

FLATHEAD COUNTY WATER DISTRICT #101

POB 1141, Columbia Falls, MT 59912

*** Meeting Minutes September 17, 2024 ***

General Meeting:

I. Call to Order 6:59pm

General Meeting for FCWD #101 held this September 17, 2024. Directors present include Nicole Bond, President, Brian Rohletter and Russ Barnett – by telephone.

Also present Tina Bondy, Board Secretary and District Customers: Caitlin Becker; Casey Becker; Norm Nunnally; Clarence Taber and Jim Belmore.

II. Minutes - Discussion and approval of the June 4, 2024 Minutes.

- a. Following a brief Board discussion of the Minutes for the June 4, 2024 meeting that had been electronically circulated to the Board, **Nikki made a Motion to accept as prepared the Minutes; Brian Seconded and all voted in favor.**

III. Time for Public Comment and Discussions - 5 min allotment / property owner.

- a. **Norm Nunnally** – Spent his time allotment yelling at the Board Members that were present. He was angry about billing challenges, alleging mishandling of district money, wants an audit and wanted to get it into the Minutes when he expressed “you guys suck”. Nikki asked him to stop yelling and he threatened to sue everyone.
- b. **Clarence Taber** – Addressed the Board by noting that lot of things that could improve. And that there seems to be a disconnect between the Board and the District customers. He had had a challenge locating the past Minutes, and is concerned that with the problems that have been raised that only meeting quarterly is problematic. He doesn’t agree that the District needs a Manager. Stated that we need to meet more often and get this under control.
- c. **Casey / Caitlyn Becker** – seconding what Clarence said. Thinks it would be good to be back to monthly meetings given the issues, particularly with the billings. Received invoices in June and August with the same invoice number. In July, received two separate invoices. Also asked about recently seeing John Toftum, not a Board Member, going into the pumphouse. Nikki advised that with that particular event, there was a leak and a broken door, which he was assisting with. Casey also wanted addressed that following the improvement project, that there are still holes left in his property that were not properly fixed at the end of the project. Finally, Casey raised that \$45 connection fee seems extremely high. He’s the CWO for Kalispell, and the local districts connection fees are a fraction of that charge. Brian advised that the connection fee was not set by the Board, it was a combination of what the state was requiring in light of the

funding, to make sure that the district was able to build up a safety net. Russ also advised that when the rates were set, the USDA was involved, A2Z was involved, we checked rates around the valley – we are not 3x what everyone else was. Plus, we had 65 residential customers when we set those rates. Not sure the comps on the size of the districts, but when you pump water to 3000 meters, the overhead is spread out amongst all of the accounts. When there are only 65 or 70 meters, it's more expensive. The Board, however, is willing to look into the rates, etc.

- d. **James Bellmore** – Expressed that he normally writes two checks a year, but recently got some bills that were off, and he wants to talk to someone either on the phone or in person to get this straightened out. Nikki advised that there is an agenda item to discuss the billing issues, but at this time QuickBooks should be up to speed.

IV. Old Business

- a. **Accounting Update** – Nikki provided update – Roxy and Nikki have completed the transition / audit. There were a lot of discrepancies. They went back to January to audit and work forward. Mr. Nunnally raised an issue about wanting to see previous reading / current reading on the invoices as he doesn't feel he has anything to reference and that the bills just show up with whatever numbers.
- b. **Open Board Seat(s)** - Because we have vacant seats, the Board may appoint someone according to the Bylaws, and is not required to wait to hold an election. Mr. Taber is the one person in the District that has submitted a letter of interest in joining the Board. **Following a brief Board discussion, Nikki made a Motion to fill a Board vacancy with Clarence Taber; Brian Rohletter Seconded the Motion and all (including Russ via telephone) voted in favor. Motion passes.**

At this time, Mr. Taber joined the Board and took a seat at the front of the room.

V. New Business

a. **DEQ Report of elevated Manganese Levels**

- i. This is something that has been on the radar for a bit, and the Board has been advised that the government is going to come up with some different acceptable levels of Manganese. The Board has asked A2Z Engineering to research government funding and grants that may be available to pay for this, otherwise, the water for the District could be out of compliance. Note that this is not in effect currently, but trying to get ahead of it. The only way to get the Manganese out will be with a chlorinated system. This is expensive and requires daily monitoring.
- ii. The District did receive a call from the state that let us know about the elevated levels. They followed up with providing a form letter to send out to the District advising them of the elevated levels of Manganese and alerting the customers of

concerns for infants and young children. The Board recommends sending this out to the Customers.

b. Water Pressure Issues

On the North side of Hwy 2, there are concerns with water pressure levels. A2Z and John Toftum have been involved in trying to determine the cause.

A2Z has recommended that the Board pay to move the meter hookup from inside the hotel so it is outside and accessible. In the event that there is a leak the District could gain access and turn it off. Right now that access is buried in the road.

There was a question posed as to why there were not curb stops, which the Board will ask A2Z to clarify.

Based on the amount of water that Wonderstone uses and that they have backup tanks – believe that is why the pressure draw down at the end of each workday. The Board members have talked to Wonderstone and asked them to put in some type of automated system, to fill their tanks in the middle of the night, when it is off peak – or have their employees do it. Still looking though to see whether there is a leak.

c. Wonderstone Service Connection – email from A2Z Engineering

Recommendation as discussed above that was received from A2Z Engineering, to move the water meter at the Wonderstone out of the water storage tank building to a new meter pit out at the water main. John Toftum would be willing to install and will provide the Board with a quote for the service.

d. Fire Hydrants listed as offline

There are two hydrants in the District that have signs on them that say “not in service”, one is in front of the Nunnally property. Mr. Nunnally is convinced it is leaking, though that has not been verified. Mr. Nunnally also asserts that the person that signed off on the water improvement project was not qualified.

e. General Manager Position

There has been an ongoing discussion amongst the Board and the contractors that with the increasing number of calls we are having, that it would be beneficial to hire a General Manager. Recommending that a budget be set so that we can have someone in place for winter. The concern being that at times, Jeff is not available to turn off water at the meter pit. Clarence opined that there are lots of emergencies and the Board Members should be the ones doing the shutting off, etc. Brian disagreed.

Clarence is not in favor of paying someone to be a General Manager, though it was clarified that the role would be the one people could call for billing questions, they can check the mail, check the pump house, run the meters, do general maintenance, clear

weeds, snow shoveling, meet with contractors, field the calls. Discussion with Clarence and Nikki. The resolution was that a job description needs to be proposed and voted on, and the District Customers should be made aware.

VI. Operator's report – Quarterly Report presented by Jeff Soyland, CWO

Jeff had prepared and forwarded the report as he was called out of state by GNP.

June to Aug – all samples fine
Consumer confidence was completed in June
Lead / Copper done
Yearly nitrate – in compliance until 2027

Another flush will be scheduled for October and Jeff will do a 1-week alert prior to the flush.

Other projects that are in the works or to be scheduled, replacement of first pressure tank, testing RPZ at both and draining/cleaning storage tank. There is a concern that since June the booster pumps have been running for long times during peak hours.

VII. Financial report – Secretary reviewed financial reports prepared as of September 17, 2024

Bank Account totals (as of Sept 17, 2024)

- Asset Replacement 5230 - \$65,127.79
- Construction 1027 - \$188.53
- Glacier Bank Checking 4486 - \$76,757.92
- Loans and Grants 1310 - \$12,576.00

Profit and Loss (July 1 – Sept 17, 2024)

- Water Service Income - \$37,883.22
- Expenses - \$1,548.09

In addition to the Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss and Aging Accounts Reports, Secretary also included a Quarterly Expenses Summary.

VIII. Correspondence and Additional Discussion

No further correspondence.

Clarence brought the Board back to the topic of how to get all of the stuff done without meeting again until December, the next scheduled quarterly meeting. We can't wait 3 months given the hostilities expressed.

Clarence – made a Motion that the Board meets monthly until we get this ironed out – the citizens are welcome to address the Board, so long as they are civil. Nikki seconded the Motion proposed. Further discussion ensued after Clarence, Russ and Brian all voted in favor of this monthly meeting, Russ noting that he would not be in town for the winter,

however. Nikki was opposed. She would be in favor of scheduling a one time meeting between now and December, as a work session to discuss the challenges the Board is facing. Further discussion with Clarence, expressing the importance for alignment where we have a cause and purpose and represent those that are paying the bills. Nikki made a Motion that there be a one time meeting scheduled between now and the December scheduled quarterly meeting. Further Board discussion, including comments from the Customers in attendance.

James Bellmore, upon learning that the Board is not getting paid for their roles, and that this was a misconception, as the District Customers believed otherwise, he commends the people on the Board for doing what they are doing.

Nikki - made an Amended Motion to meet once on October 22 to pull collective thoughts, and to discuss GM position and accounting update. Brian seconded; All in favor - Motion passes.

Russ requested that before that meeting, whether there can be a committee consisting of 2 board members, to discuss this job description for the GM. Russ and Clarence will do this. Russ will call Clarence about the 1st of October when he is back in town.

Customer Nunnally was argumentative about being “fenced out” and wanted to be part of determining the job description. Customer Casey Becker pointed out to him that “the Board has to do what is best for the system and that he is not getting ‘fenced out’.”

Continue to post at Junction Gas the notices for the meeting.

Secretary will confirm with the Badrock Fire Chief the availability of the meeting room for the proposed October 22 meeting. Provided it is available, Secretary will send notice via email and post at Junction Gas as well as post on the current website.

IX. Adjournment - 8:25pm

President announce the next General Meeting of the Board is scheduled on October 22, 2024, 7pm, at the Badrock Fire Department, subject to verification of location.