

**KINNELOA IRRIGATION DISTRICT**  
**Special Meeting – Board of Directors**  
**1999 Kinclair Drive, Pasadena, CA 91107**  
**Tuesday, May 5, 2020, 3:00 pm**  
**Minutes**

**Meeting conducted by teleconference under the provisions of Executive Order N-29-20.**

**DIRECTORS PRESENT:** Zoom teleconference/videoconference: Tim Eldridge, Frank Griffith, Gordon Johnson, Gerrie Kilburn and Dave Moritz

**DIRECTORS ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** Zoom teleconference/videoconference: General Manager Melvin Matthews, Office Manager/Board Secretary Bernadette Allen

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** Director/Chair Gordon Johnson called the meeting to order at 3:01 pm. To determine if a quorum was present, he called the roll in alphabetical order. Directors Eldridge, Johnson and Moritz were present at roll call. A quorum of Board Members was present. Chair Johnson lost connection with the Zoom meeting. After he rejoined, Directors Griffith and Kilburn joined the meeting.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT:** District resident Stephen Brown present via teleconference. No public comments.

**3. OPERATIONS STAFFING:** Chair Johnson stated that the special meeting was set up at the request of the Board to discuss a couple of items on the General Manager's goals and objectives for 2020 relating to staffing: hiring a regular full-time position in the field for operations and the hiring for a temporary field position.

The General Manager opened the discussion. He stated that the staff management plan organizational chart has one position that is currently open [Facilities Operator]. His goals and objectives include the possibility of hiring a well-qualified full-time operator and the possibility of hiring a temporary operator.

The General Manager stated that he would summarize the Personnel Committee [Director Johnson and Director Kilburn] discussion and his thoughts, which are as follows. He stated that his focus has been on hiring a full-time fully certified operator because that has the most benefit to the District. He added that training takes 6 months to a year to have a fully trained operator on staff. The previous time he recruited for field staff, it took nearly a year to narrow down to three candidates. Of those, two candidates took jobs elsewhere and one candidate was hired, but not hired for the highly trained operator position that was originally intended. He stated that it is not easy to hire an operator at this particular level due to the District's salary and benefits schedule and the candidate's own desire to work for a small agency, much like a family business, with very little opportunity for advancement. The General Manager agreed with the Board's recommendation to start the recruitment as soon as possible.

Regarding the part-time position, the General Manager understands that this goal was driven, in part, by the Board's concern that if there were an emergency that there would not be staff available to help. Hiring a temporary person would be to prove that on short notice the District could get operator help. The General Manager expressed that a temporary hire is not a good idea for the following reasons. It is difficult to hire a temporary person other than through an outside

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agency. Even if the District does hire through an outside agency, there is a training period involved and that would involve staff time and would take away from current operations. He added that if the concern was staffing in an emergency, that there is a total of four mutual aid agreements that can supply the District with personnel and equipment on very short notice. Those groups are the Public Water Agencies Group (PWAG) with 19 other agencies, the Foothill Mutual Aid Agreement with 7 other agencies, CalWarn a statewide emergency response organization, and California Utilities Emergency Association (CUEA). Since there are a lot of resources available for a true emergency, it would be counterproductive to recruit for a temporary position or bring in an operator from an outside agency. The General Manager turned the discussion over to the Board. Director Kilburn stated that she is in full agreement that the District does not need to try a temporary operator and the focus should be on hiring a permanent qualified individual. Director Eldridge stated that he would like to see a proof of concept, to bring someone in, get outside eyes on the system, see where the District's weak points are and find out what it would take for someone to come in and do the work.

Director Kilburn agreed that is a good point. She asked if Director Eldridge was thinking of a consultant to evaluate the District.

Director Eldridge replied, "No." He stated that his thought is: What does it take to actually call someone, get them to the District, within a day or two days? To run through the process and find out the weak points and good points and bring some comfort to the idea that it can be done. How long would it take for someone to get oriented to the District and operate in this environment to keep the water running?

Chair Johnson stated that he did not hear all Director Eldridge's comments because his computer lost the Zoom connection. He added that after a discussion that he and Director Kilburn had with the General Manager, he felt that in terms of priority, in terms of staff effort, that moving forward as quickly as possible to hire a permanent position was the highest priority. He agreed with Director Eldridge's request for a proof of concept. That going through the exercise of bringing someone on board through a company or some other means would be beneficial. He stated the Personnel Committee did not want to slow down movement on hiring the permanent position. Director Kilburn agreed with the Chair's comments.

The General Manager commented that he would like to invite Mike Holmes, the PWAG Emergency Preparedness Coordinator to come and give a presentation on the capabilities of bringing someone in to help for emergencies. He added that on specific projects it may be possible to bring someone in part-time. A lot of agencies that specialize in temporary certified operators are used for a specific project. He stated that for emergency situations, whether it is a virus or a natural disaster, is a far different scenario, and he would like the opportunity for the Board to better understand the PWAG emergency preparedness group and get some assurance that the District is well positioned to bring people in. All 19 agencies are currently participating in Monday meetings, and each week the questions are asked, "Do any of you need staff? Do any of you need equipment? Are there problems due to COVID-19?" It is a real live test of what it is to have an emergency. The General Manager suggested that if emergency situations are the concern, that Mike Holmes comes to a future meeting and explains the program. As far as a temporary worker for specific projects, the District could identify a specific project and get a temporary worker in to work on that project. If that is the Board's desire, the General Manager would go to a temporary

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agency. Other associations do not specialize in providing temporary workers. Other associations are useful for posting job listings, or for communicating needs, but they do not provide workers. Director Eldridge asked about documentation on the system and what would it take to get the documentation done.

The General Manager replied that the District is well documented, and it is an ongoing project. At the present time, clerical assistance is needed to put the documentation in order. He stated that he does not feel that it is necessary for a part time worker to come in to free up existing personnel to write procedures. A person could shadow an operator and write down what they are doing and document it. The General Manager stated that he feels that clerical and editing effort is needed because a lot of the procedures are still handwritten.

Director Eldridge asked what it would take to get that help.

The General Manager replied that there are temporary agencies that supply people who are proficient in software and are good writers and editors and could put it in a finished form. This would be a specialized project.

Director Eldridge asked if hiring a temporary worker would expedite the process.

The General Manager stated that it would. Basically, all staff are working to capacity. Any additional manpower in the office or in the field would be helpful. All critical work is being done and projects are moving forward. Even with the COVID-19 situation, the District is not getting behind. Additional personnel will move work forward more quickly or more projects can be undertaken. The District is definitely manpower constrained. The District has a very small staff as compared to other agencies, and although there may be fewer customers, the activities are just as varied and complex as many other agencies with many more customers.

Director Eldridge stated that he would like to see it [documentation on the system] expedited and for the General Manager to get the help needed and to keep all projects on track. He wants the General Manager to have the tools needed to accomplish it, office staff or technical writers, and asked the rest of the Board for their thoughts.

Chair Johnson agreed with Director Eldridge and stated that this should be expedited. Completion of the procedures and manuals should not be considered fill in work. It should be priority work and if it takes bringing in someone from the outside to help get it done, then he is fine with that. Chair Johnson said that technical writers are available from various sources. There are also companies that provide operators and engineers to help with operational systems that write manuals. The District may be able to find someone who has some experience writing water manuals. He directed the General Manager to let the Board know what he needs.

The General Manager replied that those are good suggestions. He stated he would look at it on a project by project basis and get the help needed to complete it. He had wanted clarification on temporary help, versus moving projects forward, versus emergencies and has a better understanding of the Board's thoughts.

The General Manager stated that at the next meeting, he will present the Emergency Response Plan, and he will invite Mike Holmes to be at that meeting or a future meeting to give the Board a better overview of PWAG. At the same time, he will talk specifically with agencies to seek technical writers to move the operations procedures forward. Separately from that, he will start the recruitment for the full-time vacant operator position.

Chair Johnson added, as Director Eldridge alluded to, it is important to look at the work assignments of all the existing staff, and if changes need to be made to the day to day work in

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order to complete the procedures or in order to train a new employee, all of that should be on the table.

The General Manager agreed, and as he had discussed with the Personnel Committee, the staff will be resuming weekly staff meetings, which helps in assigning tasks and reassigning tasks and communicating the status of projects and tasks. Staff meetings will resume via Zoom.

Director Kilburn said that is a good plan.

Director Eldridge asked what the General Manager considers to be the biggest bottleneck.

