



BOARD OF DIRECTORS REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 18, 2026 at 3:00 PM

66575 Second St, Desert Hot Springs, CA AND/OR Via Teleconference

CALL TO ORDER

President Duff called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: President Amber Duff, Vice President Robert Griffith, Director Ivan Sewell
Director Russ Martin

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Director Ted Mayrhofen

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Brian Macy, Marion Champion, Kurt Kettenacker, Oriana Hoffert, Skyler Aubrey, Amanda Lucas, Eric Weck, Will Whitten, Selene Rodriguez, Dori Petee, April Scott

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Director Sewell

RULES OF PROCEDURE

Rules of Procedure were read by General Counsel.

All noticed meetings are conducted using Rosenberg's Rules of Order as a procedural guideline. Directors should refrain from responding directly to public comments at meetings of the Board. The Board President will refer matters raised during public comment to the General Manager for follow-up when appropriate. Occasionally, a prompt response may be offered when an obvious answer resolution is available provided this is done in compliance with the Brown Act. Directors should refrain from debating or making decisions in response to public comments. The President of the Board presides at all meetings and decides all points of order and procedure during meetings. The President is responsible for maintenance and decorum at all Board meetings. No person shall be allowed to speak who has not first been recognized by the President. All questions and remarks should be addressed to the President as the presiding officer. No member of the Board should speak more than once about any one subject until every other member on the Board wishing to speak on the subject shall have been given the opportunity to speak. No Board member shall interfere with the orderly progress of a Board meeting. In order to ensure the orderly progress of Board meetings the Board President regulates the amount of time to be dedicated to a particular agenda item."

PUBLIC INPUT

Julie Casserly: Julie Casserly of Sky Valley. I'm here today to put on record how uncomfortable I was with how I and many in my community were spoken to and portrayed at your 4/20 board meeting. I've been active in countless public meetings speaking before the board of supervisors planning commission during the multispecies habitat conservation plan, general plan amendment requests, workshops, etc. I have served our community in this capacity for close to 40 years. I was involved with the development of the 2003 general plan for our community and every subsequent amendment request since in 2008, 2016, and 2024. I do not spread disinformation.

I have never had to reach out on social media before to a community. We have an extensive email list of our residents. But since the entire IDA district was involved with no notification to anyone other than the three community councils and the fact that I found out that you were scheduled to vote on this issue by chance when I happened to look at your agenda only the day before Next Door, which I have used for lost and found pets, was the only way I could think of to at least give other ID8 rate payers a chance of notification. Not one part of my post on Next Door was incorrect. It was to advise those that were interested in and following the plan for divestiture about the meeting.

When Vice President Griffith chastised us for stating that this divestiture proposal was initiated due to efforts to develop in Desert Hot Springs, I meant no disrespect when I laughed, but I thought it was clear that not one board member took the time to watch the CVWD board meeting of September 23rd. I assume you were just unaware that CVWD stated that development and desert hot springs and the ID8 divestiture were tied together. At least that's what I thought until a couple weeks ago when I was sent dozens of emails written over the last 5 years between Mission Springs, Desert Hot Springs City Council, CVWD, numerous consultants, developers, property owners, on and on. All that was discussed was development. The topic was the lack of sewer service that impeded projects from moving forward. Initially a shared service agreement was pursued and that morphed into the ID8 divestiture. This was discussed for years before Chrome 6 was even mentioned. Not one of those bodies considered or even mentioned the rate payers of ID8. January 6 of this year was the first time I could find the cost of uh Chrome 6 remediation of topic and grant funding was not even mentioned until October. It appears that the grant idea was born due to stalled negotiation of the divestiture, not to help residents cover the threat of a possible \$85 a month cost. It remains to be seen if that cost calculation is even correct. This consolidation is being pursued with no mention that as a Mission Springs rate payer, our water rates would initially double and quickly triple. The only way we've been kept informed is finding out by chance, watching videos of or attending meetings, keeping track of agendas, and most importantly through public records requests. I think our concerns regarding your transparency merit some consideration. Thank you.

Noel Ragsdale: Good morning, good afternoon, excuse me, Noel Ragsdale, we have been advised that you have submitted the application for financial assistance related to the ID8 uh divestiture. At the recent CBWD board meeting, we requested that our community council be provided with a copy of that application. We asked that board because your board has indicated that we need to direct comments and requests to them because we're not your customers.

Director Aguilar commented that since this is a public record, we are entitled to receive this document. We understand that a FOIA request has been made for it, but we ask you to provide a copy to us without having to go through the rigmarole of a FOIA request. Please stand by your claim of valuing transparency and give us a copy. Also at the CVWD board meeting, Director Estrada suggested it might be productive to conduct a workshop where there could be more robust communication between the ID8 members and the boards. Should such a meeting occur, such a or such a workshop occur, we hope

that some of your board members will attend because I am sure that there will be many questions that only you can answer. Again, transparency. Thank you.

