

**Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes and
Public Hearing for 2026 Draft Budget
Monday, November 24, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.**

The Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District (UGRWCD) conducted a Regular Board Meeting and Public Hearing on Monday, November 24, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. at the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District, 210 West Spencer, Suite A, Gunnison, Colorado and via Zoom video/teleconference.

Board members present: Stuart Asay, Joellen Fonken, Rebie Hazard, John Perusek, Don Sabrowski, Andy Spann (via Zoom), Brian Stevens and Jeff Writer.

Board members absent: Rosemary Carroll, Camille Richard, and Brooke Zanetell

Others present:

Amanda Aulenbach, UGRWCD Wet Meadows Program Director (via Zoom)

Sonja Chavez, UGRWCD General Manager

Bailey Friedman, UGRWCD Water Resource Project Manager

Julia Iovino, UGRWCD Water Resources Fellow

John McClow, UGRWCD General Counsel

Beverly Richards, UGRWCD Office / Senior Program Manager

Sue Uerling, UGRWCD Administrative Asst. / Communications Specialist

1. CALL TO ORDER

President Don Sabrowski called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. AGENDA APPROVAL

**Director Stu Asay moved and Director Joellen Fonken seconded approval of the agenda.
The motion carried.**

3. APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 27, 2025 BOARD MEETING MINUTES:

Director Stu Asay moved and Director John Perusek seconded approval of the October 27th, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes. The motion carried.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer John Perusek reported that he didn't have anything to add other than what was provided in the report. General Manager briefly reviewed the financial reports and there were no questions

from the board.

2026 Budget Memo: Senior Program Manager Beverly Richards reported on the final updates to the 2026 Draft Budget as follows: Line 6 – Regional Water Supply Income was increased to include \$20,000 to incorporate the recent grant award from Colorado Parks and Wildlife Regional Partnership Grant. In the same line item, she also increased the amount by \$100,000 to move unspent 2025 grant funding from the CWCB related to the Ag Return Flow Study since the funding agreement came in later than anticipated. Line 21 and Line 33 – Computer and Phone Expenses were decreased due to the new contract with Silicon Plains, who will be overseeing all support for computers and the phone, which were previously paid separately; and Line 43 – District Grant Program was reduced from \$300,000 to \$250,000 because our District staff have done so well raising outside grant funding resources in support of local projects. General Manager Chavez indicated this funding raising effort was intentional because she wanted to relieve some pressure on District resources associated with the Ag Return Flow Study expenses.

5. GENERAL COUNSEL UPDATE

Counselor John McClow reported that the Colorado Water Congress State Affairs Committee met last week. At this time, there are no water bills of interest to the District, but there was discussion about the state deficit and possible sweeps of water resource funding. In addition, he said that the Division of Natural Resources (DNR) wants to have the authority to control underground injections at the state level. Currently, this control is divided between DNR and the federal government. Counselor McClow noted that this could have an impact on future well rights. He said that the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) is also in the process of revising some of its policies and procedures, which could have an impact on the District in the future, as the District is subject to their requirements.

Counselor McClow also reported that the Colorado Water Conservation Board voted to accept the Shoshone Water Rights Instream Flow (ISF) Dedication from the Colorado River District (CRD). He noted, however, that there is concern by Front Range entities over historic use figures and co-management by the CRD and CWCB related to the relaxation of the Shoshone call. Counselor McClow said the next step is for the state water court to make decisions about the water rights for the project and that it's likely "sparks will fly" over historic use. General Manager Chavez commended Counselor McClow for his role in helping all parties negotiate language that allowed the CWCB Board to move forward with a vote, noting that the negotiations appeared to be at a standstill.

Director Don Sabrowski wondered if this leaves the door open for the Front Range entities to get more Colorado River water. Counselor McClow replied that engineers from both sides will be submitting their analyses of the historic use for hydro power, which will then be considered and

ruled upon by the state water court.

6. GENERAL MANAGER UPDATE

Service Resolutions: General Manager Sonja Chavez thanked Administrative Assistant Sue Uerling and Senior Program Manager Beverly Richards for their service of five years and twenty years, respectively, and honored them with gifts and resolutions.

