

# Uintah Water Conservancy District

Board of Trustees  
Board Meeting Minutes  
November 9, 2021

Approved

**Conducting:** Chairman Quentin R. Johnson called the November 9, 2021, Board Meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. at the Uintah Conference Center.

**Present:**

**Trustees:** Quentin Johnson, Tyson Murray, Dean Baker, Greg Witbeck, Shane Frost and Todd Thacker. Herb Snyder was excused.

**Others:** William Merkley, UWCD General Manager; Mary Searle, UWCD Clerk; John Hunting, O&M Manager; Dave Rasmussen, UWCD Consultant; Ken Long, Leon Kidd, Tony George, Rock Point Canal; Curt Smuin and Dwayne Holmes, Highline Canal; Shirley Slaugh, Ashley Water Users; Morgan Batty, Island Ditch; Billy Cook, Ashley Upper Canal; Bart Jensen, Jones & DeMille; Wayne Simper, Central Canal; Bart Haslem and Brad Horrocks; Keith Larson, Bowen Collins Engineers; Gawain Snow, Sunrise Engineers; Rhett Holmes, Doyle Holmes, Scott Wall, Kristy Wall, Tamara Vincent, SITLA Leaseholders; Mickey Cochran, Doug Larsen, King's Peak Land & Cattle; Randan Vincent, Brush Creek River Commissioner; Clyde Watkins, Carrie Lynn Shiner, Rodger Ames, Kelly Crozier, Dex Winterton, Duchesne County Water Conservancy District; Clark Hall, citizen.

**Approval of Minutes** Shane Frost made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Todd Thacker and passed unanimously to approve the October 19, 2021, Board Meeting minutes with a change to the Green River pumping amount.

**Refinancing Bonds** David Robertson reported they had been working with a legal team on the bond refinancing on five different District obligations to take advantage of current lower interest rates. It will have to be spread into taxable bonds and tax-exempt bonds which would be at a lower interest rate. They looked at several offers but one local bank (Zion's) is interested in buying all the obligations. Refinancing will result in savings of about \$25,000 per year through the year 2037. There would be some market risks if we went with public financing. Accepting the bank offer would generate the most savings and take out the most risk so that was David's recommendation. Accepting the bank's offer would lock in the savings. This bond would be paid off in 2037. We would not be extending any loans. Shane Frost made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Dean Baker and passed unanimously to proceed with the Bond as presented and approve Quentin Johnson and William Merkley to sign the documents accordingly.

**West Side  
Alternative  
Study**

Keith Larson presented copies of the prepared alternative study. The total cost of the chosen alternative would be \$1,091,000. \$760,000 of that would be an additional pump in the Green River. This solution is all or nothing with the pumps.

**WETx**

WETx has now completed Phase II. The Master Plan has allowed us to take advantage of money that comes available. WETx has generated ideas to assist the District. They will go through reports and take advantage of ideas that we feel would be beneficial to the District. One we should look at is developing an interim dry year supply plan. One option is to look at the Blanchett Park project again. Another is to look at a water bank plan. This report completes the current contract with WETx. The Board requested that they come to the next meeting and show what they have accomplished for Ashley Valley Water & Sewer. Shane Frost made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Tyson Murray and passed unanimously to look at the report more closely and discuss what parts of it they want to move forward on.

**Steinaker and  
Red Fleet Inflows**

Steinaker Reservoir is at elevation 5466.17 with an active capacity of 4,152 acre-feet and an average inflow of 33 CFS. Red Fleet Reservoir is currently at elevation 5565.14 with an active capacity of 9,195 acre-feet and an average inflow of 14 CFS. We are releasing 2 CFS for stockwater and pumping one foot over to the sand mine. Cottonwood is about 30% full with 115-120 CFS coming in. Brough is about 40% full. We are working at getting a transducer to measure more accurately.

**Vernal Unit  
Efficiency  
Project  
Watershed Plan**

There is a salinity forum coming up from which we can get values for salinity benefits to submit. The application is in review mode, then will go off to national review. Then we will hold public meetings, then get approved.

**Bifurcation  
Structure**

There was a stakeholder's meeting October 26 at which time a letter of support was drafted and presented. Two WaterSMART grants were submitted. We should know whether or not our application was approved by Spring. There is a landowner meeting on November 30. Things are looking good for getting a right-of-way. They don't anticipate starting until July 2022. The BIA is wanting to replace the existing structure. Shane Frost made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Greg Witbeck and passed unanimously to approve Resolution 11162021 in support of applying for the WaterSMART grant and authorize Quentin Johnson and William Merkley to sign the necessary documents.

**Land Drain  
Replacement  
Project**

PdM Construction was awarded the contract. They had delays in materials getting here but they were still able to complete the project on time and under budget. The final amount was \$43,033.92.

**Red Fleet MOA  
Project**

We need to replace the toe drains at Red Fleet, replace Switchgear at the Tyzack Pumping Plant and recoat Tyzack regulating tank and bypass pipeline. This

project will result in the plant being down March 8-28. The contractor is worried about the curing time for the new coatings in the regulating tank. The sand mine is reviewing to see how they can operate without getting water from the pumping plant during that time.

