. Erasmo Yarrito, Jr., TCEQ
Mr. Herman Settemeyer, TCEQ
Mr. Troy Allen, DLID
Mr. David Meesey, TWDB
Ms. Robyn Hadley, Water PR
Ms. Laura De La Garza, Comite Resources
Mr. Glenn Jarvis, Region M
Mr. Tomas Rodriguez, City of Laredo
Ms. Terrie Salinas, LRGVDC EDA
Mr. Jake White, NRS

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

President Jim Darling called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. and announced that a quorum was present.

2. Announcement and Swearing in of Governor Appointment/Reappointments.

Texas State Representative Eddie Lucio, III administered the Oath of Office to new Governor appointee Mr. Joe Pennington, and to re-appointees: Mr. Jimmie Steidinger, Mr. Sonny Hinojosa, Mr. Joe Barrera III, Mr. D.V. Guerra, and Mr. Jo Jo White.

3. Consider Approval of March 4, 2009 Meeting Minutes

The President then moved to item 2. – Consider Approval of April 1, 2009 Meeting Minutes. ***Mr. Joe Barrera made a motion for approval of the minutes as presented. Mr. Wayne Halbert seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

4 Public Comment

President Darling noted that no one had signed up for Public Comments.

5. Presentation RE: Trans Pecos Water Trust Proposal

President Darling recognized Ms. Karen Chapman who proceeded to present "Trans Pecos Water Trust and the Desert Rio Grande". Ms. Chapman stated that one of the projects the Trust was working on was the Forgotten River Reach, which has deteriorated into numerous small channels as a result of sediment aggradations and salt cedar establishment. This section of the river is now approximately 10% of the size it used to be. Ms. Chapman explained that the Trans Pecos Water Trust's primary mission is to protect river flows in the Rio Grande and major U.S. tributaries between Fort Quitman and Amistad Reservoir. The Trust believes this can be done in a way that helps existing water right holders obtain additional value from their water rights through strictly voluntary transactions.

At the conclusion of the presentation President Darling stated that the purpose of inviting Ms. Chapman to present this information was to make the connection of how the Trust's projects affect this region. What the Trust is doing by leasing and buying water rights is making sure the water that would otherwise be diverted ultimately flows into Amistad Reservoir thus benefiting this region. Ms. Chapman stated that the Trust would welcome moral support and financial support if possible from the RGRWA for the Forgotten River Reach projects. It was the consensus of the Board to include this item on the agenda at the next Board meeting to explore opportunities to support this project, and consider forming a committee to delve deeper on the topic. President Darling suggested Mr. Wayne Halbert would make a fine chairman for such a committee.

6. Consider Approval RE: Revision to By-Laws

The President stated that as a housekeeping item, sections 2.01, 2.05 and 5.07(d) of the RGRWA By-laws needed to be revised to coincide with the updated legislation. Section 2.01 relates to the composition and appointment of Board members, section 2.05 relates to the designation of a quorum, and section 5.07(d) relates to purchasing. ***Mr. Joe Barrera made a motion for approval of the revisions to the By-Laws as presented. Mr. Brian Macmanus seconded the motion, and upon a unanimous vote the motion carried.***

7. Status Report RE: EDA Application for Regional Drainage Infrastructure Project

President Darling recognized Ms. Terrie Salinas, LRGVDC EDA Director. Ms. Salinas reported that the United States Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration approved the RGRWA application for a \$3.5 million EDA investment to fund the Regional Economic Adjustment Plan for Building Disaster Resilient Communities. Ms. Salinas stated that staff would begin drafting the Request for Qualifications for contractors to begin working on the funded projects.

