

**Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
Meeting Minutes of the Board of Directors
Monday, June 24, 2024**

The Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District (UGRWCD) conducted an annual Board meeting on Monday, June 24, 2024 at 4 p.m. at the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District, 210 West Spencer, Suite B, Gunnison, Colorado and via Zoom video/teleconference.

Board members present: Joellen Fonken, Rebie Hazard, Stacy McPhail, Julie Nania, Michelle Pierce, Mike Rogers, Rosemary Carroll, Don Sabrowski, John Perusek, and Brooke Zanetell.

Board members absent: Andy Spann

Others present:

Bill Nesbitt, Former Board Member
Sonja Chavez, UGRWCD General Manager
Raquel Flinker, Colorado River Water Conservation District
Ashley Garrison, Colorado Water Conservation Board
Dave Gochis, Airborne Snow Observatory, Inc.
John McClow, UGRWCD General Counsel
Luke Mecklenburg, Colorado Attorney General's Office (via Zoom)
Alana Nichols, UGRWCD Fellow
Beverly Richards, UGRWCD Office/Senior Program Manager
Ari Yamaguchi, Water Resources Technician

1. CALL TO ORDER

President Michelle Pierce called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

2. AGENDA APPROVAL

Director Rebie Hazard moved and Director John Perusek seconded approval of the agenda as circulated. The motion carried.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE FOR DON SABROWSKI AND BROOKE ZANETELL

Steven Patrick, Gunnison County District Court Judge, administered the oath of office for Board members Don Sabrowski and Brooke Zanetell. Don Sabrowski applied to renew his Board term for Division 4 and Brooke Zanetell will fill the Division 8 seat that was vacated by Bill Nesbitt.

4. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Director Bill Nesbitt moved and Director Joellen Fonken seconded approval of the consent agenda. The motion carried.

5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

President Michelle Pierce provided the current slate of officers which included herself as President, Stacy McPhail as Vice-President, Bill Nesbitt as Treasurer, and John Perusek as Secretary. She indicated that John Perusek was willing to serve as Treasurer as Bill Nesbitt is leaving the board, and that Don Sabrowski was interested in serving as Secretary.

Director Julie Nania moved and Director Rebie Hazard seconded approval of the slate of officers as suggested. This includes Michelle Pierce as President, Stacy McPhail as Vice-President, John Perusek as Treasurer, and Don Sabrowski as Secretary. The motion carried

6. CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION 2024-06 APPOINTING FINANCIAL OFFICERS

Director Joellen Fonken moved and Director Rosemary Carroll seconded approval of Resolution 2024-06 appointing financial officers for the District. These include Michelle Pierce, Stacy McPhail, John Perusek, Don Sabrowski, and Sonja Chavez. The motion carried.

7. RE-AUTHORIZATION OF STANDING COMMITTEES

President Pierce referred to the list of current sub-committees provided in the board packet. She stated that each committee could only have a maximum of five board members. Based on this requirement she said that the committees that were available for Director Zanetell would include Education and Outreach, Finance, Legislative, and Watershed Management Planning. Director Zanetell indicated that she would like to serve on the Education and Outreach and the Finance Committees. President Pierce asked if any of the other Directors would like changes to their committee memberships, there were none.

Director Mike Rogers moved and Director Rebie Hazard seconded approval of the re-authorization of the standing committees with the inclusion of Director Zanetell. The motion carried.

8. TREASURER'S REPORT

Director Nesbitt began his report by stating that J. Powell met with the Board of Governors again and they have decided that there is not going to be a great drop in the interest rates, maybe only a 25-basis point drop towards October of this year. This is consistent with what the traders are talking about at this time. Bill said if you look at the futures index there is a lot of faith in this decision however Goldman Sachs has said there was going to be 3% drop this year so he does not have much faith in their opinion.

J. Powell reiterated the position, as did the majority of the Board of Governors at their meeting in Jackson Hole and this group is pushing for a 2% inflation drop. In the past the President at the time had put pressure on the Federal Reserve as they like to see a drop in the interest rates in order to help voters make decisions.

Director Nesbitt indicated that jobs are still strong, and inflation is still up across the board. The new Farm Bill has not passed (operating under 2018 Farm Bill). He also said that Ukraine is still having trouble and they are the greatest producer of wheat. As an aside, Director Nesbitt said he went on the USDA website and asked how many calories people consume on average.

