

Pinal County Water Augmentation Authority

MEETING MINUTES

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 11, 2025:

A meeting of the Pinal County Water Augmentation Authority was convened at 7:01 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
- Keith Eaton, Town of Florence
- Bryan Hartman, Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation & Drainage District
- Derek McEachern, Central Arizona Irrigation and Drainage District
- Bob Marsh, City of Maricopa
- Jake Lenderking, Water utilities without a CAP water subcontract
- Craig McFarland, City of Casa Grande
- Stephen Q. Miller, Pinal County
- Fred Schneider, Water utilities with a CAP water subcontract

Also Present:

- Joe Singleton, PCWAA Executive Director
- Cheyenne Walsh, Compass Strategies
- Mitch Basefsky, Central Arizona Project
- David Malewitz, City of Eloy
- Lonnie Frost

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Bill Collings called the meeting to order at 7:01.

QUALIFYING AND SEATING OF NEW DIRECTOR:

Joe Singleton told the Board that the newly appointed representative for the Town of Florence, Mayor Keith Eaton, had signed his loyalty oaths and qualified to be seated as a member of the PCWAA Board. Accordingly, he was seated as a member of the Authority Board.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Craig McFarland moved to approve the minutes as drafted from the meeting of January 7, 2025. Fred Schneider seconded the motion, which carried 10-0. **CAMPBELL, COLLINGS, EATON, HARTMAN, LENDERKING, MARSH, McEACHERN, McFARLAND, MILLER, SCHNEIDER.** Craig McFarland moved to approve the minutes as drafted from the meeting of January 14, 2025. Stephen Miller seconded the motion, which carried 10-0.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Stephen Miller said that the expenses for the month were in order. Miller noted the bank balance from the last bank statement. He said that all budgetary items were within limits. Chairman Bill Collings asked if a balance remained on the contract with MATRIX New World Engineering that could be used against billings to satisfy any remaining work called for on the submittal to ADWR related to Pinal AWS work. Singleton confirmed that there was about \$4,500 in spending authority remaining on the current contract with MATRIX. Jake Lenderking moved to accept the Treasurer's Report and pay the bills as presented. Craig McFarland seconded the motion, which carried 10-0.

BARTLETT DAM MODIFICATION / SCIF:

Bill Collings said that he and Joe Singleton had met with the Buckeye Water Conservation and Drainage District (BWCCD) and heard the District's perspective on their upstream water rights that relate to a Bartlett Dam capacity modification. Collings said that BWCCD had been negotiating with various valley cities to receive treated effluent in lieu of asking for additional modified-Bartlett supplies. Collings added that the District had engaged in some discussion with Salt River Project staff (in their role as project managers and a participant in the Bartlett Dam modification project) on the topic. Collings said that Noel Carter of the BWCCD stressed that the District had strenuously defended their water rights over the 100-year history of the district. Joe Singleton added that specific cities that the BWCCD had been talking with were the members of the Sub-Regional Operating Group (SROG) that jointly own

the 91st Avenue Treatment Plant in the Phoenix AMA. Singleton said that BWCDD current thinking detailed at the meeting was to obtain more effluent from the SROG cities and assess the remaining Bartlett partners for 10,000 AF of their collective wet water in years that those partners would have access to modified Bartlett supplies. He added that shortly after the meeting the retiring Water Resource Management Advisor for the City of Phoenix had written a letter stating that Phoenix had not made an agreement with BWCDD related to a modified Bartlett Dam. Singleton added that he was concerned that even in the event of such concessions to BWCDD, it did not guarantee a settlement with other downstream users that might feel that they were affected by the project.

Singleton told the group that they were meeting with the SCIF participants later in the week. He added that there was a meeting of the Bartlett Dam Modification Steering committee later in the month, with Bill Collings said was on the 27th.

Jake Lenderking asked if the PCWAA should retain counsel to examine claims of BWCDD. Bill Collings said that he wanted to see the District provide more detail to their claims and plans before seeking legal advice. Collings indicated that updated information on the status of the Gila River General Stream Adjudication would be helpful, as it effects the BWCCDD rights. Lenderking acknowledged the utility of the Adjudication information, noting that he thought that most of the water on the Verde system was adjudicated through the Kent Decree. Collings added that he thought that they should know how much water that the Bureau of Reclamation would ask for from the Bartlett Modification soon.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:

