

Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District, Aug. 14

General manager reviews water resources

By James Howald

At its meeting in August, The Woodmoor Water and Sanitation District (WWSD) heard a presentation from General Manager Jessie Shaffer explaining the approaches to water resources the district could use to plan future needs. The board considered awarding a construction contract, voted for a resolution affirming the district's participation in the El Paso County Regional Loop Water Authority (EPCRLWA) and launched an analysis of water and sewer tap fees. The board heard operational reports. Finally, the meeting ended with an executive session.

Four approaches to water resources

In response to a request from the board made at the previous meeting, Shaffer gave the board his thoughts on possible approaches the district could take to manage its present and future water sources with a focus on long-term sustainability.

If the district does nothing, Shaffer said, the Denver basin aquifers currently supplying customers will decline, with or without growth. More wells will need to be drilled and the cost of well drilling will escalate. The water pumped from aquifers will become more and more costly. Beyond a certain number of wells, it is hard to avoid well interference and it is harder to site wells, which can't draw from outside the district boundaries. Long-term sustainability requires other sources, he said.

Shaffer characterized the next approach as "Go it alone"—by which he meant treating and transporting water from the Woodmoor Ranch without relying on any partnering water districts. This approach offers a sustainable supply of surface water, with the advantage that WWSD would retain complete control over its operations. The downside is affordability: The cost is likely to be near \$180 million, which would be born entirely by WWSD ratepayers. Shaffer said this approach is not achievable due to cost.

The third approach Shaffer discussed involves relying on Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU) to convey, treat, and deliver water to WWSD customers. The short-term costs of this approach make it seem attractive, Shaffer said, but the long-term costs are higher than other alternatives, with a cumulative cost break-even point at nine years, and CSU could raise rates at any time so WWSD would lose control of its costs under this approach. Infrastructure to connect to CSU's system would need to be built, and there are many fees that that would apply.

Finally, Shaffer discussed using a group approach and partnering with other districts. He said the EPCRLWA, in which WWSD is participating, is an example of this approach. A considerable challenge here is creating consensus among the partners, Shaffer said, but this approach offers economies of scale and sustainability.

Following the presentation, board President Brian Bush said the "do nothing" approach should be dropped as it violates WWSD's mission to provide water to its customers on a sustainable basis.

Construction contract awarded

District Engineer Ariel Hacker told the board that the Monument Junction development currently under construction by Classic Homes has created a need for an additional pressure management zone within the district. The cost of building the new zone would primarily be paid by Classic Homes but some of the needed infrastructure would be installed beyond the boundaries of Classic Homes' property to serve other WWSD customers, so WWSD would be responsible for a portion of the project. Classic Homes is responsible for installing a total of three pressure reducing valves and related pipelines, while WWSD is responsible for one valve and its pipelines, she said.

Hacker said three bids for the project were submitted but two contained substantial errors, so she recommended the third bidder, Asland Constructors.

Shaffer said that typically if a developer creates a need for additional infrastructure, the developer pays the associated costs, but in this case, since some of the work is off the developer's property, Classic Homes approached the district and asked WWSD to manage the entire project, with Classic Homes paying WWSD for its portion of the project and adding a 20% contingency fee. Shaffer said if WWSD managed the entire project it would mean a single set of inspections, making the project more efficient.

The board voted unanimously to authorize awarding the contract to Asland Constructors. Bush asked that work not begin until Classic Homes had paid WWSD for its portion of the costs.

EPCRLWA resolution passes

The board voted unanimously in favor of a resolution formalizing WWSD's participation in the EPCRLWA, informally known as the loop. Of the three other participating districts, Donala Water and Sanitation District has also signed a similar resolution and Cherokee Metropolitan District and the Town of Monument are expected to take the same step soon.

Tap fees due for review

Shaffer introduced Andrew Rheem of Raftelis, the company WWSD works with to model rates and fees and told the board he had asked Rheem last year to begin an analysis of the district's tap fees.

Rheem said his goal was to ensure that growth in the district was paying its own way, explaining that there were some legal restraints on how tap fees would be used. For example, if they are used for debt service, the debt must be acquired due to development.

Rheem defined water and sewer tap fees as a one-time charge assessed to new customers when they

connect to the district's infrastructure for the first time or when they increase their service. New customers are paying for their share of the district's capacity, he said. Currently, a new residence in WWSD's service area pays \$29,788 for a ¾-inch water tap and \$10,390 for a sewer tap. Larger capacity taps pay a higher fee, he said.

Rheem explained three approaches to setting tap fees. The "buy-in" method is often used in districts where capacity is available and a new customer is buying into the existing system. The system is valued at its replacement cost in this method. The "incremental" approach is used where the existing system has little or no capacity for growth and the tap fees will be used to increase capacity. Finally, the "hybrid" approach when there is current capacity, but more is needed.

Rheem said his analysis would evaluate the maximum water and sewer tap fees under all three approaches and would recommend tap fees for all meter sizes.

Bush asked what timeframe would be used for the analysis, and Rheem said that was an open question. Bush said the board should avoid getting locked into something it does not want going forward.

The board voted unanimously to authorize Bush to sign a service agreement with Raftelis to complete the study.

Highlights of operational reports

- Operations Superintendent Dan LaFontaine noted that the district's customers were currently receiving surface water treated at the Central Water Treatment Facility.
- LaFontaine said he had been investigating how stormwater was infiltrating the system and said he believed that, due to the rainy weather, a number of customers were using sump pumps to drain their basements and sending that water into the wastewater system where it would be treated. This is an illegal discharge, he said, adding water from basements should be distributed to the homeowners' property.