Director Nesbitt concluded his report by saying that prices are high, but foreclosures remain low in Gunnison County, which is quite different than in the early 2000's when there were a record 209 foreclosures in the county. He also said that the board and organization are in good shape with a projected 8% rate of return on investment once the District moves into the new building.

9. BASIN WATER SUPPLY REPORT

Beverly Richards pointed to her memorandum in the packet and added that all streams in the basin had reached peak runoff and are now dropping. Though this is the case, most are still running at above the historical average for this date. Beverly pointed out that a rainstorm event that occurred earlier in the week caused many of the stream gages to record increases of 1,000 cfs. She said that Blue Mesa Reservoir was currently at 73% of full capacity and that all others in the Gunnison Basin were close to full capacity or slightly over. Releases out of Taylor Reservoir were increased to 600 cfs to avoid a spill at the reservoir. This amount was decreased by 50 cfs the previous week and current operational plans are to maintain that release until July 1st. She said that we are in good shape with regard to water storage and soil moisture heading into the summer months.

Director Perusek asked if Beverly had heard anything about the closures on the river. She said she had just heard prior to the meeting that the County had reopened the river that day. Director Fonken asked about impressions that Spring Creek Reservoir was being drained again. Director Sabrowski said CPW is not draining the reservoir but have found that the dam is not solvent. They do not want water to go over the spillway, so they installed siphon tubes in order to maintain a safe level in the reservoir. This will continue until they can further address the issues with the dam. Sonja Chavez said that at the TLUG meeting the group encouraged CPW to come to the District through the Grant Program and that UGRWCD could work with the state to find the funds to address dam issues.

10. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Spencer Business Park Unit A Renovation Update – General Manager Chavez said the Unit A renovation is moving along well. There are just a few things that still need to be done before we move. Furniture is arriving, pictures are going up, and the back sidewalk has been completed. On July 8th and 9th GL Computers will be moving the server to Unit A. As a result of this, staff can choose to take the day off or

download needed files and work from home. The telephones will not be working either, but we will provide cell numbers if anyone needs to contact us.

Project and Fundraising – Manager Chavez congratulated Alana Nichols on her first successful grant application, the Transformative Landscapes Challenge Grant which assists government entities with the removal of turf and planning of low water use plants. We have two years to complete the grant project and this year we will be working on the design. The project will also include an education component showing the community the different types of plants that could be used for xeriscaping their gardens. We also want to work with the schools and want the xeriscape garden to be used as an education piece for promoting the beauty of xeriscape and the associated water conservation benefits.

General Manager Chavez reported that UGRWCD also received the America the Beautiful grant which was started by the previous Wet Meadows coordinator. The grant is for \$80,000 and will be used primarily for the Wet Meadows program. The US Forest Service wet meadows grant of about \$80,000 has also come through.

She has also been in discussion with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to identify potential projects totaling \$115,000 of TNC support. One project has been identified and discussions continue on several other potential opportunities.

General Manager Chavez was able to get the contract in place for the CFP funds for the agricultural multi-grant proposal. She thanked Raquel Flinker and the River District for the support and ease of contracting. The next steps include the completion of the Harmful Algal Bloom Study Phase 2 contract which is about \$35,000.

Finally, she indicated that UGRWCD had not heard regarding the USBR Snow Measurement grant application and don't expect to until August. Both Gunnison and Delta Counties are poised and ready to go before the Colorado River District for a CFP funding request in support of airborne LiDAR flights.

UGRWCD Irrigation Return Flow Study – Sonja said there has been some preliminary reconnaissance work done. Thanks to Director McPhail who was able to provide landowner and contact information which was very helpful. USGS also spent an afternoon with Andy Spann looking at the East River No. 2 diversion. When we have a formal study design, we will report back to the board.

Wet Meadows Program – The Wet Meadows program received 18 applications for the coordinator position. Sonja thanked Ari Yamaguchi for his help in getting this information out to some job boards which resulted in high quality responses. UGRWCD will move forward with an initial virtual interview with five candidates in the hopes of being able to narrow down the pool to 2 or 3 applicants for a formal in-person interview.