Joe Singleton told members that the Department of Water Resources and T.J. Shope, Chair of the Senate Natural Resources Committee had each held stakeholder meetings to discuss an "Ag-to-Urban" program. Singleton said that the Department of Water Resources would utilize an Ag-to-Urban stakeholder process that allows for greater public participation in the discussion and development of the program than that of the Alternate Pathway to Designation of AWS (ADAWS) process had. Singleton said that ADWR had held two policy meetings and a technical meeting that more closely examined the program minutiae. He said that the ADWR process would place an ADAWS program within the AWS rules, and that the Department was looking for several safeguards in the program. Singleton told the group that the current guardrails that the Department had brought up consisted of overall savings of groundwater, applying to irrigation grandfathered rights that had been utilized during three of the previous five years, and did not already have a Certificate of AWS on it. He added that the Department was only considering Ag-to-Urban conversions within a Designated Service Area right now. Singleton said that the next ADWR meeting would be on February 26, and offered hybrid participation. Singleton told the group that Sen. Shope had met with stakeholders twice before introducing his version of an Ag-to-Urban program in the Senate. He said that S.B. 1611 contrasted to the ADWR approach in that the Senate version seeks to establish a sliding scale of physical availability to replenishment. He added that the Senate bill did not speak to a specific

irrigation history in the legislation, and did not limit that application of the program to the Phoenix and Pinal AMAs (as the ADWR proposal does) or to Designated Service Areas.

Singleton said that there were two bills (one on the House and one in the Senate) that among other provisions would make cloud seeding illegal. He said that he and Cheyenne Walsh had met with the primary sponsor of the house bill (H.B. 1432), Rep. Fink to explain PCWAA's concerns and history with cloud seeding. Singleton said that Fink said that constituents had told her of cloud seeding already taking place. He said that he told her that ADWR had never licensed an Arizona cloud seeding project. Singleton said that Walsh was going to meet soon with Sen Farnsworth, the sponsor of the senate legislation, to convey the Authority's position and concerns regarding his bill.

LOBBYIST REPORT:

Cheyenne Walsh of Compass Strategies told the Board that the bill introduction deadline in the House was yesterday. She told the group that the Senate Natural Resources committee and the House Natural Resources, Energy and Water (NREW) committees had light meeting agendas so far this session, and expected big agendas from both as the deadline to hear bills in their originating chambers approaches next week. She said that she expected to see the Authority's bill to clean up its statutory bonding language, S.B. 1616, on the next agenda, as well as Sen. Shope's Ag-to-Urban bill, S.B. 1611. Walsh said that CAP had a bill on the agenda for the special Friday meeting of the House NREW committee concerning how member service area fees are assessed. Walsh said that she understood that the bill would be amended to address concerns that the proposal would result in higher fees than those currently paid. Stephen Miller, who is the Pinal County representative to the CAP Board said that he had also been told that the bill would be amended to ensure that Pinal rate payers did not experience large, sudden fee increases. Walsh said that Joe Singleton and some of the bond counsel attorneys were prepared to be at the Tuesday hearing that was expected to agenda the PCWAA legislation. She said that she expected a long hearing.

Bill Collings said that some of the current water-related bills seemed redundant. Stephen Miller said that some of the bills that duplicate topics might be for use as strikers later in the legislative process. Walsh said that following the committee deadlines that she would reconfigure the PCWAA tracking list to move many of the bills to the back, as their chances of continuing to move through the legislative process would be greatly diminished. Collings asked if there were any additional bills that the PCWAA should take positions on. Walsh said that she wanted to review the bills with Joe Singleton again, but said that there were several bills that would cut funds to ADWR that she recommended opposing and on-farm efficiency bills that supported programs like N-Drip that she recommended supporting, as the Authority had previously supported N-Drip legislation. Stephen Miller asked about H.B. 2753 concerning Pinal AMA groundwater replenishment, saying that the legislation was important to water providers that might utilize ADAWS. Craig McFarland said that when he last checked that there was quite a bit of support for the legislation and little opposition. Fred Schneder said that he had spoken to Paul Gardner and that Queen Creek would support the bill.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

There was no report from the Chair.

CALL TO THE AUTHORITY:

There was a call to the Authority. Craig McFarland said that if any members had legislation that they wanted the Pinal Partnership to weigh in on to let him know. Bill Collings offered members the same from the Authority, advising them to contact himself or Joe Singleton.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

There was a call to the public. Mitch Basefsky of CAP said that the January version of the 24-Month Study showed runoff to the Colorado River system at 85% of normal. Basefsky said that if those figures held up that it would keep Arizona in Tier 1 shortage conditions for the 2026 water year, which would result in a 7.48 million-acre-foot (MAF) release from Lake Powell into Lake Mead. Basefsky noted that a 7.48 MAF release (or less) in 2026 would put the Upper Basin in violation of the 1922 Colorado River Compact provisions that call for 75 MAF to be released to the Lower Basin on a 10-year average. Basefsky noted that the state was looking at reserving \$1 - \$3 million for legal fees to allow for pursue action in such an event. Basefsky said that discussions with the Upper Basin states were ongoing, but that so far they refused to compromise on taking any mandatory cuts to their water use.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

The next meeting will be held on March 11, 2025 at 7:00 a.m.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 a.m.

ATTEST:


William Collings, Chairman


Stephen Q. Miller, Secretary-Treasurer