8. Status Reports

A. Report from TCEQ Watermaster

President Darling recognized Mr. Erasmo Yarrito. Mr. Yarrito reported the most recent reservoir levels and announced that the temporary conservation levels had been lifted as of May 15, 2009 and normal conservation levels were back in effect. Mr. Yarrito informed the Board that on April 22 a delegation from TCEQ met with IBWC staff in El Paso, TX regarding emergency preparations along the Rio Grande. As a result of that meeting, it was agreed to hold workshop tabletop meetings at cities in different areas along the Rio Grande to analyze various flooding scenarios. These meetings began on May 19 and have been productive.

B. Report from IBWC

No one from IBWC was present and no report was available at this time.

C. Report from Rio Grande Regional Water Planning Group

President Darling recognized Mr. Jake White, NRS Consulting Engineers. Mr. White stated that the Rio Grande Regional Water Planning Group (Region M) Plan was separated into two phases. Phase I involved evaluating three special projects: Evaluating Surface Water Availability Models, Evaluating Individual Irrigation Districts as Water User Groups (WUGs) and Evaluate Demonstration Projects currently underway such as On-Farm Irrigation and the Brownsville PUB Desalination Project. Those projects have been submitted to TWDB and the Group is waiting for comments back from TWDB staff. The second phase of the plan involves updating the Regional Water Plan. A contract is currently in place with TWDB to perform this work and the initial draft report is due in to TWDB by March 1, 2010.

9. Committee Reports

A. Community Outreach

There was no new information to report.

B. Finance and Planning

1. Financial Report

Ms. Debby Morales was recognized and stated that staff was requesting Board approval to pay expenses in the amount of \$1,644.72 which included Surety Bond renewal for all Board members, Texas Water Conservation Association Dues and regular monthly expenses. ***Mr. Ricardo Gutierrez made a motion for approval of payment of the current expenses. Mr. Paul Heller seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.***

2. Status of Assessments

President Darling recognized Mr. Joe Barrera who noted that collection for the 2009 Assessment was progressing satisfactorily; however, Mr. Barrera suggested any Board Member who had contacts with the entities who were delinquent might consider making a friendly reminder call.

C. Personnel and Professional Services

President Darling recognized Ms. Robyn Hadley, WaterPR. Ms. Hadley reported that the website continued to be active with approximately 200-300 visitors a month, and anticipated that with the addition of photos and other articles of interest the activity would increase.

D. Legislation

Mr. Wayne Halbert was recognized and distributed updated information on legislation pertinent to water issues. Mr. Halbert noted that HB 2208 Relating to the calculating of current market value of certain water rights by the Rio Grande Regional Water Authority did pass, and that the only legislation pertaining to irrigation districts that did not pass was the bill relating to the ability to expend water master funds that were being built up; that bill never got out of committee. Mr. Halbert then discussed the announcement from Congressman Ruben Hinojosa's office regarding the passage of HR 1393 – Lower Rio Grande Valley Water Resources Conservation and Improvement Act of 2009. Mr.

Halbert informed the Board that this was the third time this bill has passed the house; however, it has failed to pass out of the Senate on two previous occasions. The Irrigation Districts with projects included in this bill are hopeful it will pass the Senate this time. HR 1393 authorizes several million dollars worth of projects mostly in Rio Grande Valley but also in El Paso and Hudspeth counties. Upon conclusion of discussion ***Mr. Joe Barrera made a motion to authorize sending a letter of support for HR 1393 to the Senators. Mr. Jimmie Steidinger seconded the motion, and upon a vote the motion carried unanimously.*** Mr. Halbert will assist in drafting said letter.

E. El Morillo Drain

Mr. Yarrito was recognized and stated that the most recent information he had on El Morillo Drain was that money was set aside to repair/rebuild the pump motors, which is good news as often times one or more of the pumps have been out of service.

10. Discussion and Possible Action RE: Meeting Schedule

It was the consensus of the Board not to meet in July and schedule the next meeting for Wednesday, August 5, 2009.

11. Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 10:16 a.m.

Jim Darling, President, RGRWA

ATTEST:

Joe Barrera, Secretary-Treasurer, RGRWA