Director John Perusek moved and Director Brian Stevens seconded approval of Resolution 2025-05 recognizing Sue Uerling for five years of service to the District. The motion carried.

Director Brian Stevens moved and Director Joellen Fonken seconded approval of Resolution 2025-06 recognizing Beverly Richards for twenty years of service to the District. The motion carried.

Grants Committee: Grant Committee Chair Joellen Fonken reported that the committee met on November 7, 2025 to review the 2026 grant guidelines and discuss funding for the program. It was reported that thanks to a number of outside funding opportunities being pursued by staff, the District believes it can reduce the 2026 grant program dollars needed to support local projects. Therefore, the committee is recommending a line item of \$250,000 to fund District grant awards in 2026.

Director Joellen Fonken moved that the Board approve the recommendation of the Grant Committee to allocate \$250,000 to the District Grant Program non-operating budget expense line item for the 2026 budget. The motion carried.

General Manager Update: General Manager Chavez briefly reviewed her memorandum included in the meeting packet. She noted that at the Gunnison Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) meeting on October 28, 2025, she reviewed the impacts to the Slate River at Baxter Gulch long-term water quality and quantity trend monitoring site stream gauge. The BOCC and staff were apologetic about not taking note of the stream gage during the planning process and expressed their willingness to discuss the additional work that USGS will have to do to get the site back online. Director Jeff Writer asked if, in the future, Gunnison County would notify the District whenever there are projects that could have an impact on the watershed. Staff noted that requests for planning reviews by the County and City were hit or miss and that the General Manager and BOCC agreed that this was an area that could be improved upon. The question was also raised if Gunnison County will be responsible for the cost of replacing the monitoring equipment. Ms. Chavez replied that USGS can cover costs associated with getting monitoring equipment back online because UGRWCD pays operations and maintenance expenses under our annual funding agreement, but that they would need County support with restoration of the stream bed and bank stabilization work around the site.

Ms. Chavez gave a brief overview of the Colorado Basin Roundtables C9 Summit on October 28 and 29th. She also noted that Counselor McClow and she attended the Gunnison Basin Roundtable (GBRT) meeting on November 17 in Montrose. Staff from the Dust on Snow project presented a funding request for \$30,000 to the GBRT and Ms. Chavez wondered if this would alter the usual funding request that Dust on Snow submits to the District for their operations. She'll follow up. Counselor McClow said that the documentary *Legacy* was presented at the GBRT meeting and that it is "exceptional" and focuses on mental health among the agricultural community and how by pulling this segment together, they can help one another cope through the stress of ranching and farming. General Manager Chavez reported that the agricultural community in Colorado has the highest rate of suicide among all industries. The film is available on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8fuYyviRPQ>

7. BASIN WATER SUPPLY UPDATE

Senior Program Manager Beverly Richards reported that basin SWE has increased to 50 percent which was an increase from the 36 percent since her report was submitted. She also said that precipitation was still at 100% but has flatlined since October 24th.

President Don Sabrowski adjourned the regular meeting at 6:09 p.m.

8. PUBLIC HEARING ON 2026 DRAFT BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE

President Don Sabrowski convened the Public Hearing for review of the 2026 Draft Budget at 6:10 p.m. There were no citizens online or at the meeting to provide input.

9. CITIZEN COMMENTS ON BUDGET

No citizen comments were received.

10. BOARD DISCUSSION ON PUBLIC HEARING COMMENTS

Since there were no citizens in attendance to comment on the budget, no discussion on comments was necessary from the Board of Directors. The public hearing was closed at 6:11 p.m.

11. FUTURE MEETINGS

A list of upcoming meetings was included in the Board packet. The Board was reminded that the December 8, 2025, Special Budget Meeting will be a short meeting at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom only.

The 2026 Board Meeting dates were also included in the packet and it was noted that the November

2026 meeting will be the fifth Monday of the month on November 30, 2026.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Board President Don Sabrowski adjourned the November 24, 2025 Board Meeting at 6:13p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebie Hazard
Rebie Hazard, Secretary

Don Sabrowski
Don Sabrowski, President