

Petaluma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Board Meeting

Minutes

January 28, 2021 | 4:00 p.m.

Location: Zoom

<http://www.petalumavalleygroundwater.org>

Agenda

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairman David Rabbitt called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and roll call was conducted by Ann DuBay, Administrator. **Chairman David Rabbitt, Director Susan Gorin, Director Carolyn Wasem, and Director Mike Healy** were present. **Director Bruce Abelli-Amen** was absent. Also, in attendance were Jay Jasperse, Plan Manager; Marcus Trotta, Technical staff; Andrea Rodriguez, Outreach staff; Simone Peters (recording meeting minutes); Heidi Bauer, AC Committee Chair; Kent Carothers and Chelsea Thompson, City of Petaluma; Mike Martini and Peter Kiel, Members of Public.

2. Consent Calendar

- a. **Approve Minutes of December 17, 2020**
- b. **Approve Year-to-Date Financial Report**
- c. **Approve Year-to-Date Member Agency Contributions**

No public comment.

The Board unanimously moved to approve the Consent Calendar as presented. The motion passed **4-0-1 (Director Abelli-Amen absent)**.

3. Directors/Subcommittee Report

- a. Rural Community Engagement

Director Wasem – The liaisons met earlier in January with the consultants who shared the preliminary survey results; 15% response return rate. We will meet again in February for another update.

No public comment.

4. Advisory Committee Report

Heidi Bauer, Advisory Committee Chair reported the Advisory Committee met in December and January and discussed Water Quality and Interconnected Surface Water SMC, the Water Budget, and Projects/Management Actions. A written report is included the meeting packet.

No public comment.

5. Action Items

a. **Draft 2021 Policy Platform:** Consider approval of draft policy platform

A resolution for making decisions between meetings was adopted by the Board in December 2020. The proposed policy platform is needed to provide GSA staff with clear guidance allowing time-sensitive decisions to be made and actions to occur. The policy platform proposes that:

1. The GSA supports federal and state legislation, including bond measures, that provide funding for groundwater planning, programs, and projects; and
2. The GSA generally supports efforts by other local agencies and non-profit organizations to improve basin water resources through increased information and data; enhanced education and outreach; and projects and programs to improve water quality, water supply and streamflow.

Board Questions/Comments

Director Healy – I support this but, I am wondering if on the Legislative Platform: *“Petaluma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency generally supports federal and state legislation, including bond measures, that provide funding for groundwater planning, programs and projects”*, we could expand it from federal and state legislation, to include proposed contemplative agency actions such as Regional activities. There may be administrative activities as well as legislature.

The Board unanimously approved the policy platform with the amended language “generally supports Federal, State or Regional activities including bond measures...” as proposed by Director Healy. The motion passed **4-0-1**. (**Director Bruce Abelli-Amen** absent).

6. Information items

a. **Groundwater Sustainability Plan Update:** Receive update on GSP, 2021 Calendar and Projects and Management Actions

The Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) is due January 31, 2022. As part of the GSP, Sustainable Management Criteria (SMC) must be developed for six sustainability indicators as defined by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Jay Jasperse gave an update on the key GSP activities to be completed this year and provided the schedule for 2021. GSP updates will be made around the schedule and four major elements will be taken into consideration to build into the schedule:

- Complete 50-year water budget
- Use model to evaluate SMC as defined by draft SMCs
- Evaluate projects and management actions as needed to ensure sustainability per SMCs
- Develop GSP implementation plan

Marcus Trotta provided an overview of GSP requirements for Projects and Management Actions including example projects and next steps.

Board Questions/Comments

Director Rabbit – In light of Mr. Martini’s comments regarding a farm plan, and knowing we are in a time crunch, can things be referenced through the Plan without restarting a pathway?

Jasperse – We need to learn more about what the farm plan is and work with Mike Martini and his team on where the nexus points are. Our initial thinking is that we recognize this effort initiative as a Management Action in the first edition of the Plan.

Director Wasem – Regarding your groundwater banking study, is that already in progress or is it something you are looking to undertake? Have we reached out to other GSAs that have looked at that?

Trotta – We did a regional study, published in 2013, looking at Sonoma Water’s and partners’ capacity for providing water in winter and storing it underground to meet summertime demands and future droughts. It provided lots of information; generally, the study found there was plenty of water in the Russian River during the wintertime to meet a good-sized groundwater banking.

