

**South San Joaquin Groundwater Sustainability Agency
Regular Meeting
Manteca, California
January 17, 2024**

The Governing Board of the South San Joaquin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SSJGSA) met in regular session in person at the South San Joaquin Irrigation District (SSJID) Board Room at 9:00 a.m., with public access provided via the online Zoom meeting platform. Chairman de Graaf called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m., and led the flag salute.

Upon roll-call the following members were noted present:

PRESENT: Daniel de Graaf, City of Ripon
Robert Holmes, South San Joaquin Irrigation District
Dominique Romo, City of Escalon

ABSENT: David Roos, South San Joaquin Irrigation District
Mike Weststeyn, South San Joaquin Irrigation District

Also present were SSJID General Manager Peter Rietkerk, SSJID Water Resources Coordinator and SSJGSA Secretary Brandon Nakagawa, Special SSJGSA Counsel Valerie Kincaid, and SSJID Clerk of the Board Danielle Barney.

Public Comment – None

ACTION CALENDAR

Item #1 – Approval of the Meeting Minutes of November 15, 2023

MOTION: A motion was made by Director Holmes and seconded by Director Romo to approve the minutes as submitted.

The motion passed 3 to 0 by the following vote:

AYES: de GRAAF HOLMES ROMO
NOES: NONE
ABSTAIN: NONE
ABSENT: ROOS WESTSTEYN

Item #2 – Quarterly Presentation of Financial Statements Through December 2023

Ms. Sonya Williams, SSJID Financial and Administration Manager and SSJGSA Treasurer, addressed the Board and gave a quarterly oral presentation of the South San Joaquin Groundwater Sustainability Agency Financial Statements through December 31, 2023. She provided detailed descriptions of the statement of changes in net position, statements of members' capital, expense reimbursements to the South San Joaquin Irrigation District, and the 2023 budget which showed a remaining balance of \$48,437.00.

Ms. Williams stated that she had followed up on Board discussion at the November 15, 2023 board meeting regarding the high monthly charge for banking fees. It was discovered that, upon inquiry, the financial

institution had recently changed representatives for the SSJGSA and a meeting was scheduled for the week of January 22, to discuss lower fees.

Item #3 – Discussion and Adoption of the Proposed 2024 Annual Budget

Mr. Brandon Nakagawa, SSJGSA Secretary and SSJID Water Resources Coordinator, addressed the Board and stated that the proposed SSJGSA 2024 budget was presented at the November 15, 2023 board meeting with directive for Directors to take the preliminary budget back to their respective agencies for review. He added that there were no suggested changes and/or revisions received, but noted a significant increase in 2024 Member Dues to the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority (ESJGWA).

Mr. Nakagawa explained that the cost for the ESJGWA’s Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Update, as required by the Sustainable Groundwater Sustainability Act (SGMA), had ballooned to over \$1.13 million due to increasingly stringent California Department of Water Resources (DWR) standards which triggered a sizeable ESJGWA budget amendment. He further explained that the ESJGWA Board of Directors approved the budget amendment and the increase in Member Dues. The SSJGSA share of member dues increased to \$45,303.00, in addition to the \$24,113.00 already paid by the SSJGSA in 2023. Mr. Nakagawa provided a brief recap of additional anticipated 2024 expenses for staff time, general materials, legal, technical consultants, conferences and travel, and SSJGSA related events.

Director Weststeyn joined the meeting at 9:10 a.m.

Director Holmes stated that there had been extensive discussions at the ESJGWA level regarding the increase in membership dues, and that Mr. Nakagawa had been diligent in negotiations with Woodard and Curran (W&C) on a revised scope of work and consultation fee for the GSP update. He added that the ESJGWA will form an Ad Hoc Committee to oversee the GSP Update process.

SSJGSA Board discussed if membership dues will decrease following the GSP Update; the probable high costs for SGMA required sustainability; and how ESJGWA member dues may exceed some GSA revenues.

MOTION: A motion was made by Director Holmes and seconded by Director Romo to adopt the SSJGSA 2024 Annual Budget.

The motion passed 4 to 0 by the following vote:

AYES:	de GRAAF HOLMES ROMO WESTSTEYN
NOES:	NONE
ABSTAIN:	NONE
ABSENT:	ROOS

Item #4 – Discussion on Recent Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority Meetings

Mr. Nakagawa displayed the PowerPoint presentation from the ESJGWA Board meeting on January 10, which included items related to the 2025 GSP Update and clarified the factors driving the GSP cost increase, and the revisions negotiated to bring W&C costs down. The slide presentation also depicted updates on the ESJGWA Steering Committee meetings; action items related to the GSP Update including an increase of revenues and expenditures by \$790,120.00, and a revised Consultant Services Agreement with W&C for a not-to-exceed cost of \$1,130,120.00 down from \$1.5 million; the proposed W&C detailed budget overview for tasks related to the GSP Update; methods to cut costs and find efficiencies; ways to leverage existing resources; a cost

comparison with other basins; the 2025 GSP Update Master Schedule; the ESJGWA proposed budget amendment; and GSA membership breakdown.

SSJGSA Board discussion regarding the W&C’s proposal included a detailed cost breakdown of W&C’s monthly invoices; consideration to bill on a Time & Materials (T&M) basis; and two (2) high-cost line items namely Compliance Actions at \$401,120.00 and GSP Amendment at \$426,580.00. Also discussed was the anticipated accelerated schedule to finalize a draft GSP Update by September 2024. Mr. Nakagawa stated that W&C have provided him with a detailed cost breakdown which he will forward to the Board.

Additional discussion included SGMA versus drought related issues, DWR’s required modifications to the ESJGWA GSP, DWR recommendations to the GSP including a Domestic Well Mitigation Program, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) pushing for domestic wells be converted to drinking wells. Mr. Nakagawa stated that, recently, the San Joaquin County Civil Grand Jury had contacted some GSAs requesting data of any work done to drinking wells, which he will discuss further in Closed Session.

Mr. Nakagawa noted Assembly Bill (AB) 828 – “Sustainable Groundwater Manager: Managed Wetlands” which would prohibit GSAs authority to regulate groundwater extractions serving Disadvantaged Communities (DACs). He stated that SSJID and Special SSJGSA Counsel Valerie Kincaid have been drafting a letter opposing the bill. Ms. Kincaid expressed her frustration that DWR could, potentially, amend a finalized GSP and restrict a GSA’s ability to regulate users.

Mr. Nakagawa reported that the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA), California Chamber of Commerce, California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF), California State Association of Counties (CSAC), Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), and Western Growers Association penned a joint letter to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) providing comments on the Tulare Lake Subbasin Probationary Hearing. A copy of the letter will be circulated to the Board for viewing.

COMMUNICATIONS

Item #5 – Various Reports to the Governing Board:

- a) **Staff and Consultant Updates**
None
- b) **Technical Advisory Committee**
None
- c) **Member Reports**
None
- d) **Correspondence**
None

The Board convened to Closed Session at 10:00 a.m.

CLOSED SESSION

Item #6 – Closed Session

The Board returned to Open Session at 10:39 a.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF REPORTABLE ACTION TAKEN IN CLOSED SESSION

Disclosure of reportable actions taken in Closed Session, pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.1:
There were no reportable actions taken in Closed Session.

ADJOURNMENT

Item #6 – Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

ATTEST:

Danielle Barney, Clerk of the Board