Lowline Fire Field Assessment – Sonja said she and Ari went out to do a Low Line Fire assessment. The good news is that many of the areas will recover well. There are some areas where you can see significant

burn scars where vegetation did not return. These areas held up well through the snowpack, but the concern is that an intensive rainstorm could really disrupt the surface of the soil. GEI Consultants also participated in the site assessment and was able to provide helpful input.

Taylor Local User's Group Update – Director Sabrowski reported that inflows coming in to be the reservoir were higher than expected in June and that the expectations is that inflows in July will be much lower and therefore the challenge is yet to come with regard to management. He anticipates that July will involve reduction of releases to maintain the target end of year storage content of 70,000 acre-feet by October 1st.

General Manager Chavez said that it was an unusual year as the Colorado Basin River Forecast Center (CBRFC) model was not behaving well, and this resulted in CBRFC changing the forecast a couple of times. Another unusual thing that occurred was that the runoff came very fast. This can be a challenge in the future with regard to management and flooding issues for properties located in flood-plains. Another unusual thing that happened this year was that the majority of runoff was projected to come in June . They backed off on that a bit, but their prediction was that 20% more would come in June and much less in July. Director Sabrowski said the rains helped which may have led to the change in the forecast.

Director Nesbitt asked about the hydropower on the Taylor River. Sonja said that equipment has been received and they are expecting the system to come online by August.

Director Carroll said information from the SNOTEL sites and the hydrographs indicates that we had much less snow than last year but much higher peak flows. This will likely result in dryer conditions at the tail end of the season in the form of lower base flows. Dave Gochis said there was some split between what was forecasted at ASO and CBRFC. The SNOTELS were very exciting this year with regards to the amount of snow melting out. The last Airborne snow survey was done in early May and showed substantially more snow at higher elevations compared to this same time last year. The open questions is, did that high elevation snowpack recharge the system sufficiently so that there was a bit larger tail to the runoff, or did it all come down at once which could result in less water at the end of the season as Director Carroll pointed out. Dave did say that the soil moisture data at the SNOLITE stations indicates that soils are still wet so it will be interesting to see how this all plays out.

Director Nania asked if this pattern was driven by temperatures or rain on snow events. Director Carroll said the first pulse was driven by temperature and the second pulse was driven by both temperatures and rain on snow. She also said that there still is a lot of snow on Cement Creek.

Gunnison River Festival (GRF) – GRF Secretary and Outreach Coordinator, Alana Nichols reported on the GRF held this past weekend. On Friday night the Taylor Downriver Race was held. Flows were high for this event and there were 54 participants and 26 boats. After the event a reception was held at the Three River boathouse with food provided by Scenic River Tours. On Saturday the main event was held at the Gunnison Whitewater Park and this event included a number of water events such as the Canine Big Air, Raft Rodeo, Kayak Freestyle, Surf Jam, and the Hooligan Race. There were 15 vendors at the event, 20

participants, and 5 dogs. GRF estimates that at least 400 people attended this main event and they raised \$760. Sonja said this was a great turnout and was due to the hard work done by Alana.

11. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Board President read Resolution 2024-06 recognizing Bill Nesbitt for his service on the Upper Gunnison Board of Directors. Following the recognition, Board Members expressed their thanks to Director Nesbitt for all that has been accomplished during his time on the Board. Director Nesbitt was presented with a framed resolution which also included photos of him reading water books to 1st graders at the Gunnison Elementary School.

Director Joellen Fonken moved and Director Rosemary Carroll seconded approval of Resolution 2024-06 recognizing Director Bill Nesbitt for his contribution to the Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District. The motion carried.

12. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Luke Mecklenburg with the Colorado Attorney General's Office congratulated the District on their 65th anniversary.

13. FUTURE MEETINGS

A list of meetings was included in the Board packet.

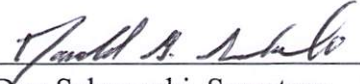
14. SUMMARY OF MEETING ACTION ITEMS

There were no meeting action items

15. ADJOURNMENT


President Michelle Pierce adjourned the June 24, 2024 Board meeting at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Don Sabrowski, Secretary

APPROVED:



Stacy McPhail, Vice President