Tabitha Davies: Hello, my name is Tabitha and I am an ID8 Ray Payer and I want to begin by addressing Vice President Griffith directly. At your last meeting, you characterized members of this community as armchair lawyers. Getting their news from Tik Tok and you prefaced your remarks with no offense. And saying no offense before insulting people does not erase the insult. It just documents that you knew it was one. And I want to be precise about why that conduct matters.

Because it's not just a rule and in rude, it's a violation of your own board's rules. Under Rosenberg's rules of order, public speakers cannot yield their time to one another. Time is non-transferable and the public is capped at three minutes per speaker. So when a board member uses an unlimited platform from the dais, characterize or push back on community that cannot pull its time and cannot respond, that is not debate, that is asymmetry weaponized against ratepayers that you seek to control. By the way, when that push back is delivered with the kind of emotional escalation that we witnessed at the last meeting, that level of dysregulation directed at members of the public from someone holding public office, it should be concerning to every member of the board and to every ratepayers that's watching. You chose to do that. You chose to break from the standard of conduct of your own rules so that they have been established and the record will forever reflect that choice. Now, since you've repeatedly insisted on the record that this consolidation has nothing to do with development, and yet every single sipper response that I have received and every public meeting record relevant to this matter frames this consolidation as the hinge for development down Palm Drive. So, the public is left with two possibilities in my opinion.

And I'll let the public decide which one they find more comforting. Either this board is being played by parties who have not been honest with them and the actual purpose of this project, or the board knows the actual purpose and is not being honest with the public about it. I can't tell anyone which it is. Only the people sitting on this dis can answer that. But the records don't match the talking points and the public deserves to know why. At your last meeting, you took quote sensitivity to accusations and a lack of transparency pointed to a certificate on the wall.

Transparency is responding to a cure and correct demand. I filed one and the responses I've got are dismissals, not responses, twice. So, speaking of transparency, why did your assistant general manager join a private mom's group the same day she opted to try to discredit my voice without announcing who she was and her only a comment on the day she joined? I might add, your district has documented groundwater contamination issues and are currently spending ratepayers money to remediate at what 10 million a year. CVWD who's significantly larger uses about 9.3.

So at the end of the day, what I have to say is the energy that I have brought to this situation with ID8 because we don't want you to take us hostage because it's essentially weaponizing municipal water. I will bring tenfold to make sure that if we get absorbed by Mission Springs, I make sure you're absorbed by Desert Water Agency. Have the day you deserve.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

The Board recognized the following employees:

NEW HIRES

Neal Stephenson Lead Field Operations Technician

ANNIVERSARIES

Nate Mather	Water Production Supervisor	1 Year
William Whitten	Business Analyst	2 Years
Cynthia Acosta	Administrative Assistant II	3 Years
Jason Weekley	C&M Supervisor	6 Years
Ann Rogers	Customer Service Representative II	10 Years
Robert Lopez	Purchasing and Warehouse Specialist	20 Years
David Pena	Lead Field Service Representative	21 Years

PRESENTATIONS

CWEA AWARDS PRESENTATION

Assistant General Manager Marian Champion reported that Mission Springs Water District received statewide recognition from the California Water Environment Association, including third place for its internship program with the Desert Hot Springs High School REAL Academy and second place for wastewater operations at the Nancy Wright Regional Water Reclamation Facility. She thanked staff for their dedication, professionalism, and teamwork in earning both honors.

PUBLIC HEARING ~ VACANCIES, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION EFFORTS ~ AB 2561

President Duff opened the Public Hearing and called for the Secretary's report. Notice of Public Hearing was posted to the Desert Sun on May 3rd & May 10th, 2026. As of this afternoon there were no comments or protest on this item.

Human Resources Manager Oriana Hoffert presented the District's annual workforce vacancies, recruitment, and retention update in compliance with AB 2561. She reported that as of May 14, 2026, the District had 57 budgeted full-time positions, with 3 vacancies, reflecting a 5.3% vacancy rate. The vacant positions are Engineering Technician, Customer Service Manager, and Director of Finance. During the current fiscal year, the District experienced 11 vacancies due to employee separations, new positions, and internal promotions, of which 8 have been filled, leaving 3 open positions. Ms. Hoffert reported a turnover rate of approximately 7.3% and stated that the District continues to prioritize internal advancement, competitive compensation and benefits, professional development, and employee recognition as key recruitment and retention strategies. She also noted potential recruitment challenges related to senior-level positions, a limited regional labor pool, and industry-wide shortages of certified water professionals.

Public Comment was given as follows:

Tabitha Davies: I just wanted to say thank you for your clarity in how you spoke and the fact that you didn't run as quickly as I do because having been in multiple meetings over the last year that generally is not how the presentations go. So, thank you.

Motion made by Vice President Griffith, Seconded by Director Sewell.

Voting Yea: President Duff, Vice President Griffith, Director Sewell, Director Martin

ACTION ITEMS

AWARD OF CONTRACT TO ECOLOGY AUTO PARTS INC. FOR HAULING AND OFF-SITE DISPOSAL OF BIO-SOLIDS, GRIT AND SCREENINGS

The Board authorized the General Manager to execute a 3-year contract with Ecology Auto Parts, Inc. (Ecology), in an amount not to exceed \$1,380,000 (\$460,000 per year), for off-site hauling of biosolids, grit, and screenings for landfill disposal or beneficial reuse, and to take all actions necessary to complete the project.

