

**South San Joaquin Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Regular Meeting
Manteca, California
November 15, 2023**

The Governing Board of the South San Joaquin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SSJGSA) met in regular session in person at the South San Joaquin Irrigation District (SSJID) Board Room at 9:00 a.m., with public access provided via the online Zoom meeting platform. Chairman de Graaf called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., and led the flag salute.

Upon roll-call the following members were noted present:

PRESENT: Daniel de Graaf, City of Ripon
Robert Holmes, South San Joaquin Irrigation District
Dominique Romo, City of Escalon
David Roos, South San Joaquin Irrigation District
Mike Weststeyn, South San Joaquin Irrigation District

ABSENT: None

Also present were SSJID Water Resources Coordinator and SSJGSA Secretary Brandon Nakagawa, and SSJID Clerk of the Board Danielle Barney.

Public Comment – None

ACTION CALENDAR

Item #1 – Approval of the Meeting Minutes of June 21, 2023

MOTION: A motion was made by Director Weststeyn and seconded by Director Romo to approve the minutes as submitted.

The motion passed 5 to 0 by the following vote:

AYES: de GRAAF HOLMES ROMO ROOS WESTSTEYN
NOES: NONE
ABSTAIN: NONE
ABSENT: NONE

Item #2 – Quarterly Presentation of Financial Statements Through September 2023

Ms. Sonya Williams, SSJID Financial and Administration Manager and SSJGSA Treasurer, addressed the Board and gave a quarterly oral presentation of the South San Joaquin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Financial Statements through September 30, 2023. She provided detailed explanations of the balance sheet, bank reconciliation, statement of changes in net position, statements of members' capital, expenses incurred through September 2023, expense reimbursements to the South San Joaquin Irrigation District (SSJID), future billing(s), and budget comparison of actual expenses and remaining budget.

Board inquiries included the monthly charge for banking fees, and consideration of an interest-bearing account to which Ms. Williams responded she would discuss these topics with the bank and/or begin searching for other options for a financial institution.

Mr. Brandon Nakagawa, SSJID Water Resources Coordinator and SSJGSA Secretary, noted that the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (ESJGWA) invoice for the SSJGSA's 2023-2024 member's contribution, for the amount of approximately \$25,000.00 was being processed by San Joaquin County (SJC) and will be paid by the SSJGSA in 2023. He stated that his billable time as the ESJGWA Interim Coordinator is invoiced from SSJID to the ESJGWA, and thereby reimbursed from the ESJGWA directly to SSJID.

Item #3 – Discussion on Recent Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority Meetings

Mr. Nakagawa provided an update on recent activity, and/or action at the ESJGWA Board meeting on November 8, which also included the ESJGWA proposed 2024 budget.

Mr. Nakagawa noted priority issues he had identified as the ESJGWA Interim Coordinator, since assuming the role in September, including \$500,000.00 in grant funds that must be spent by June 2024. He stated that \$300,000.00 will be utilized towards a 400-foot deep monitoring well including location, surveying, engineering and construction costs, and that time was of the essence. Mr. Nakagawa added that, hopefully, SJC will take on liability of the well, allowing the ESJGWA monitoring access. In addition, he implemented the submittal of a monthly expenditure report by SJC staff.

Mr. Nakagawa stated that the 2025 Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Update scope of work and budget was being negotiated and proven more costly than anticipated due to added requirements by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR). The ESJGWA will likely need additional Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) contributions to afford the GSP Update effort, which will require a sizeable increase of 2024 member dues.

Mr. Nakagawa reported that a proposal had been requested from Woodard & Curran (W&C) for services regarding the GSP Update. He stated that the W&C preliminary proposal came in at \$1.5 million; that negotiations are underway to discuss factors driving the estimated costs, adjustments to the scope of work, and revised proposal fee; that the ESJGWA will not seek additional contributions from the GSAs until revisions are made to the W&C proposal with a lower cost estimate; and that a revised scope of work/proposal from W&C is expected by December.

