

Pinal County Water Augmentation Authority

MEETING MINUTES

MINUTES OF APRIL 11, 2023:

A meeting of the Pinal County Water Augmentation Authority was convened at 7:08 a.m. both remotely through technological means and in the Pinal County Offices in Casa Grande, Arizona.

Directors Present:

- Bill Collings, Papago Butte DWID
- Melissa Campbell, City of Coolidge
- Stephen Q. Miller, Pinal County
- Bob Marsh, City of Maricopa
- Bryan Hartman, Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation and Drainage District
- Derek McEachern, Central Arizona Irrigation and Drainage District
- Fred Schneider, Water utilities with a CAP water subcontract

Also Present:

- Joe Singleton, PCWAA Executive Director
- Jonathan Jennings, Advanced Weather Modification Solutions
- George Bomar, Advanced Weather Modification Solutions
- Mitch Basefsky, Central Arizona Project
- Patrick Adams, Water Policy Advisor to Gov. Katie Hobbs
- Cheyenne Walsh, Compass Strategies

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CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Bill Collings called the meeting to order at 7:08.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Melissa Campbell moved to approve the minutes as drafted from the meeting of March 14, 2023. Bob Marsh seconded the motion, which carried 7-0. **CAMPBELL, COLLINGS, HARTMAN, MARSH, MCEACHERN, MILLER, SCHNEIDER.**

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Stephen Miller said the bills for the month included payment to Advanced Weather Modification Solutions (AWMS) for their work on the Cloud Seeding study. Miller noted that the Authority was within its budget on all items. Bill Collings asked if the latest billing from AWMS was on the tracking spreadsheet. Joe Singleton clarified that it was included in the figure for the "Regional Studies and Reports" line item. Fred Schneider moved to accept the Treasurer's Report and pay the bills as presented. Bryan Hartman seconded the motion, which carried 7-0.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

At Chairman Collings prerogative, the Call to the Public was moved up on the agenda in order to allow Patrick Adams, Water Policy Advisor to Governor Hobbs, to address the Authority. Adams said that he had been following PCWAA's work for several years. He said that the Governor's Office was looking forward to working with PCWAA moving forward. Adams said that the issues that PCWAA identified in its legislative handout were ones that were being experienced in other areas of the state, and that Pinal issues were indicative of issues that the whole state was confronting. Stephen Miller said that as the Authority considers legislative solutions to its concerns, that he hoped it would apply in other areas of the state in order to broadly address statewide issues. Adams said that he appreciated the comment, noting that previous Pinal work on assured water supplies did lead to broad rules changes.

Towards the end of the meeting, Chairman Collings made an additional call to the public. Mitch Basefsky of CAP said that the snowpack in the Rockies was about 145% of the 30-year average. He said that if conditions held that they could receive at least 7.48-million-acre-foot (MAF) release from Lake Powell into Lake Mead, rather than the 7 MAF release that had been anticipated. Basefsky said that the system was also picking up quite a bit of side flows into Lake Mead. He said that current information has led to estimates that the water levels in Lake Mead could be 10 feet higher than originally anticipated.

Basefsky said that the Bureau of Reclamation was supposed to holding a press conference later today in order to release the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement concerning the Colorado River basin. He said that the announcement was supposed to have been yesterday, but was delayed. He said that CAP staff would evaluate the document after it is released.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR PCWAA AUDIT WORK:

Bill Collings told members that he and Joe Singleton had created a Request for Proposals (RFP) based on an RFP used by the City of Eloy for a similar task. He told members that the draft RFP had been sent out with the meeting materials for review. Collings said that the document was intended to be comprehensive, as he hoped to be able to use it as a template for future contractual work. Fred Schneider asked how the RFP would be disseminated to potential respondents, asking if it would be sent directly to certain entities or advertised. Collings said that a short advertisement would be used, directing interested parties to Joe Singleton in order to receive the full RFP. Singleton further clarified that in addition to the public advertisement that several parties, including the current auditors would be notified directly. Bob Marsh moved to proceed with RFP language, with any minor modifications that were deemed necessary. Stephen Miller seconded the motion, which carried 7-0.

SUMMER CLOUD SEEDING STUDY:

Jonathan Jennings of AWMS said that some of the initial work from the Pinal Cloud Seeding Study would be presented at the Weather Modification Association conference in Colorado next week in order to get peer feedback. He showed the Board slides noting that the weather data from 32 rain gauges over 10 years indicated a short but powerful regional summer rainy season from June – August that would provide for opportunities for cloud seeding. Jennings said that AWMS's draft report would contain a recommendation for a one-year pilot project between July and September of 2024. He added that an abbreviated program for 2023, utilizing a portion of the cloud seeding season might be possible. He said that a three-month pilot project utilizing contractors should cost between \$200,000 - \$220,000. Jennings detailed some options on the equipment and activities needed for cloud seeding. He noted that at least initially, it could be beneficial to utilize contractors and leased aircraft that was already outfitted for seeding operation. He said that the pilot project period could be used to educate others in order to develop capacities such that contractors would eventually be replaced by trained personnel.

