



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING (WORKSHOP) MINUTES

Tuesday, October 07, 2025 at 9:00 AM

66575 Second St, Desert Hot Springs, CA AND/OR Via Teleconference

## CALL TO ORDER

President Sewell called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM

## ROLL CALL

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** President Ivan Sewell, Director Russ Martin, Director Amber Duff  
Director Ted Mayrhofen, Vice President Robert Griffith\* \*arrived at 9:56 a.m.

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:** Brian Macy, Marion Champion, Arturo Ceja, Danny Friend, Will Whitten,  
Amanda Lucas, Dori Petee

## PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Director Martin

## PUBLIC INPUT

*No public input*

## ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

### UNCLAIMED PROPERTY

Director of Finance, Arturo Ceja, presented on the district's process for handling unclaimed property, specifically outstanding checks, some of which have remained uncashed for up to ten years. The accounting department is working to clean up these items, following recent changes in California state policy regarding unclaimed property. The district does not yet have a formal policy but plans to develop one for board review. The process involves identifying unclaimed property, attempting to contact owners, and publishing notices in newspapers and on the district website. A claim process will be established online for customers or vendors to recover funds. After three years, if checks remain unclaimed, the district may move the funds to the general fund or as recommended, to the "help to others" program to assist community members affected by rate increases. The board retains discretion over the allocation of funds. The presentation clarified that checks expire after 90 days; however, best practice would be to wait 6–12 months before transferring funds, allowing recipients ample time to claim them. The district maintains updated contact information and makes reasonable efforts to reach owners, while recognizing its limitations. Most outstanding checks are for small amounts, and the law allows for the automatic transfer of amounts under \$15; however, the district prefers to notify all affected parties. The board discussed the importance of clear communication regarding the claim process and the need for internal system improvements to automate flagging of expired checks. The discussion concluded with consensus on the proposed steps and a commitment to transparency and community benefit in handling unclaimed property.

**HELP 2 OTHERS**

Assistant General Manager Marion Champion provided an update on the "Help to Others" bill payment assistance program, which is designed to support customers in need. The program offers a one-time pledge, with income eligibility set at 400% of the federal poverty guidelines (e.g., \$62,650 for a single-person household). The qualification process is straightforward, and the United Way administers the program, handling all income verification to protect customer privacy. The board discussed various pledge amounts, initially considering \$250 and \$200, but currently settling on \$150. However, due to excess funding primarily from cell tower revenues and potential unclaimed property monies, the program could support higher pledge amounts, possibly up to \$175 or \$200. The annual budget for the program is \$25,000, but available funds may exceed \$80,000, enabling assistance for over a thousand families each year. The board also considered the impact of administrative fees and the need to balance community and employee benefit programs, emphasizing flexibility and the potential to adjust pledge amounts as needed. Comparisons were made with similar programs in other districts, noting differences in credit amounts and administrative approaches. The board requested further analysis, including charts comparing pledge amounts and administrative fees, as well as a review of residual funds and surplus from unclaimed lawsuit settlements. The discussion concluded with agreement to evaluate both \$175 and \$200 pledge scenarios for future consideration.

**PROP 218 UPDATE**

Assistant General Manager Marion Champion presented this update. Since the last board meeting, staff has actively engaged with various community groups to provide updates on Prop 218 and related district initiatives. Presentations were made to the Desert Hot Springs City Council, local community members, the Senior Center, Mission Lakes Country Club residents, Rotary members, and the Skyborne HOA, with each group showing strong interest and support. Notably, the Senior Center expressed interest in hosting an in-person signup clinic for the Help to Others program in partnership with United Way. Additional outreach included a breakfast update at Vista Montana and participation in the "History Speaks" event at the historic rock house. Upcoming events include a presentation to the Women's Club and coordination with Jewish Family Services at the senior center. The district is also partnering with the City of Desert Hot Springs for a community resource fair on October 27th, featuring multiple organizations, refreshments, entertainment, and activities for families. Staff efforts in organizing these voluntary public meetings have been widely praised for fostering transparency, building trust, and encouraging positive community involvement. Board members expressed gratitude for the staff's dedication and highlighted the community's appreciation for the district's award-winning water and commitment to maintaining high service standards.

**COMMENTS****GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS**

General Manager Brian Macy reminded the Board that it is Water Professionals Week and noted how the staff is being provided with donuts and bagels. He also thanked all of the water districts in the Coachella Valley for all they do.

**DIRECTOR COMMENTS AND REQUESTS FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

1. General Comments
2. Requests for Future Agenda Items
3. Requests for Future Meetings - *State of the County, December 11, 2025 @ 5:00 p.m.*

Director Mayrhofen mentioned the idea of pursuing LEED Green certification for a new critical service center, acknowledging that while it may initially cost more, it would result in long-term savings by adhering to energy and environmental standards. He emphasizes that the additional costs could be offset by grant funding and highlights the opportunity to be the first in the Coachella Valley to achieve a high-level (possibly bronze) certification. He encouraged the group not to be deterred by the extra effort required, even though the project is already underway with architects, and expressed a desire to lead in sustainability and innovation in the region.

Director Duff asked if the architect could give us options to replace the current materials with more LEED green materials. She also mentioned the Coachella Valley Dust Summit and would like to see it on the next agenda for approval for board compensation.

Director Martin announced he is the guest speaker at the Palm Springs Realtors Association breakfast tomorrow. The event will take place at the Mizelle Senior Center at 9:00 am.

President Sewell noted his attendance at the CVWD Board Meeting, where they spoke about the divestiture of the ID-8 area. He said the City Manager's comments were well stated. He wanted to clarify to the public that MSWD did not initiate this divestiture.

**CLOSED SESSION****CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL REGARDING POTENTIAL INITIATION OF LITIGATION**

pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9(d)(4) Two potential cases.

**REPORT ON ACTION TAKEN DURING CLOSED SESSION**

The Board met in closed session on the items listed above; no reportable action was taken.

**ADJOURN**

With no further action, President Sewell adjourned the meeting at 10:36 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dori Petee  
Executive Assistant