

COOS BAY-NORTH BEND WATER BOARD
P O BOX 539 – 2305 Ocean Boulevard
Coos Bay, Oregon 97420

Minutes
Regular Board Meeting

September 5, 2024
7:00 a.m.

Coos Bay-North Bend Water Board met in open session in the Board Room at the above address, date, and time with Chair Carmen Matthews presiding. Other Board members present: Bill Richardson, Rob Kilmer, and Greg Solarz. Board Members absent: none. Water Board staff present: Ivan D. Thomas, General Manager; Matt Whitty, Engineering Manager; Jeff Miller, Interim Operations Manager; Jason Mills, Distribution Supervisor; Aimee Hollis, Customer Relations Manager; and Stacey Parrott, Executive Assistant & HR Specialist; Board Legal Counsel Melissa Cribbins was present. Media present: None. Jim Knepler of Rock Face LLC was present via phone.

Chair Matthews opened the meeting at 7:00 a.m. and led the Board and assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Matthews asked if there were any corrections or additions to the August 15, 2024, Regular Board meeting minutes. Mr. Solarz moved the minutes be approved as written. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kilmer and passed unanimously.

Chair Matthews asked if there were any public comments and there were none.

Regarding the proposed upgrades to the automatic pumping control and condition monitoring systems, Distribution Supervisor Jason Mills discussed upgrading 12 existing remote telemetry units (RTUs), the last S&B RTUs in the distribution system, currently supplied by aging copper circuits and DSL service. Zply Fiber reached out, suggesting a switch to fiber; however, that upgrade requires the RTUs to be replaced with newer, more-costly units.

Mission Communications has consistently demonstrated reliability and cost-effectiveness in meeting our control and data acquisition needs. Upon project completion, the entire distribution system will be controlled automatically by Mission, with staff being able to monitor and manage the system remotely via smartphones.

The recent SCADA Master Plan supports Mission equipment as suitable for our needs, capturing all necessary data points with minimal issues. A quote of \$52,590 was received from Correct Equipment for the units, with additional costs for electricians required for installation for a total estimated project cost of \$67,590. The Board budgeted \$74,500 in the fiscal year 2025 capital budget for the project.

Mr. Richardson moved to authorize the sole-source purchase of the telemetry equipment from Correct Equipment and the hiring of electrical contractors for the installation, at a total

estimated project cost of \$67,590.80. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kilmer and passed unanimously.

Regarding the Rock Face LLC appeal of Water Board rules and regulations; section IX – Conservation and Leak Repair Incentive, General Manager Ivan Thomas stated that Rock Face LLC (Coos Bay Village) recently had a major underground private leak and submitted required documentation needed for the leak repair incentive, however the limited 50% adjustment is over the stated \$1000 threshold for the General Manager’s approval. A full 50% adjustment for the excess water leak would equate to \$1,850.80. Mr. Thomas invited Jim Knepler with Deering Management Group, property manager of Rock Face LLC to explain the appeal and his requested exception in this case.

Mr. Knepler provided background on the private leak that occurred at the Coos Bay Village. Despite taking steps to monitor and mitigate water usage, the center experienced a significant increase in water bills due to the underground leak, resulting in a \$32,000 excess in costs. Although a \$24,000 credit was received for sewer costs from the City of Coos Bay, the remaining costs still burdened local tenants and small business owners. They had initially sought insurance coverage, but the claim was finally withdrawn once the large credit from the city was received. Jim emphasized that the leak adjustment policy and subsequent appeal were key to support the Coos Bay Village’s business owners’ financial recovery.

Chair Carmen Matthews abstained from discussion and voting on this item due to a conflict of interest, as he is a tenant of the Coos Bay Village. Mr. Matthews recused himself from this portion of the meeting to maintain transparency and uphold ethical standards.

Board members recognized that the leak repair incentive policy was designed to assist those who responded responsibly and promptly to leaks and do not feel the request is excessive. Mr. Solarz asked if there was a statement from the insurance company that could be shared with the Board. Mr. Knepler stated he could share the email to the insurance company which stated he officially withdrew the insurance claim.

