

# Uintah Water Conservancy District

Board of Trustees  
Board Meeting Minutes  
November 10, 2020

Approved

- Conducting:** Vice-Chairman Quentin Johnson called the November 10, 2020, Board Meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed guests. This meeting was held at the Uintah Conference Center because of COVID-19 protocols.
- Present:**
- Trustees:** Quentin Johnson, Greg Witbeck, Herb Snyder, Dean Baker, and Tyson Murray. Todd Thacker and Shane Frost were excused.
- Others:** William Merkley, UWCD General Manager; Mary Searle, UWCD Clerk; John Hunting, UWCD O&M Manager; Dave Rasmussen, UWCD Consultant; Aaron Averett, Sunrise Engineering; Jeff Hearty, Bureau of Reclamation.
- Approval of Minutes** Herb Snyder made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Dean Baker and passed unanimously to approve the October 13, 2020, Board Meeting minutes.
- Steinaker Dam Gate Modifications** The contractor has run into difficulties because of COVID. If any employees are working in areas with over a 3% transmission rate, they have to quarantine for 14 days. They will begin by being on site for a week starting November 16. They will disassemble the gates and send them to California for replacement of seats and seals to correct deficiencies discovered after the original construction. They had a prep team come in and the hoist was not operating. Hopefully by the end of the week the hoist will be able to pull the gates out.
- Vernal Unit Efficiency Project Watershed Plan** The preliminary draft of the EA was sent to the NRCS on October 26. They are now finishing up modeling for Rock Point flood control. As they have gone through the process, we have seen opportunities for additional funds. We are going to request those funds for Reach II and III of the Service Canal and for retention ponds for Rock Point. They are getting with the County Commissioners next week on flood control.
- Uinta River Bifurcation** The BIA is working to put together a letter to inform everyone on the status of this project. If the plan reverts to building the structure at the original location, Ouray Park Irrigation Company will probably pull out which may kill the project.
- Ashley Upper/Highline Canals Pipe Project** Stacks of pipe are being fused and put in the ground. About 15,000 feet of pipe is fused and about 2,100 feet is in the ground. They have piped through both tunnels on the Highline. They have also started pouring concrete on the structure on Ashley Creek. If the weather stays good, they plan to have the Highline finished and at least the 48" pipe in the head of the Upper done before water

deliveries in April of next year. The channels have not been maintained to the point where they could take advantage of the high water like they were designed.

**2021 Preliminary  
Budget**

William commended John Hunting for the hard work he does working with the budget and went over some of the highlights listed in the balance sheet. We anticipate a little over \$7 million coming to the District from NRCS for various projects. We will request funding from them then pass that on to the participating projects. Steinaker Canal has income of about \$4.6 million. Wages and salaries are not showing change until a decision is made by the Board. Rate increases passed last month are reflected in the budget. The project area is the part that has changed the most. When the Central Canal project gets underway we have the funds to make those contributions. We want to build an equipment shed. WetX is working with Ashley Valley Water, Vernal City and the District to give us input to put Green River water to use. We have large Federal facilities that house a lot of irrigation and M&I water. The district is going to have to spend a tremendous amount of money to make more M&I water available (Burns Bench Pumping Plant) out of Red Fleet. There is a lot of water in the two facilities that, if we had a mechanism where on a real-time basis, water could be traded between water users, we might be able to postpone investment in some of the water infrastructure projects if we put the water to better use. We need a way to put water to better use with a water bank. We need to set up technology to increase transparency on how the water in Ashley Creek is used and divided. That money for WetX needs to be included in the budget. Any money in the budget for this year (cloud seeding study) (project assistance) that is not used will go into the budget for next year. GIS development is going to be an ongoing project. Red Fleet Dam pipe needs coating and the valves and pumps need to be re-furbished. The District has a lot of debt but most is pass-through. If we can estimate what it truly costs the District to deliver water we can use that to determine how much irrigators cover and what should be covered by M&I. There was discussion about the share of the Green River Project the District covers and that is not subsidized by the rate increases on the Vernal and Jensen Units passed last month.

**Financial  
Statements**

Dean Baker made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Tyson Murray and passed unanimously to approve the October 2020 financial statements.

**Invoices**

Quentin Johnson made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Tyson Murray and passed unanimously to approve paying Basin Irrigation \$3,466.31; Bowen Collins \$9,266.50; J-U-B Engineering \$1,750; Jones & DeMille \$7,462.75; Tyson Murray \$500; PdM \$3,385; Brett Prevedel \$352.79 for a total of \$26,183.35.

**Resolution  
20201110A**

Conveyance of Non-Project Water through Steinaker Dam and Reservoir. Water that is diverted into Steinaker that is not project water is stored for the canal companies. We release it through the Service Canal. Then we have a small charge from the Bureau of Reclamation for usage. M&I users have primary rights

in Ashley Creek. We store for irrigators as well as Ashley Valley, Vernal City and Maeser. This year that storage was in excess of 800 acre feet. We had no legal framework to release that water to the M&I users. This contract will allow us to do that. All of Steinaker was obligated to the irrigators. We would like to open up that contract so M&I users can use and store non-project water. That opens up the negotiations with the Bureau of Reclamation. Amending the contract would be the easiest. It would be published and put up for negotiations. The stipulations that irrigation water would receive the preference on the water. We need to have legal framework in place to deliver the non-project water. Dean Baker made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Greg Witbeck and passed unanimously to approve Resolution 20201110A and authorize Todd Thacker to sign it.

**Resolution**  
**20201110B**

Future delivery of M&I water from Steinaker. The Steinaker contract between the Bureau of Reclamation and the District is dated 1958. It states that once irrigators pay a certain amount for a certain number of years their obligation will cease to exist. The M&I part of the contract was set up as a water service contract instead of repayment. After 40 years the contract was supposed to be re-negotiated; but that was never done. We need to enter into negotiations with the Bureau of Reclamation for further deliveries of M&I water out of Steinaker Reservoir. We would like to pursue a 40-year repayment contract. Greg Witbeck made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Tyson Murray and passed unanimously to approve Resolution 20201110B and authorize Todd Thacker to sign the document to enter into negotiations.

**Fleet Program**

We are looking at yearly expenses for maintaining vehicles in the range of \$10,000-\$12,000. Ashley Valley has started a buy-back program with Young Automotive where within one year or 12,000 miles, Young agrees to buy back the vehicle for the same amount that was paid. We reached out to Young and got no response so we reached out to the local dealers. Downtown Auto Group gave us an offer stating that they will buy back the vehicle for the same price paid after one year or 12,000 miles (whichever comes first). All oil changes and maintenance is performed at no cost to us during that period and we would receive preferential treatment in scheduling that maintenance. Concern was expressed about the perception by the public. Dean Baker made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Tyson Murray and passed unanimously to try it by buying two vehicles this year and give other dealers the option to match that offer.

**Manager Report**

William presented drought and sno-tel reports. We are in a bad situation unless we have storms.

**Adjourn**

Tyson Murray made a MOTION to adjourn which was SECONDED by Dean Baker and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.