Executive session

The meeting ended with an executive session to confer with legal counsel on questions relating to the EPCRLWA and to negotiations with CSU regarding the conveyance, treatment, and delivery of water.

The next meeting is scheduled for Sept. 11 at 1 p.m. Meetings are usually held on the second Monday of each month at 1 p.m. at the district office at 1845 Woodmoor Drive; please see www.woodmoorwater.com or call 719-488-2525 to verify meeting times and locations.

James Howald can be reached at jameshowald@ocn.me.

Monument Sanitation District, Aug. 8

Board hears request to merge with town's Water Department

By Jackie Burhans and James Howald

At its August meeting, the Monument Sanitation District (MSD) board heard a summary of a meeting between two MSD board members and representatives of the Town of Monument to discuss merging MSD with the town's Water Department. The board voted on updates to the district's employee handbook and to its bylaws. In his manager's report, District Manager Mark Parker discussed maintenance and security issues at the district's headquarters. Board President Dan Hamilton led a discussion of improvements to the district's billing system. The meeting ended with an executive session.

LaKind and Kronick propose merger

Hamilton told the board that he and Director John Howe met with Monument Mayor Mitch LaKind and Councilmember Laura Kronick to discuss the possibility of merging MSD with the town's Water Department and ultimately creating a water and sewer authority that combines the MSD service area, which is not entirely within the town borders, with the town. Hamilton said no specific proposal was made. Howe recalled that a similar discussion had taken place when Don Wilson was mayor, but no proposal was made.

Hamilton said if a specific proposal were made, it would be the board's duty to consider it.

Jim Kendrick, who handles operations for MSD, said he did not know of a merger between a special district and a charter town in the state of Colorado.

Employee handbook and bylaws updated

Hamilton presented changes to the district's employee handbook, which has been under review by MSD's lawyer to bring it into compliance with recent changes to state law. Most of the changes address Paid Time Off (PTO) policy, he said.

Hamilton said under the updated policy employees with one to five years employment would earn 160 hours of PTO per year, employees with six to 15 years would earn 240 hours, and employees with more than 15 years would earn 320 hours. Parker added that Colorado's Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FMLI) law mandates that employees with less than a year on the job earn one hour of PTO for each 30 hours worked.

Hamilton proposed that each of Parker's 28 years of experience in wastewater management add one-half a year of service to Parker's 2 1/2 years of employment in MSD. He also pointed out that Colorado law requires any employee with less than 80 hours of earned PTO to be provided 80 hours if a public health emergency is declared.

Two half days off at Christmas and New Year's were removed along with two floating days off and replaced with a day off following Christmas and New Year's.

The board voted unanimously to approve the updated employee handbook.

The board also voted to approve amended bylaws. Parker said the changes were minimal, and he recommended reviewing the bylaws on a five-year schedule.

Manager's report

Parker said the Black Forest Foods Café and Delicatessen, which rents a portion of the MSD headquarters building, was struggling with air conditioning issues and had deployed two swamp coolers on a temporary basis. He said its HVAC units were aging and would be evaluated for replacement. As the building's owner, MSD would pay for any new equipment, he said.

Parker reported heat and hail damage to the roof on a section of the building and said a claim had been submitted to MSD's insurer.

Parker told the board that Marylee Reisig, owner of Santa Fe Trail Jewelry, a tenant in the headquarters building, had thwarted a robbery attempt at her store. Pictures of thieves who had stolen \$5,000 worth of merchandise from the Garden of the Gods Trading Post had been circulated to similar retailers and Reisig recognized them when they entered her shop. Reisig was able to prevent any theft by kicking them out, and Parker called police. Security camera footage showed the thieves driving by the store, parking their car, and entering the store.

Improvements to billing proposed

Hamilton said he would like to see the district make its autopay option easier for customers. He proposed eliminating the fee for paying with a credit card. He said he was willing to increase rates to eliminate the fee. Parker said credit cards were accepted only online and he intended to make it possible to pay with a credit card in the office as well. Parker said he did not want the district to store customer information as that would require compliance with additional regulations. Account Administrator Cheran Allsup said some older customers prefer to pay in person.

Executive session

The meeting ended with an executive session to consider Allsup's annual review.

Monument Sanitation District meetings are normally held at 9 a.m. on the third Wednesday of the month in the district conference room at 130 Second St., Monument. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Sept. 20. See <https://colorado.gov/msd>. For a district service map, see <https://colorado.gov/pacific/msd/district-map-0>. Information: 719-481-4886.

Jackie Burhans can be reached at jackieburhans@ocn.me. James Howald can be reached at jameshowald@ocn.me.

Donala Water and Sanitation District, Aug. 17

Electrical contract awarded

By James Howald and Jackie Burhans

The Donala Water and Sanitation District (DWSD) board met in August to award a contract for electrical work on the district's newest well. The board also heard operational reports from General Manager Jeff Hodge, who reviewed the district's monthly finances and touched on several ongoing projects.

Well 16A nears completion

Hodge told the board that drilling and hardware installation are complete for Well 16A, which will pump

from the Arapahoe aquifer. Bids are out for drilling a pipeline to connect the well to the district's infrastructure and to construct a vault for the well. The final bid is for electrical work, Hodge said.

Roger Sams, of GMS Engineering Inc., said the electrical work consisted of conduits, wiring, and installation of some equipment that has been received. There were two bids submitted for the work, Sams said: one from McDade-Woodcock Inc. for \$134,551 and a second from Sun Valley Contractors LLC for

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