The General Manager stated that there is not a single thing that is a bottleneck. The staff is working to capacity. Maintenance projects may get deferred due to lack of time or priority, but there is not any one item. Every week at staff meeting the staff discuss tasks and projects assigned for the week, and certain tasks get postponed due to lack of hours in the day. Board members are invited to join the staff at the Monday meetings.

Director Eldridge stated that he would like to join the meeting and he reiterated that the Board has given the General Manager some hard dates and they want to get him the resources to get things done.

The General Manager said that many of the dates are realistic and some may not be, for example, the hiring of a full-time operator could take longer than indicated on the goals and objectives. The General Manager will keep the Board informed. If additional staff, temporary or permanent will help, he will share that with the Board. He stated, that as the Chair pointed out, the goals and objectives for the General Manager involve the entire staff and cooperation of the entire staff, because they cannot be achieved by himself and he appreciates the willingness of the Board to provide resources.

The General Manager stated he neglected to mention that currently there is not a vehicle for another full-time operator. Once that person is hired, another vehicle will need to be purchased. During a training period, and when restrictions are lifted, an operator can ride along with existing staff. Eventually, that operator would need a vehicle of their own to be productive. This is a budgetary consideration.

Chair Johnson asked if there were additional comments.

Director Griffith asked if the Personnel Committee has an outline of what the District is looking for in an operator for the Board to review.

The General Manager replied that the District has a job description for that position, and that job description would be the basis for the job posting.

Director Griffith asked if the document could be emailed to the Directors.

The General Manager replied that he could and he asked the Chair to share the discussion that the Personnel Committee had with regard to the experience level sought.

Chair Johnson said that there was a discussion, but there was not a conclusion or recommendation. He stated that it is challenging to hire experienced operators in California and all agencies are trying to find people. It is a limited pool, so you are left with the choice of hiring an existing person that has the certifications or someone who is a candidate, an up and coming person. The Personnel Committee discussed where the District should be, and he thinks the full Board should have that discussion. The latter approach was the one taken when the last person was hired, someone who could move up and gain certification.

Director Griffith stated that he thinks the Board needs to know some numbers before the decision is made.

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Chair Johnson said that it would be important to know what the salary ranges are of various levels in the Southern California area.

Director Eldridge asked what the education path is for an operator. Is it all on the job learning? The General Manager replied that there is continuing education requirements for all operators, regardless of level. The way there is progression in certification levels is to take educational courses. There are various sources online and in person. Citrus College has a water technology program that leads to initial certification. There is some on the job experience and education required to progress to certification levels. The District is rated at Distribution Operator 3 (D3) level and Treatment 2 (T2) level. Someone can be hired with lower or no certification, with the promise that they will get certified. There is an established salary range for the full-time operator position, and it has taken into account salary ranges in the area. At this point it is not necessary to do a survey of other agencies. This information is available online at the State Controller's website. The General Manager stated that he has already done that comparison and he thinks the District's salary range is realistic for the position. It is a wide range to allow for various levels of experience and certifications. An operator who is already certified will be in the upper half of the salary range. Director Eldridge asked about Citrus College's program.

The General Manager stated that their program specializes in entry levels, to enable students to take the D1 and T1 test and pass. Citrus has other continuing education classes. Sacramento State also has online courses, which he used and completed in nine months. If an operator is certified, they are required, every three years to have a certain number of continuing education units to renew their certification. Everyone on the operating staff, including the General Manager, continue to take continuing education classes to renew their current certification level.

Director Eldridge asked what is lacking with the most recent hire. Was that person supposed to get certifications that have not materialized?

The General Manager replied that the latest hire is certified, but not at the D3/T2 level and has not pursued the certification in a timely manner. Beyond certification, it is also a matter of demonstrating skills and ability to take on additional tasks of the system. Certification level is not the sole indicator of the value of the person to the District, but it is necessary to move up to the senior level of operators and be able take on a greater level of maintenance and troubleshooting tasks. Some operators are not capable of gaining that additional knowledge and experience and the ability to do higher level tasks.

Director Eldridge asked, if there is such a high demand for operators in California, why has there been no talk of having systems for training? Why is there no training program?