Director Wasem – The groundwater banking opportunity is something I would like to explore with you along with some legal challenges we will encounter with it. We will probably have to look at Programmatic EIR to achieve those on any kind of a scale. Staff has done a great job; this effort will help us manage groundwater throughout Sonoma County regardless if there is a GSA of SGMA mandate.

Director Rabbit – There are so many opportunities in front of us. How do we get the biggest bang for the buck? Will we be at a point in time where the cost benefit analysis will help us know the things that we're investing in are making a positive impact on groundwater? I know we are constantly learning, adapting, and evolving, but I hope when we get to the point where we're writing checks, that those checks are being written on something that's well established.

b. Rural Community Engagement Update: Receive update on project and timeline

The project is being conducted jointly with the other two Sonoma County GSAs. Major contract tasks include research (survey and focus groups); development and implementation of an engagement campaign; and funding analysis.

Andrea Rodriguez confirmed the Rural Residential survey was sent out to 702 Petaluma Valley well owners on December 2. Approximately 15% surveys were returned, and SCI is satisfied with the response rate. She presented the bi-lingual survey and informational mailer, and snapshots of issues ranking in Petaluma Valley (top priority “restrict new development”). Ironically, groundwater does

not appear to be a big issue of concern. Rodriguez reiterated that the survey is a look and feel survey and includes no detail about fees. Next steps include analyzing the data and focus groups with volunteers who are interested to participate. An engagement campaign will be developed in March/April and kicked off in May/June. SCI is expected to present their findings at the next Board meeting.

Board Questions/Comments

Director Rabbitt – Is 15% return what we expected? Is there a margin of error?

Rodriguez – SCI was hoping for a 20% return rate, I don't know the split ag/residential return by parcel.

Director Rabbitt – And I would imagine they can be a little more selective to try to get a good cross representation when they do the focus groups, if enough people said they would be willing to participate.

Director Healy – Rural residential are less than half the population of our GSA.

Director Wasem – Responders tend to think ag was the major challenge and ag (not rural residential members) should pay for groundwater.

No public comment.

7. Legal Counsel, Plan Manager and Administrator Report

A written report from the Plan Manager and Administrator are in the packet. In addition to the report, Ann DuBay noted that the first Section of the GSP is available for Advisory Committee, Board, and public comments. She will be sending a reminder to the Board with a link and staff would appreciate your feedback.

DuBay also said that there was a question from **Director Wasem** about Programmatic EIRs for Well Permits at the last Board meeting – *“Are there examples of programmatic EIRs for well permitting programs where the county is a lead agency?”* Kronick researched the question and didn't find anything substantive. Since well permitting is more in the realm of the county than the GSA, staff recommend seeking county assistance if there are additional questions.

Board Questions/Comments

Director Wasem – Santa Barbara County has a programmatic EIR for cannabis growers. They say 'here's how many acres this programmatic EIR covers', it certainly expedites processes, and eliminates a lot of headache and paperwork for people along the way.

Director Rabbitt - We could inquire with County Council to try to get some additional information at the appropriate time if the Board is interested.

No public comment.

8. Public comment on matters not listed on the agenda but within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board *(this topic was discussed between Items 2 and 3 at the meeting)*.

Mike Martini, representing 20 growers and wine producers in partnership with Sonoma County Farm Bureau and the Sonoma Wine Grape Commission, wished everyone a happy new year and said he hoped 2021 would be a better year. Together we work with over 2000 local farmers, ranchers, and grape growers. We are working together to create a farm plan that incorporates best practices in water management and conservation. We are asking for time on future GSA meeting agendas to present progress on the farm plan which upon completion and approval by the Board, can be incorporated into each subbasin's GSP. This will help us collectively meet compliance with sustainable groundwater management. Thank you for your service and your time.

Thank you to Ann DuBay and Sonoma Water staff; we have already set a meeting for February 18 to start introducing the draft elements, so that we are prepared to get them in front of you. I look forward to working with you and accomplishing this mutual goal.

Director Rabbitt – Thank you very much, I am glad staff has already set a date. We will make sure to schedule time at a future Board meeting to bring the topic back here.

Director Wasem – I am excited about it; Jackson Family Wines has been working on a lot of these things for a long time, particularly climate issues. We have a good grip on what needs to be done on farm to manage sustainable groundwater. I am excited that the programs we are promoting will be adopted region wide.

No public comment.

9. Adjournment

Director Rabbitt said the next Board meeting would be on February 25 and adjourned the meeting at 5:12 p.m.