Mr. Nakagawa displayed the PowerPoint presentation from the ESJGWA Board meeting on November 8, which outlined strategic direction and timeline for finalizing the GSP Update including costs; funding; scope of work; the 30-day public review and public response periods; GSA adoptions of the proposed GSP Update; required Periodic Evaluation Outlines; required GSP corrective action, amendments and/or modifications; and required outreach. He stated that the ESJGWA is behind scheduled tasks for the GSP Update including groundwater modeling and data collection.

Mr. Nakagawa summarized future challenges stemming from the SJC Grand Jury Report including a recommendation of increased public participation, and criticisms from environmental groups regarding Assembly Bill (AB) 685 – Human Right to Water. He added that some GSAs have been contacted by the Grand Jury requesting copies of their respective board minutes.

Mr. Nakagawa distributed a copy of a WaterWrights article, titled “Tulare Lake Subbasin/State Board Workshop November 9, 2023,” by Don A. Wright regarding a State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) meeting held November 8 to discuss putting the Tulare Lake Subbasin on probation by 2024, recommended

that all wells pumping more than 500 are feet (AF) per year be required to install meters, and move the groundwater extraction reporting back from February to December. The article highlighted the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and its requirements as the basis for the proposed probationary status and recommendations. The SSJGSA Board recognized the importance for the ESJGWA to stay in compliance with its GSP and SGMA requirements, and the SSJGSA's good fortune to have stable groundwater levels in the Eastern San Joaquin Subbasin.

Additional ESJGWA board meeting discussion included the water accounting framework, SJC hiring a Water Resources Coordinator to resume leadership of the GSAs, consideration of an Executive Director or a "committee approach" for leadership of the GSAs, and that SJC's recruitment for a Water Resources Coordinator has been unsuccessful thus far.

Director Holmes acknowledged the mismanagement of the ESJGWA by SJC; commended SSJID General Manager Peter Rietkerk for allowing Mr. Nakagawa to step up as Interim ESJGWA Coordinator, and Mr. Nakagawa for taking on the responsibility; and added that the ESJGWA member agencies and SJC staff are responding well to Mr. Nakagawa's leadership. He noted that previous ESJGWA budget processes had proved challenging under SJC leadership, Mr. Nakagawa is on a good path in negotiations on the W&C proposal, and that the GSAs have varying levels of concern regarding the probable increase in membership dues.

Mr. Peter Rietkerk, SSJID General Manager, stated that Mr. Nakagawa had approached the member GSAs regarding his interim leadership of the ESJGWA, and that a collaborated decision was reached to the affirmative. He added that he is in complete support of Mr. Nakagawa's involvement, and acknowledged his ability to work well with all parties on local and/or state levels.

Ms. Valerie Kincaid, Special SSJGSA Counsel, joined the meeting via the online Zoom meeting platform at 10:10 a.m.

Item #4 – Discussion and Possible Action Regarding the Proposed 2024 Annual Budget

Mr. Nakagawa addressed the Board regarding the proposed 2024 annual budget and stated that it was similar to the 2023 budget. He highlighted projected expenses including legal, consultant, and conference costs; and the SSJGSA member contribution to the ESJGWA.

Mr. Nakagawa directed the Members to take the preliminary 2023 Budget to their respective agencies for review, with the expectation that the final budget will be presented and adopted by the SSJGSA Board of Directors at the January 2024 meeting.

COMMUNICATIONS

Item #4 – Various Reports to the Governing Board:

- a) **Staff and Consultant Updates**
None
- b) **Technical Advisory Committee**
None
- c) **Member Reports**
None

- d) **Correspondence**
None

The Board convened to Closed Session at 10:15 a.m.

CLOSED SESSION

Item #5 – Closed Session

The Board returned to Open Session at 10:45 a.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF REPORTABLE ACTION TAKEN IN CLOSED SESSION

Disclosure of reportable actions taken in Closed Session, pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.1:

Coming out of Closed Session, Mr. Nakagawa reported that the Board directed staff to write a letter to the SWRCB critical of the agency's process in the Tulare Lake Subbasin issue.

Mr. Nakagawa announced that the SSJGSA board meeting, on December 20, will most likely be canceled due to the Christmas holiday season. The next regular board meeting will be held on January 17, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

Item #6 – Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 10:46 a.m.

ATTEST:

Danielle Barney, Clerk of the Board