The General Manager stated that it is a mystery. Some community colleges have taken it seriously, such as Citrus, Saddleback and Rio Hondo. They all have water technology programs. The focus is on entry level people. He has no idea why Pasadena City College does not have a program. He has talked with his contacts there and it is not a priority, even though there is a statewide demand. Most likely, the potential operator that the District hires, will be taken away from another agency. The State of California will provide to the District the mailing addresses of all certified operators in California, and that list can be filtered by certification level to mail out the job posting information. Director Eldridge stated that he would look into the colleges and their programs.

The General Manager suggested he check out Citrus. He is on the advisory committee and he attends meetings twice a year, with their staff and with other General Managers.

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Director Kilburn asked the General Manager, in addition to sending out the job description, she requested that he send the salary range.

Chair Johnson asked the General Manager to schedule an item on one of the upcoming Board Meetings, June or July, preferably June, to discuss and confirm the level of the position that the District wants to hire.

The General Manager stated that the job description only lists a salary range, and he would like to discuss the level sooner, as well as the financial implications.

Chair Johnson stated that if there is time in the May meeting, the Board can discuss the following: what would be the level of the person, the potential duties, and impact on assignments of existing staff. What would be the cost and budgeting strategy for the new position?

The General Manager stated that at the next meeting the item can include the job description and the salary range. No decisions need to be made and additional discussion can occur in June or July regarding the ideal candidate and the salary level and tasks involved.

Chair Johnson stated that the sooner the better. May is good.

Director Eldridge asked if Mike Holmes could make a presentation as soon as possible.

The General Manager replied that he will invite Mike Holmes to join the Board at the next meeting, presumably via Zoom. In discussion of the Emergency Response Plan, since it contains sensitive security information, the item will be scheduled as a closed session. Mike Holmes can join the Board for that closed session as well, and the Board can ask him whether the response plan is adequate, reasonable or needs improvement. If Mr. Holmes is unable to join the Board at the next meeting, he can make a general presentation on the emergency response group in open session at a future meeting. In open session on May 19<sup>th</sup>, the General Manager will add an item to review the job description for the facility operator and review the salary range for that position.

Director Griffith stated that his notes from the last meeting show that the General Manager was going to send the Board a copy of the current Emergency Response Plan to each Board member. He had not received it.

The General Manager replied, since it is a closed session item, he will be consulting with the attorney when to share that document. He had concerns about distributing it via email.

Director Griffith suggested he hand deliver it.

The General Manager said it would be hand delivered prior to the meeting.

Director Kilburn said if it is hand delivered, there is no approval necessary to deliver it by email.

The General Manager agreed.

Director Kilburn said that it is a good time to recruit, because it is the end of the school year, people may be looking to change jobs, and there is a high number of jobless.

Director Moritz asked if the District has any profile, status or standing at the colleges, where there is an awareness of our operation as opposed to other operations.

The General Manager replied, "Absolutely." He is in touch with the full-time staff at Citrus, who is well aware of the District and may be personally able to recommend candidates.

Director Moritz stated that sometimes instructors know their students and may be able to direct someone in the program to the District.

The General Manager agreed.

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**4. DIRECTOR REPORTS AND/OR COMMENTS:**

Director Kilburn shared that there is a proposed closing of the sheriff station in Altadena. She contacted the LA County Supervisor Kathryn Barger, who is opposed to the closing. Residents can share letters or emails. She will be doing a One Call Now message for her homeowner's association and she hopes that others will notify their neighbors as well. The General Manager stated that the District wants the community safe and secure, and the District will benefit if there is a good response from law enforcement. The District cannot take a position. As individuals they can take a position. The General Manager hopes it will not be closed. Director Kilburn shared with the Board the phone number and the name of the person she spoke with at Kathryn Barger's office. Director Moritz stated that his neighborhood is organizing emails and a response because they feel it will be a disaster if the station is closed.

**5. CALENDAR:** The next meeting will be a Regular Meeting on May 19th, 2020, at 3:00 pm. The General Manager stated that the next meeting will be via Zoom. He expressed that the meeting is more effective if it is in person, and as soon as collectively, the Board is comfortable, he suggested resuming the regular meetings in the Boardroom. He added that he has received the draft audit and he may have it available for the June meeting, but most likely it will be for the July meeting. He will start the draft budget in July and present it to the Board at the August meeting.

**6. ADJOURNMENT:** It was motioned/seconded/carried unanimously-(Kilburn/Eldridge-5/0/0/0):  
**"That the Board adjourns the meeting."**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,



Bernadette C. Allen

Office Manager/Board Secretary