

*El Paso County Regional Loop Water Authority, March 20***Contract awarded for water treatment plant design and pilot test***By James Howald*

At its March meeting, the El Paso County Regional Loop Water Authority (EPCRLWA or the Loop) board awarded a contract for water treatment plant design and pilot testing. The board considered issuing a letter regarding possible use of eminent domain to Western States Land Services LLC, the company that the Loop has hired to acquire the easements needed for the project's pipelines, which will convey water from Fountain Creek northward to customers in northern El Paso County.

Corbin Fromm of Fromm and Co. LLC, the Loop's accounting company, gave the board a financial report. Board President Jessie Shaffer asked the board to consider authorizing a request for proposal (RFP) for pipeline and pump station engineering services and recommended the board hire a financial adviser.

The meeting ended with an executive session.

**Burns and McDonnell selected for water treatment design and pilot**

Mark Valentine, the Loop's interim workflow manager, told the board that seven companies had responded to its RFP to provide water treatment plant design services. All the RFPs were well done, Valentine said. The proposals were reviewed by the Loop board members and by three engineers from Merrick and Co. The proposals were scored on their approach and the experience of the companies that submitted them. Black and Veatch, Burns and McDonnell, and CDM Smith submitted the top three proposals, Valentine said. Of the three, Burns and McDonnell's proposal was the strongest, Valentine said, and he recommended the board select that company.

Shaffer said he liked the evaluation process

and agreed with Valentine's recommendation. The board voted unanimously to award the contract to Burns and McDonnell.

**Eminent domain to be used only where negotiation fails**

Shaffer said he did not want to "authorize a blank check" allowing Western States to use eminent domain to acquire land needed for easements. He asked Nicole Peykov, the Loop's attorney, for direction on the issue. Peykov said the letter being considered does authorize the use of eminent domain but she recommended beginning with a more traditional approach without its use, and then using eminent domain only when negotiation fails, rather than giving Western States a blanket authorization to use it.

The board voted unanimously to authorize Western States to proceed with negotiations regarding easements.

**Financial report**

Fromm told the board that invoices totaling \$39,000 had been received in February. The board voted to authorize Fromm to pay the invoices.

Fromm said a check from the El Paso Board of County Commissioners had been received and he expected another check from the same source for \$500,000 to arrive soon. The checks were the first two payments of \$4 million provided by the Biden administration's American Recovery Plan Act to get the Loop project through its beginning stages. The Loop had reserves of \$195,000, Fromm said.

Fromm said he recommended that the board authorize him to draft an engagement letter to Stockman Kast Ryan and Co. asking that company to audit the Loop's 2024 finances. The board voted in favor of Fromm's request.

**Board authorizes RFP for pipeline and pump station engineering**

Shaffer said the design of the project's pipelines and pump station was the next step to be considered following decisions about treatment. He wanted to use the same process used for the treatment RFP. Shaffer said the pipeline and pump station design was simpler than the water treatment design and he proposed having Valentine and Merrick and Co. handle it on their own with less involvement from the Loop board. Board members Jeff Hodge and Tom Tharnish agreed with Shaffer, and the quorum authorized Valentine to proceed.

**Financial adviser considered**

Shaffer said it was time to hire a financial adviser to help with decisions regarding strategies to raise the funds needed to complete the Loop. He said he had a preliminary discussion with Holman Capital, a private equity fund. Shaffer suggested a workshop to consider how to fund the next stages of the project.

**Executive session**

An executive session was held to receive legal counsel regarding negotiating positions. No actions were taken following the executive session.

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The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 17 at 9 a.m. Regular meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 9 a.m. at the Monument Town Hall at 645 Beacon Lite Road. Workshop meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at 9 a.m. at the Monument Town Hall. Please see [loopwater.org](http://loopwater.org) or call 719-488-3603 to verify meeting times and locations.

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*Donala Water and Sanitation District, Mar. 27***New water and sewer rates take effect***By James Howald and Jackie Burhans*

At its February meeting, the Donala Water and Sanitation District (DWSD) board voted to implement an across-the-board 5 percent rate increase. General Manager Jeff Hodge announced that the upcoming board election was canceled. He reviewed the results of the district's sanitary survey. The board amended its agreement with the Loop water reuse project and heard operational reports.

The meeting ended with an executive session.

**Water and sewer rates to increase**

Hodge asked the board to consider Resolution 2025-2, which specifies a 5 percent increase to water and sewer fees and rates. The new fees and rates for single-family residences include:

- Water and sewer tap fees increase to \$8,925.
- Water service rate increases to \$33.48.
- The water usage rate for the first 10,000 gallons increases to \$8.68 per 1,000 gallons.
- The water usage rate for the second 10,000 gallons increases to \$14.46 per 1,000 gallons.
- The sewer service rate base fee increases to \$67.50, and the rate per 1,000 gallons of wastewater increases to \$9.71.

Many of the administrative fees, such as the returned payment fee and the late payment fee, remain unchanged. *For a complete list of rates and fees, see the DWSD web page at <https://DonalaWater.org>.*

Hodge estimated DWSD has about 50 water taps available for sale, and 44 of the taps are slated to be used by a residential development adjacent to the Big R Store near Struthers Road.

