

# Uintah Water Conservancy District

Board of Trustees  
Board Meeting Minutes  
June 8, 2021

Approved

**Conducting:** Chairman Quentin R. Johnson called the June 8, 2021, Board Meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**Present:** **Trustees:** Quentin Johnson, Tyson Murray, Dean Baker, Greg Witbeck and Todd Thacker. Herb Snyder was excused. Shane Frost was absent.  
**Others:** William Merkley, UWCD General Manager; Mary Searle, UWCD Clerk; Dave Rasmussen, UWCD Consultant; Aaron Averett and Ben Smith, Sunrise Engineering; Bart Jensen, Jones & DeMille; Ferdinand Rivera - CRS Engineering; Wayne Simper, Central Canal.

**Approval of Minutes** Greg Witbeck made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Dean Baker and passed unanimously to approve the May 11, 2021, Board Meeting minutes after making a change reflecting that Greg was not at the meeting.

**Steinaker Dam O&M Status Transfer** When Steinaker Dam went into Safety of Dams status for repairs, the Bureau of Reclamation took over the role of decision-making for maintenance and operations. With the project now “substantially complete,” those responsibilities have been returned to the District. The first repayment contract payment is due March 1 following the year the repairs are completed. They have not determined how much the actual cost is yet. The Bureau pays 85% and the remaining 15% is split 52% to M&I and 48% to irrigators. As we pay off the Island Ditch Pump Station, the repair expense will be added to the irrigators. The M&I payment begins the year after completion of repairs. If there are issues that come up at the holds, the dam goes back in the Safety of Dams status. We are trying to keep M&I users updated on the cost. We need to collect the higher rate for 400 AF of water that has transferred from agriculture to M&I use. There will be a meeting to negotiate a carriage charge for storing non-project water in Steinaker and changing the 1958 contract from a water service contract for M&I to a repayment contract.

**Steinaker and Red Fleet Inflows** Steinaker Reservoir is at elevation 5479.31 with an active capacity of 9,220 acre-feet and an average inflow of 39 CFS with 45 CFS going out. There has been more going out but many farmers have shut down to cut hay. Red Fleet Reservoir is currently at elevation 5588.06 with an active capacity of 16,840 acre-feet and an average inflow of 27 CFS and outflow of 41 and pumping about 7 over to the treatment plant.

There were questions on how we are getting the readings from Brush Creek. We have meters on many of the diversions. The River Commissioner does not have access to that data so he calls or texts John Hunting daily. We are trying to find a way to put that on our website or otherwise give users access to our data. We maintain the meters on each ditch on the main diversions and the canal companies operate their own.

Regarding the Vincent pipeline and according to Rep. Scott Chew, there is no Utah money that is waiting for someone to ask for it. There is \$100 million of COVID relief funds set aside for water systems but it is earmarked primarily for secondary systems. There may be a way to access it for projects such as this. The Board felt we should pursue construction of the Burns Bench Pump Station. The current Burns Bench Pump Station has two 9 CFS pumps in the river. We made application for 3500 AF of water to be pumped out of the river. The 2003 agreement between the District and the Brush Creek Distribution System allows us to call for use of the pump station, so we requested that we be given the opportunity to use that water and have applied for it.. Also, Stewart Lake did not call for their water this year because there was not enough water to move fish into the Lake.

**Vernal Unit**  
**Efficiency**  
**Project**  
**Watershed Plan**

Bart Jensen said that the economic analysis should be finished by next week that will be included in the draft EA. They are planning to submit everything in July for the NRCS review. They meet with the NRCS every other week. The NRCS has hired additional staff because of all the COVID backlog. Ashley Central Canal got many comments from Washington and from the State on their Watershed Plan. It will probably take two months just to answer the questions.

**Bifurcation**

The District turned back the WaterSMART grant and will re-apply choosing a different location this Fall. Jones & DeMille did preliminary work to make sure the location will work.

**GIS Update**

Ben Smith is the GIS Coordinator with Sunrise Engineering. Aaron Averett presented the progress made and showed drain locations. We need to have all parts of our system on GIS. The intent of the drains was to help agriculture, but with all the development, it is no longer an agriculture problem and should go back to the municipalities to maintain. That is the conclusion based on identifying all the drains.

**New Employee**

Heath Penrod was introduced as the new employee who started Monday to work on the West Side and help out in other areas as needed.

**Certified Tax Rate**

The proposed tax rate to maintain the District's current level of income is at 0.000563. Our current rate is 0.000549. Property is assessed at 50% of its value. This tax rate would raise the tax on \$100,000 property by \$0.70. Dean Baker made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Todd Thacker and passed unanimously to approve the proposed Certified Tax Rate of 0.000563.

**Financial Statements**

Tyson Murray made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Greg Witbeck and passed unanimously to approve the May 2021 financial statements.

**Invoices**

Dean Baker made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Tyson Murray and passed unanimously to approve paying BHI \$3,700; Jones & DeMille \$33,354.43; PdM Professionals \$2,470; Snow Christensen \$208.50; Sunrise Engineering \$1,512.40; Talon Field Services \$1,610 for a total of \$42,855.33.

**Waterhorse Lawsuit**

William Merkley reported this is the "Million" project that wants to take water from Flaming Gorge and pipe it to Colorado. The permit was denied by the Utah State Engineer so he is suing her. We protested so we receive all the information.

**Colorado River Authority**

We received a letter stating that if we pay Dan Larsen compensation for this position, the Colorado River Authority will not pay his per diem and travel expenses. The Board requested that William meet with Clyde Watkins and Dan and attorneys to decide how to compensate him for his service and time.

**Manager Report**

There will be no meeting in July.

We will need to send invitations for negotiations regarding the Steinaker contracts made with the Bureau of Reclamation.

William was reminded to pursue the 1000 AF of Stewart Lake water. If we decide to pump District Green River Water, we will file a change application with the State Engineer's office. At the current Burns Bench pump station, they are pumping 18 CFS of Green River water or 36 acre-feet per day. We need to send a letter to the Bureau of Reclamation to let them know how their releases are affecting the sand that shuts off our pumps at the Green River Pump Station.

We are currently 21 feet below the next hold in the elevation on Steinaker. If natural creek flows do not fill Steinaker to hold elevations, we may consider pumping water over from Red Fleet. When Ashley Creek rises to 300 CFS, we release 20-30 feet downstream to the River Canal and Union Canal companies.

**Adjourn**

Todd Thacker made a MOTION to adjourn which was SECONDED by Dean Baker and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.