Presentation was given at Study Session, there is nothing further to add.

Motion made by Director Sewell, Seconded by Vice President Griffith.

Voting Yea: President Duff, Vice President Griffith, Director Sewell, Director Martin

RESOLUTION 2026-04 ~ SUPPORTING ACWA'S VISION FOR OUR WATER FUTURE CAMPAIGN

The Board adopted Resolution 2026-04, expressing Mission Springs Water District's support for the Association of Water Agencies (ACWA) Vision for our Water Future Campaign.

Presentation was given at Study Session, there is nothing further to add.

Motion made by Vice President Griffith, Seconded by Director Sewell.

Voting Yea: President Duff, Vice President Griffith, Director Sewell, Director Martin

HUMAN RELATIONS REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION

The Board considered the Human Relations Committee's recommendations and directed the Accounting Manager to implement the action item as part of the annual budget process.

The Board received staff's presentation regarding seven recommended budget items and provided direction to move the items forward as presented. Board members expressed support for the recommendations, noting the importance of remaining competitive to retain employees and recruit qualified candidates.

Motion made by Vice President Griffith, Seconded by Director Martin.

Voting Yea: President Duff, Vice President Griffith, Director Sewell, Director Martin

DISCUSSION ITEMS

ADMINISTRATION BUILDING UPDATE

The General Manager provided an update on the administrative building and Critical Services Center, noting that two bids were received for the project, ranging from \$33 million to \$35 million. He stated that both bids fall within the district's \$40 million budget. The engineering and architectural team are currently reviewing the bids and expect to return to the Board in June with a recommendation.

GROUNDWATER PROTECTION PROGRAM UPDATE

Update provided on Thursday, there is nothing further to add.

CONSENT AGENDA

Consent agenda items are expected to be routine and non-controversial, to be acted upon by the Board at one time, without discussion. If a member would like an item to be handled separately, it will be removed from the Consent Agenda for separate action.

Register of Demands is being pulled as the revised version was not included in today's packet. This item will be presented to the Board in June for approval.

Approval of minutes only:

Motion made by Director Sewell, Seconded by Vice President Griffith.

Voting Yea: President Duff, Vice President Griffith, Director Sewell, Director Martin

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It is recommended to approve the minutes as follows:

April 16, 2026 ~ Study Session

April 20, 2026 ~ Board Meeting

REGISTER OF DEMANDS

The register of demands totaling \$3,305,102.63

REPORTS

DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

Director Sewell reported attending the following meetings and events: 4/7 DHS City Council Meeting, 4/21 DHS City Council Meeting, 4/30 RivCo Annual CV Business Conference & Economic Forecast.

Director Martin reported attending the following meetings and events: 4/7 – 4/10 CWEA Annual Conference, 4/15 DVBA Public Officials Luncheon, 4/16 Big Heart Awards, 4/30 RivCo Annual CV Business Conference & Economic Forecast.

Vice President Griffith reported attending the following meetings and events: 4/5 – 4/9 CSDA Legislative Conference, 4/30 RivCo Annual CV Business Conference & Economic Forecast.

President Duff reported attending the following meetings and events: 4/5 – 4/9 CSDA Legislative Conference, 4/16 Big Heart Awards, 4/17 ACWA Legislative Symposium, 4/30 RivCo Annual CV Business Conference & Economic Forecast.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Included in this report are the following oral reports:

- A. Finance Report
- B. Public Affairs Report

District staff provided an update regarding recent theft incidents affecting district property and nearby infrastructure. The Director of Operations Danny Friend reported that, since the last board meeting, two additional fire hydrants had been stolen. Staff also described a break-in at the district's existing solar site, where storage containers and a trailer used by a solar contractor were accessed through cuts made in the fence line. Law enforcement responded quickly after staff suspected an individual was still on site, and a stolen trailer was located shortly thereafter with the assistance of a police drone. The estimated loss associated with the solar site incident was approximately \$50,000. Staff coordinated with the contractor and law enforcement to recover the trailer and return it to the site.

Staff further noted that the district has been working with regional partners and law enforcement agencies to share information regarding theft activity affecting utility and solar infrastructure throughout the Coachella Valley. Additional concerns were raised regarding the theft of approximately 6,000 feet of Frontier fiber cable near Long Canyon, where evidence indicated the cable had been forcibly pulled from conduit. Board members expressed concern about the increasing frequency of these incidents and suggested the board consider discussing preventative theft measures in closed session at a future meeting to avoid publicly disclosing security strategies. Staff indicated that a written update would also be included in the following month's report.

COMMENTS**DIRECTOR COMMENTS AND REQUESTS**

- A. General Comments

Director Martin noted complaints received from his constituents regarding difficulty opening the water bottles.

- B. Requests for Future Agenda Items
- C. Requests for Future Meetings

ADJOURN

With no further business, President Duff adjourned the meeting at 4:14 PM

Respectfully Submitted,



Dori Petee
Executive Assistant