Mr. Solarz moved to allow an increase in the maximum adjustment under Section IX - Item E to allow for an increase in the maximum adjustment up to \$1,850.80. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kilmer and passed unanimously.

Regarding re-engineering for Distribution Specialist position to Distribution Technician, Mr. Mills stated that due to turnover, promotions, and challenges in hiring certified candidates, it was recommended to replace the Distribution Specialist position with an additional Technician role to ensure coverage for system maintenance and service quality. The role change was accounted for in the budget for FY 2025. In order to ensure the Distribution Section remains adequately staffed and service levels are maintained, he requested that the Board approve to replace the Distribution Specialist position with an additional Distribution Technician role.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Kilmer moved to reallocate the Distribution Specialist to an additional Distribution Technician. The motion was seconded by Mr. Richardson and passed unanimously.

Regarding the proposed agreement with HR Answers for the Coos Bay - North Bend Water Board FY2025 Pay Equity Audit and Market Wage Analysis, Mr. Thomas stated that we last contracted with HR Answers to complete a thorough study in 2019. This was completed prior to union negotiations so any concerns with pay equity, or compensation could be thoroughly analyzed with current market data.

Coming this year, the Board expects to re-negotiate the labor bargaining agreement with the employee union. and the new audit will help the organization stay up to date on market standards and equity across all positions. Contracting with HR Answers will help to ensure compliance with Oregon's pay equity laws and prepare for upcoming union negotiations starting in January 2025.

The studies are being conducted primarily to support upcoming labor negotiations and assess current market conditions. They will also review Water Board practices and job descriptions in light of recent changes. Over the past three years, the Water Board has experienced significant turnover in its management team, updated its business processes, and adjusted staff roles. The studies will audit these changes to ensure alignment with current best management practices and market data, which should be reviewed every five years.

The Board has \$8,000 budgeted in the FY2025 budget for the project. HR Answers completed a very high quality and thorough report for the Water Board in the past and already have much of our data from prior audit and analysis. The proposed cost for the audit is \$8,000.

Mr. Solarz moved to approve the General Manager to enter into a professional services agreement with HR Answers in the amount of \$8,000 for a Water Board Pay Equity Audit and Market Wage Analysis. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kilmer and passed unanimously.

The Board's next regular meeting was set for Friday, September 20, 2024, at 7:00 a.m.

Updates were given as follows:

- Trespass camps on Water Board property – Staff is seeing ongoing issues with trespass camps on Waterboard property, most recently some social media posts and possible news story concerning camps near Lower Pony Creek. Camps have already been removed from Woodlawn area in collaboration with North Bend Fire Department, having secured grants for fire protection and has been assisting in clearing brush around tanks. Efforts to clear camps at multiple areas is underway in collaboration with Resource Officer at North Bend PD and the Devereux Center. Board acknowledged and commended the Devereux Center and volunteers for their efforts in cleaning up camp areas. Board would like to continue utilizing their support along with outside contractors if needed to expedite the clean-up process.
- Timber Sale Update - Approximately 40% of timber sale revenue has been received. Logging is ongoing, and revenue projections are positive. No complaints have been

received from surrounding homeowners. Board discussed and advocated for native landscaping near the Service Center area where trees will be removed.

- Service Center Design Improvements - New HVAC installation has been completed however flooring is delayed but expected soon for new Meter Services offices. Efforts to reorganize storage and reduce clutter are in progress. Appliances are ordered.

Mr. Solarz made proposal to revise policy language on Conservation and Leak Repair Incentive Policy, Section IX - Item E for clarity on appeals beyond the set maximum adjustment. Board acknowledged and commented that further review and potential language adjustments were recommended to tighten policy terms. Proposed policy change will be included on agenda for upcoming Board meeting.

At 7:58 a.m. Chair Matthews directed they go into executive session for the purpose of discussing potential litigation pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(h) and personnel issues pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(a). The Board returned to open session at 8:11 a.m.

There being no other business to come before the Board, Chair Matthews adjourned the meeting at 8:11 a.m.

Approved: _____, 2024

By: _____
Carmen Matthews, Chair

ATTEST:
