



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BOARD MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF TRABUCO CANYON WATER DISTRICT | APRIL 17, 2025

The Special Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Trabuco Canyon Water District (TCWD or District) conducted on April 17, 2025, was called to order by President Edward Mandich at 3:00 p.m. in the Board Room at the District Administrative Facility located at 32003 Dove Canyon Drive, Trabuco Canyon, California. Mr. Michael Perea, District Secretary, transcribed the minutes thereof.

DIRECTORS PRESENT

President Ed Mandich
Vice President Glenn Acosta
Director Mark Anderson
Director John Horst
Director Michael Safranski

STAFF PRESENT

Fernando Paludi, General Manager
Michael Perea, Assistant General Manager
Lorrie Lausten, District Engineer
Karen Warner, Principal Accountant
Gary Kessler, Water Operations Superintendent
Phil Serpas, CMMS/SCADA Administrator
Other staff were present

DISTRICT CONSULTANTS

Claire Collins, District General Legal Counsel – Hanson Bridgett, LLP

PUBLIC PRESENT

There were members of public present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Director Safranski led the Board of Directors, District staff, and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

VISITOR PARTICIPATION

None

ORAL COMMUNICATION

None

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

None

REPORT FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

None

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ACTION CALENDAR

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

ITEM 1: BOARD WORKSHOP MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

Mr. Paludi introduced this matter for Board consideration based on discussions and information shared with the Directors at previous public meetings.

a. Board of Directors Protocols

Ms. Collins delivered a presentation on the proper protocol for elected official communications with other water agency elected officials and respective staff members for the purpose of preserving a clear and ethical line of communications. Ms. Collins provided a copy of the District's list of committee appointments and agency representative assignments approved at the December 19, 2024 Regular Board Meeting, and she added that a general rule to follow is that elected officials communicate with other elected officials, and that staff members communicate with other staff members.

Director Acosta expressed the importance of following Board protocol, and that Directors need approval from the Board prior to making commitments to other agencies.

Director Safranski commented that each Director is only one part of the whole Board, and he cautioned against working alone without Board discussion and approval.

b. Intergovernmental Relations

Ms. Collins introduced this matter by explaining this is a critical function of the Board of Directors and District staff, and she referenced the matter concerning the Orange County Local Agency Formation Commission (OC LAFCO) discussion matter at the April 16th Regular Board Meeting as an impetus for agency collaboration. Mr. Paludi reported that Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD) has established a Shared Services Ad Hoc Committee for the purpose of identifying potential collaboration with the South Orange County agencies. Director Mandich stated that he is establishing a Shared Services Ad Hoc Committee with both him and Director Horst, and he directed Mr. Paludi to reach out to SMWD to set up a meeting to discuss shared services opportunities.

Mr. Paludi introduced the matter concerning District outreach efforts to local and State officials for funding opportunities and requests. Director Mandich inquired about the formal process for these types of efforts; Ms. Collins indicated that staff and counsel prepare the materials for Board consideration at public meetings. Director Horst reported on his outreach efforts to neighboring agency managers, and he explained that he briefed Mr. Paludi prior to execution of these efforts. Director Horst added that he met with Assemblymember Philip Chen to discuss State funding opportunities to augment District capital project funding. Discussion occurred regarding a draft letter from Assemblymember Chen to Assemblymember and Budget Committee Chair Phil Ting requesting state budget funds for the Dimension plant transmission main rehab project. The General Manager was authorized to complete the draft letter, return it to Assemblymember Chen, and copy Assemblymember Kate Sanchez.

Mr. Kessler requested the Board clarify their position on shared operations services, and he cautioned the Board that the other agencies may understandably not want to operate our facilities and equipment and vice versa. Discussion occurred on the concept of shared operation services. Director Mandich commented that this matter was not clear. Director Horst commented that there may be opportunities for staff to work in tandem with other agency staff. Mr. Perea commented that there are pre-existing mutual aid relationships that may be clarified through inter-agency agreements, but did not support shared operation services. Director Acosta commented that this topic exceeded the scope of the discussion.

Director Mandich opened the floor to public comment.

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Ray Chandos -Mr. Chandos commented that he supports the Board of Directors seeking additional funding opportunities to offset rate increases, and he encouraged the Board to respect free speech rights of each Director and members of the public.

Sue Marrucci – Ms. Marucci expressed her appreciation for the new Directors on the Board, and she recommended that the Board educate themselves and ask questions on all things water related. Ms. Marucci commended District field and office staff for their hard work and expressed that they deserve respect.

Jay Gentile – Mr. Gentile expressed concerns with the condition of the District’s groundwater wells based on the debris flow impacts from the Airport Fire in Trabuco Creek, and encouraged the Board explore options to submit a claim for damages to the County of Orange. Discussion occurred among the Board regarding this option.

c. Revenue Generation and Cost saving Opportunities

Mr. Paludi introduced this topic for Board consideration, and he indicated that this matter was agendized at the request of Director Horst.

Director Horst introduced the idea of maximizing our investment in the Baker Water Treatment Plant (BWTP), including the potential of selling the District capacity in the BWTP. Discussion occurred concerning the original reasons behind the District’s participation in the BWTP and planned future discussions on this matter. Mr. Kessler expressed his concern to the Board with this proposal as the District’s capacity in the BWTP represents approximately twenty-five percent of the District’s water demand and provides system redundancy in the event of an emergency. Mr. Perea recommended scheduling a Board workshop for staff to present an overview of the District’s potable water system and how it is designed to operate as an educational opportunity for the benefit of the new Directors, as well as the members of the public.

Director Safranski introduced the idea of exploring the disposal of the District’s Porter Property. Mr. Paludi reported that staff is preparing a request for qualifications (RFQ) for qualified consultants to identify the highest and best use of the property. Discussion occurred concerning different options for the utilization of the Porter Property, including, but not limited to, mitigation property, residential development, solar farm, and/or satellite OCFA facility. Discussion occurred concerning groundwater exploration on the District’s property; Mr. Perea indicated that the District performed a well feasibility study of the Porter Property in 2020 and recommended the Board re-evaluate this option.

Director Horst encouraged District staff to pursue grant funding opportunities as much as possible, and he cited examples of neighboring agency successes.

Director Horst requested a list of vendors from staff to identify areas of cost controls and overages. Discussion occurred concerning the District’s rules and powers as a County Water District and the use of contractor on-call services for emergency response situations. Mr. Paludi commented that staff will review and provide a list of District vendors for Board review.

Director Mandich directed staff to agendize this matter for Board review on a quarterly basis.

MOTION: None. Informational item only.

ADJOURNMENT

President Mandich adjourned the April 17, 2025 Special Board Meeting at 5:07 p.m.