

# Uintah Water Conservancy District

Board of Trustees  
Board Meeting Minutes  
January 12, 2021

Approved

**Conducting:** At the request of Chairman Todd Thacker, Vice-Chairman Quentin Johnson called the January 12, 2021, Board Meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed guests.

**Present:**

**Trustees:** Todd Thacker, Quentin Johnson, Greg Witbeck, Dean Baker, and Tyson Murray. Herb Snyder 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 and Gawain Snow, Sunrise Engineering; Mike Collins, Bowen Collins & Associates; Bart Jensen, Jones & DeMille Engineering; Dan Matthews, Tyler Dow and Eric Kellems, WETx; Wayne Simper, Ashley Central Canal; and Scott Chew, Utah State House of Representatives.

**Approval of Minutes** Greg Witbeck made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Todd Thacker and passed unanimously to approve the December 8, 2020, Board Meeting minutes after changing them to reflect that Shane Frost was present.

**Sunrise Work Order 2021-1** Aaron Averett said Sunrise is working with WETx in outlining steps to get water rights utilized more fully in connection with Vernal City and Ashley Valley Water. Tyler Dow said that WETx is helping by gathering and analyzing water rights and supply information. They will make water right recommendations and proposals and implement plans. The goal is to get a water bank set up. They will get to know our water and make sure it is being deployed in the best way. This will help us to follow through on recommendations presented by Bowen Collins in the Master Plan. Green River is set up to be a natural water bank. We have a distribution system in place. This is to bring water buyers and sellers together. Money could be well spent on maintaining aging infrastructure. After some discussion Todd Thacker made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Dean Baker and passed unanimously to approve Work Order 2021-1.

**Steinaker and Red Fleet Inflows** John Hunting reported that Steinaker is currently at elevation 5467.88 with an active capacity of 4738 acre feet. That is about 600 acre feet behind last year at this time. There is no way Steinaker will fill because of the required hold for Safety of Dams. If we get a couple of storms that could change. Red Fleet is currently at elevation 5585.10 containing 15,719 acre feet. Red Fleet should get to the full allotment. John reported that the water that was released was to test the new fish screen.

**Steinaker Dam  
Gate  
Modification  
Schedule**

William presented the planned schedule for the gates to return from California and be installed. Because of the holiday, the installation will probably be moved to Tuesday. The repair is on schedule.

**Vernal Unit  
Efficiency  
Project  
Watershed Plan**

Bart Jensen reported that there was not much update or movement because of the holidays. He will touch base and keep it moving. The board requested that he prepare a schedule for next month's board meeting.

**Uinta River  
Bifurcation**

The newest plan is to look at a new location that would be on (and accessed) private property. The new location has been identified and it would benefit all the planholders. It will take 5-6 hours of survey to accomplish. Dean Baker made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Tyson Murray and passed unanimously to go ahead with the survey at a cost not to exceed \$1,000 to see if this new location will work.

**Ashley  
Upper/Highline  
Canals Pipe  
Project**

CIVCO has created a map and sent it to the Bureau of Reclamation to account for work that has been done. The intent is to have the Highline enclosed and delivering water to shareholders by April. The Upper should be enclosed to 1500 North by then. Boardmembers expressed a desire to go see the project as part of one of the future board meetings.

**Steinaker Reach  
II and III**

Mike Collins reported they received the geotechnical survey. They are looking now at pipe selection and will prepare a new cost estimate based on which pipe will work. They are now in the process of identifying utilities along the route.

**AVW&SID  
Standby  
Agreement**

Ashley Valley doesn't need extra water every year so we need to develop an agreement to cover tying up water for when they do need it. It would be like the agreement we have had in the past for extra water. We are looking at things that can be done to make water available. One option would be to use the Burns Bench Pump Station system. We would hold water in Red Fleet and use it as needed. The cost would include pumping out of Green River and also pumping out of Red Fleet. Tyson Murray made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Greg Witbeck and passed unanimously to enter into negotiations with Ashley Valley for a Standby Agreement.

**Legislative  
Update**

Scott Chew reported on some of the bills coming up in Utah Legislative sessions that would impact water in the Basin. One of the items in the budget proposed by new Governor Spencer Cox is \$5 million for water efficiency. Scott is sponsoring a bill regarding the unintended consequences resulting from releases from Flaming Gorge. He said the new Secretary of Interior is from New Mexico.

**Financial  
Statements**

Dean Baker made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Greg witbeck and passed unanimously to approve the December 2020 financial statements.

**Invoices**

Dean Baker made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Tyson Murray and passed unanimously to approve paying Bowen Collins \$19,603; George Weldon Construction \$19,734.25; Jones & DeMille \$20,546.50; PdM \$14,840; Sunrise Engineering \$4,989.50 for a total of \$79,713.25.

**Manager Report**

Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the Utah Water Users Workshop usually held in March will be moved to May and will be an in-person conference hoping the vaccines will have taken effect and restrictions will be lifted. They realize this will be difficult for the agriculture community that usually attends.

Dave Rasmussen reported that Ronald Batty, formerly on the District's board, passed away and we should send flowers, as well as to services for Todd Thacker's son.

William presented a map showing how drastically the state of Utah is affected by the drought and the Snotel report that doesn't make the future look any better.

William reported that the Navajo Nation water rights settlement was passed along with the COVID 19 relief bill because the Navajo Nation has been hit so hard. There was also a settlement on 85,000 acre feet of water from the San Juan River.

**Adjourn**

Tyson Murray made a MOTION to adjourn which was SECONDED by Dean Baker and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.