George Bomar told the Board that the licensing framework for Arizona cloud seeding was through the Arizona Department of Water Resources. He reminded members that the Arizona regulations were less comprehensive than in other western states. He said that the cost of obtaining a license was modest and that there was not a public noticing provision for the application process.

RESPONSES TO ADWR COMMENTS:

There was no report on Responses to ADWR Comments.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:

Joe Singleton told members that the Arizona Water Banking Authority (AWBA) had held their quarterly meeting on March 22, 2023. He said that the AWBA introduced Mark Taylor as a new member of the Board and announced a stakeholder session concerning how the AWBA would distribute long-term storage credits for the firming of CAP municipal and industrial subcontract water agreements. He said that the AWBA would meet later today at 10:00 for that discussion, and that a link to the meeting was on ADWR's website.

Singleton said that he had been engaged in a variety of administrative tasks including annual reporting, budgeting, and funding requests. He said that he and Chairman Collings has also worked on the RFP language. He added that the Bartlett Dam Modification subcommittee had met on March 29, and would be discussed later in the meeting. He told the group that the Pinal AMA Groundwater Users Advisor Council (GUAC) would meet tomorrow at 10:00. He said that the meeting would be available online and in-person at the Casa Grande City Council Chambers. He said that the GUAC would hear from Irrigation Management Services and PCWAA concerning their programs that use Conservation and Augmentation Assistance funds, as well as hear a presentation from Ivanhoe Electric Mining Company about their project proposal.

Stephen Miller said that he had spoken to the Ivanhoe Electric Mining Company, and that they might be willing to do additional presentations, including for PCWAA. He said that he had forwarded Chairman Collings contact information to them.

LOBBYIST REPORT:

Cheyenne Walsh of Compass Strategies said that it was a quieter time of the legislative session right now. She said that the legislature was past the standing committee deadlines, so that there would not be more bills moving through committees until a budget was put together through the appropriations process. She told the Board that it was the 93rd day of the legislative session that was targeted to be 100 days long. She said that she expected the session to go far beyond the 100th day. She told members that the Governor had vetoed 37 bills this session, noting that the record was 58 vetoes. Walsh said that it was a lighter year for water-related legislation, although there were several notable bills including Rep. Griffin's bill (H.B. 2445) that seeks to address the rental loophole in the assured water supply rules. Walsh added that the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Fiscal Accountability heard budget presentations for both the ADWR and Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA). She said that the presentation included mention that the \$200 million in conservation funding

controlled by WIFA needs to be spent by the summer of 2024. Walsh said that the process to use these funds was still being developed, so she recommended that those who might want to apply for those funds begin working on it now, as it seemed like the process would go quickly once initiated.

Bryan Hartman asked about the disposition of the bill concerning a settlement between the irrigation districts and the Ak-Chin. Walsh said that as the bill has an appropriation attached to it, that it was part of that process now. Bill Collings asked about the bill that sought to appropriate \$30 million to irrigation efficiency projects. Walsh said that the proposal was in a similar place to the Ak-Chin legislation.

PINAL STAKEHOLDER PROCESS REPORT:

Stephen Miller said that he thought that Nathan Miller had been in contact with the City of Eloy in order to obtain the finalized long-term demand figure for city water use.

BARTLETT DAM MODIFICATION REPORT:

Bill Collings said that the Bartlett Dam Modification Group's Needs subcommittee had met and worked on Needs criteria that relate to two of the guiding principles. Collings said that the work would be data-driven, and would be needed to demonstrate the demands for water that the Authority's request for additional water would serve. Collings told the Board that the dialogue between the partners had been dynamic and useful. Singleton agreed that dialogue at the last several meetings had good. Collings added that it seemed that the partners, including PCWAA would have until January-February of 2024 to define where the financing would come from for PCWAA's share of the costs, which Collings estimated could be \$30-\$55 million. Collings reminded members that federal monies could not be used to fulfill this, as federal money can not be used by cost share partners on a federal project.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

Chairman Collings said that he had sat in on the Eloy Maricopa-Stanfield Basin study. He said that the group was experiencing similar funding issues as the Authority is currently facing regarding finance of Bartlett Dam modification costs, in that they are seeking funding mechanisms for post-study efforts. He said the group had discussed hiring a grant writer, and he suggested that the PCWAA might be able to partner with them on the effort as they seek their own funding solutions for Bartlett Dam.

CALL TO THE AUTHORITY:

There was a call to the Authority. Bob Marsh asked if the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) proposal to leave water in Lake Mead in exchange for payment would affect the Pinal area. Mitch Basefsky of CAP said that they were aware of a proposal from the Bureau of Reclamation to pay the cities of Phoenix and Tucson as well as the GRIC to leave water in Lake Mead. Basefsky said that some of the details of the deal were not yet known.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The next meeting will be held on May 9, 2023 at 7:00 a.m.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06 a.m.

ATTEST:


William Collings, Chairman


Stephen Q. Miller, Secretary-Treasurer