**Steinaker Dam**  
**Gate**  
**Modifications**

The gates did not seal to the satisfaction of the Bureau of Reclamation or the District. The contracting officer is not willing to call on Weeminuche again. Spencer Strand has proposed that Randy Green do the work at a cost of \$65,000 which would be covered by the Bureau. They plan to do this in January and use local machinists.

**Service Canal**  
**Enclosure**  
**Project**

There is \$1.75 M in MOA funds to purchase the pipe for this project. The Bureau cannot transfer that money to the District but they need approval from the District to expend the funds for the purchase of pipe. They need to start now on this section. The cost of HDPE pipe has gone up 40%. Reach II and Reach IIIA cost in February was about \$16 million. We have gathered about \$8 million to go toward this project. With the increase in costs, we have a much larger shortfall. To get this project finished, we need to get started. Shane Frost made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Tyson Murray and passed unanimously to start the paperwork needed to purchase the pipe but the Bureau needs to get back with us before they do the actual purchase. The Board also requested that William go after more funding.

**2022 Rates**

A work session was held before the board meeting to discuss this issue. After much discussion and several motions that failed for lack of a second, Shane Frost made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Greg Witbeck and passed unanimously to increase the Vernal Unit and the Jensen Unit O&M rates to where the irrigation water users would be covering 30% of costs by 2026 but leave the reserve at \$.50, increase the M&I rates to 80% of costs and leave the reserve at \$6, increase the West Side to 40% of costs by 2026.

**2022 Preliminary**  
**Budget**

A spreadsheet showing the preliminary budget was presented for trustees to look at and make suggestions before the Budget Hearing in December.

**Financial**  
**Statements**

Shane Frost made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Greg Witbeck and passed unanimously to approve the October 2021 financial statements.

**Invoices**

Shane Frost made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Dean Baker and passed unanimously to approve paying Bowen Collins \$100,856; Energy Management \$15,500; George Weldon Construction \$4,765; Jones & DeMille \$25,861.34; J-U-B Engineers \$1,750; McKeachnie Law \$2,175.50; PdM Professionals \$8,940; Sunrise Engineering \$2,118.30; Talon Field Services \$2,916.53 for a total of \$164,882.67.

**SITLA Irrigation**  
**Project**

This project is to develop the District's allocation of Green River water at the south end of the Valley. A number of concerned citizens were in attendance regarding how this project would affect grazing permits and existing leases.

Doug Larsen discussed the overall aspects of the project and indicated that they wanted to work with everybody and put ground into irrigation. They see the need to protect this water right and put it to use. They intend to do it on state grounds instead of BLM. They also want to go with the longest lease they can. The question was brought up that they are investing \$20 million without generating a revenue. The lessees want it in writing that they would just grow crops. There was a question about what the deal is with SITLA land. The goal is to build a reservoir with a 20 acre foot capacity and keep grass growing.. There was concern about use of water that will be moved from the river to lands. There was a question why they don't just lease the ground that can be irrigated instead of all the ground. Clyde Watkins said the Duchesne County Water Conservancy Board has not committed in writing—just verbally. It was suggested that the concerns be put in an agreement as a stipulation. Could we utilize our water and still have our needs met. We have done everything we can to do to tie up the water. We have signed extensions. Do the District and Duchesne County District want to move forward with this project? We need to see more definite plans and make sure stipulations are in agreements to protect it. There would be 6000 acre feet from Uintah Water Conservancy District and 20,000 acre feet from Duchesne County Water Conservancy District. The Board felt they needed to see a more detailed plan with more clarification. Current leases need to be protected but the water right needs to be protected also. Doug expressed a desire to work with members of both boards and counties to preserve the current leases. They will come back and present a business plan to both districts showing how they will plan to operate. They plan to bring some of the water to current farmers. They need to be able to bring some of the water back so farmers can use it for their beneficial use.

**Schedule of  
Public Meetings**

Shane Frost made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Dean Baker and passed unanimously to approve the presented 2022 Schedule of Public Meetings as presented but move the November 15 meeting to 9:00.

**Dan Larsen  
Compensation**

After some discussion, Tyson Murray made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Dean Baker and passed unanimously that Duchesne Water pay Dan \$90 per diem and pay \$120 for attendance at meetings and cover all costs that the Colorado River does not pay, then invoice Uintah Water for half of that amount so each district pays their share.

**Manager Report**

William asked for suggestions for the Golden Shovel award to be presented at the Uintah Basin Water Summit. Todd Thacker made a MOTION that was SECONDED by Tyson Murray and passed unanimously to have Bill Cook and Curt Smuin receive the award for their work on getting their canals piped. The Judge has approved and agreed to sign the proposal to expand the Vernal City Trustee boundaries to include the boundaries as now constituted. Colorado River Water Users is in Las Vegas December 13-15 and the Uintah Basin Water Summit will be held January 13.

**Adjourn**

Todd Thacker made a MOTION to adjourn which was SECONDED by Dean Baker and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.