Board President Wayne Vanderschuere said customers would see the increases in the bills they will receive in May for the April water and sewer usage.

**Board election canceled**

Hodge said since there were two candidates nominated for the two open board seats, the upcoming

election was canceled. Vanderschuere will serve another term, Hodge said, and Kenneth Judd, who has served on the DWSD board previously, will replace current board member Ed Miller. Vanderschuere and Judd will be sworn in at the May board meeting, after which new board officers will be elected.

**District passes Sanitary Survey with flying colors**

Hodge told the board that inspectors from the Field Services section of the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment performed a sanitary survey, a review of a district's capability to supply safe drinking water, on Feb. 14. The survey found no violations and two minor deficiencies that were resolved the day of the survey, Hodge said. He congratulated Superintendent of Water Operations Ronny Wright and his team for the successful survey outcome.

**Agreement with the Loop amended**

Hodge asked the board to vote on an amendment to the Intergovernmental Agreement that DWSD has signed with the Loop water authority. When the Cherokee Metropolitan District withdrew from the Loop project, Hodge said, that left three participating districts and three corresponding members on the Loop board. As a result, two Loop board members constituted a quorum, which meant a simple conversation between a pair of board members was a public meeting and subject to Colorado's open meetings laws, including the requirement that the meeting be announced to the public 24 hours in advance.

The amended agreement addresses this complication by specifying that if the Loop has only three participating districts, each district will name two members to the Loop board, thereby increasing to four the number of members constituting a quorum.

The board voted unanimously to approve the amended agreement. The board also appointed

Accounts Payable specialist Christina Hawker as DWSD's second Loop board member and Cade Pennington as the alternate member.

**Operational reports**

In the financial section of his Manager's Report, Hodge told the board that the district had received a large portion of revenue from the district's property taxes. He noted that due to the need to redrill Well 7D, the district has budgeted \$1 million for Colorado Springs Utilities to convey, treat, and deliver water that DWSD owns from other sources such as the Willow Creek Ranch. "Everything is tracking for this time of year," Hodge said.

Hodge said the redrilling of Well 7D, which is adjacent to the district's headquarters at 15850 Holbein Dr., is "zipping along." Two meetings with neighbors had been held, he said, and he expected drilling to begin by May 1. An undersized transformer at the Well 7D site that hums has been replaced, Hodge said.

**Executive session**

The meeting ended with an executive session to determine negotiating positions relative to the Willow Creek Ranch conditional water rights owned by the district. No actions were taken by the board following the executive session.

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The next board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 17 at 1:30 p.m. Generally, board meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at 1:30 p.m. and include online access; call (719) 488-3603 or access [www.donalawater.org](http://www.donalawater.org) to receive up-to-date meeting information. The March meeting was delayed by one week to allow adequate notice of a public hearing. The district office is located at 15850 Holbein Drive, Colorado Springs.

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*El Paso County Planning Commission, March 6 and 20***Three projects recommended to BOCC***By Marlene Brown*

At the March 6 meeting of the El Paso County Planning Commission, the commissioners approved 9-0 the Final Plat of the Burkheimer Subdivision at the intersection of Black Forest Road and Vessey Road. John Burkheimer requested that the 13.68-acre property (zoned RR-5) be split into two lots, one being 8.4 acres and the other 5.1 acres. The project was recommended to the El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).

During the March 20 meeting, consent calen-

dar item P252 map amendment (rezoning from RR-5 to RR 2.5 acres) Ben Lomand Mountain Village would include about 74 single-residence lots with a minimum size of 2.5 acres serviced by individual wells and septic systems. It was recommended to the BOCC.

Item SF247 Final Plat, New Breed Ranch Filing No. 3, a 34.7-acre zoned Planned Unit Development (PUD) would create seven single-family residential lots on portions of 279.07-acre property near Shoup Road and Highway 83. The item

passed 8-0 and was forwarded to the BOCC.

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The EPCPC normally meets on the first Thursday and if required the third Thursday of each month at the Regional Development Center, 2880 International Circle, Colorado Springs. For more information, call 719-520-6300 or to watch the meetings live or recorded go to <https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/elpasoco/?page=HOME>.

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*El Paso Board of County Commissioners, March 13 and 18***Misfits Crew Estates Final Plat approved***By Marlene Brown*

At the El Paso Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) land use meeting on March 13, Mark McDonald and Amanda Enloe requested that the Misfits Crew Estates Final Plat be approved to cre-

ate three single-family residential lots. The 35.72-acre property is zoned RR-5 on the north side of Hodgen Road, 0.32 miles west of Thompson Road. Lot 1 would be about 25.7 acres and Lots 2 and 3 would be about 5 acres each available for

single-family residential construction.

The item was heard on the consent agenda at the Feb. 20 Planning Commission meeting for Misfits Crew Estates Final Plat requesting approval with a vote of 9-0 and forwarded to the BOCC.