



**APPROVED** BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

**January 13, 2021**

The Board of Directors for the Merced Irrigation-Urban Groundwater Sustainability Agency (MIUGSA) met virtually on the above date pursuant to notice at 9:00 A.M., consistent with temporary authorization to deviate from Brown Act meeting guidelines issued through Executive Order by California Governor Gavin Newsom.

**CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

At 9:00 A.M., Chair Hicham Eltal welcomed those present and called the meeting to order. MIUGSA Board Coordinator, Jennifer McMaster made an announcement regarding changes that have been made to the Board meeting procedures in order to make good faith efforts to comply with the Governor’s Executive Orders and allow the public the opportunity to observe, participate and comment in the Board’s meeting.

Ms. McMaster stated that staff had not received any emails from members of the public requesting a link to the video portion of the meeting or commenting on any agenda item. Ms. McMaster also summarized the procedure members of the public should follow in order to submitting comments both before, and during the meeting.

**ROLL CALL**

Roll call showed the following MIUGSA Representatives present:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Hicham Eltal (Chair)	Merced Irrigation District
Ken Elwin (Vice Chair)	City of Merced
Jose Antonio Ramirez	City of Livingston
Cynthia Benavidez	Le Grand Community Services District (CSD)
Daniel Chavez	Planada Community Services District (CSD)
Jennifer McMaster	Board Coordinator
Phillip McMurray	

The following MIUGSA Representatives had an excused absence:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Carlos Valencia	Winton Water and Sanitary District (CSD)
Justin Vinson	City of Atwater

*(\*\*Note – Board member Chavez was present during the Board’s meeting, however during the meeting he experienced technical difficulties with his audio device and was unable to signify a vote during consideration of the Board’s action items. For purposes of these minutes only, Board member Chavez is noted to have abstained from the vote.)*

**CORRECTIONS OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA**

None.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Eltal discussed the agreement with Woodard and Curran that includes the preparation of a Proposition 68 Implementation – Round 1 Grant funding application on behalf of the 3 Merced County Subbasin GSA’s. He noted that preparation of the grant application will result in an approximate \$12,000 budget shortfall. He discussed the remaining contingency fund with Woodard and Curran from the development of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. Chair Eltal asked for direction from the Board regarding the use of a portion of the remaining contingency funds to help fund the cost of the grant application.

The Board discussed and provided feedback. Based on that feedback, funding will be pulled from the contingency fund to help fund the cost of the Proposition 68 Implementation – Round 1 Grant Application.

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

1. Meeting Minutes: December 9, 2020

On motion by Director Benavidez, seconded by Director Elwin; the Board unanimously approved the motion to accept the Consent Calendar, as presented. A roll call vote was taken and the votes were as follows:

Ayes:	Eltal, Elwin, Benavidez, Ramirez
Noes:	None
Abstain:	Chavez
Absent:	Valencia, Vinson

**REPORTS**

Chair Eltal discussed current weather conditions and the potential for higher groundwater pumping this upcoming year, especially absent set basin-wide transitional objectives in the GSP. He discussed thresholds and undesirable conditions. He noted that thresholds have not been set for certain areas outside of the Merced Subbasin GSA and Turner Island GSA-1, which may have an impact on domestic wells within the Underrepresented Communities. Chair Eltal recommended discussion at the upcoming Coordinating Committee meeting.

Matthew Beaman, Merced Irrigation District, Water Resources Regulatory Engineer, provided an overview and update regarding a domestic well inventory project, administered by the

Merced Integrated Regional Water Management Authority, and funded by a Disadvantaged Community Involvement Grant issued by the California Department of Water Resources. Mr. Beaman noted that the project involves a study to identify locations of domestic wells throughout the Merced IRWM region, a majority of which lies within the Merced Groundwater Subbasin. He noted that a draft technical memorandum summarizing the findings was completed in December 2020 and is currently under review. Mr. Beaman responded to questions from Board members and discussed the next steps, including finalization of the study, and the development of a stakeholder outreach program.

Mr. Eltal noted that since the grant is for the entire basin, staff may be able to obtain information related to domestic wells within the Merced Subbasin GSA to determine conditions of those wells. Mr. Eltal discussed previous droughts, and noted that measures taken by well owners in order to continue to receive water during those times will be important to the water tracking program as it will give an idea of what may occur in the event of a rapid drop in groundwater levels. Chair Eltal further expressed the importance of identifying domestic wells outside of the MIUGSA.

### **ACTIONS/DISCUSSION**

Mr. Beaman provided a presentation and led a discussion regarding the development of a stakeholder advisory committee to provide community input during the implementation phase of the Merced Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP). Mr. Beaman provided background information and discussed the Coordination Committee's recommendation at its meeting in December 2020 to develop/re-establish the committee. Mr. Beaman noted that based on that recommendation, the three GSA's, with the help of Woodard and Curran, have coordinated to revise the stakeholder application and will begin soliciting members through a public application process to sit on the committee for implementation of the GSP.

Mr. Beaman provided an overview of the revised application and qualifications to participate on the Stakeholder Advisory Committee during implementation of the GSP. He noted that the revised application is available at [www.MercedSGMA.org](http://www.MercedSGMA.org), and all applications are due by February 1, 2021. Mr. Beaman responded to questions and discussed next steps following the application submission deadline. He indicated that the Coordination Committee is anticipated to discuss the applications received at its upcoming meeting, currently scheduled for February 22, 2021. The recommendations from that meeting will be provided to the governing board for each of the three GSA's for final review and determination.

The Board engaged in a lengthy conversation regarding folks that may be interested in sitting on the Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

Mr. Beaman provided a presentation and review of each MIUGSA member agencies groundwater production from 1999 through 2019. Mr. Beaman discussed trends in reduction to groundwater usage amongst the member agencies. He provided a review and comparison of 10 year long-term pre-SGMA averages and 5 year short-term post-SGMA averages, and discussed the percentage of reduction for each agency. He noted that due to conjunctive use practices, MID's agency pumping numbers do not follow the same trend as the urban agencies. For example, MID groundwater wells remain active but on standby in years of adequate surface water supply (e.g. 2016-2020). Conversely they may be used more aggressively in dry years.

Chair Eltal provided an overview of the conversation between the Merced SGMA Ad-Hoc Committee during its Merced Framework meeting in October 2020. He noted that the purpose of the groundwater production exercise is to allow each agency to see its production numbers for discussion and suggestions moving forward. He noted that similar information is likely to be presented to the other GSA's in the basin to aid in determining a consumptive groundwater use baseline to measure progress toward reduction.

Chair Eltal noted that MID's numbers provided in the presentation are only the agency numbers and do not include private wells.

The Board discussed actions taken by each member agency to reduce groundwater pumping.

Mr. Beaman discussed actions to reduce pumping as provided by the City of Atwater. He noted that recent actions include reduced watering days, implementation of a water conservation ordinance prohibiting certain water waste, decreased hydrant flow testing, and the installation of over 2,000 meters since 2015.

Director Ramirez discussed water conservation efforts made to reduce groundwater pumping throughout the City of Livingston. He discussed in particular, the modernization of certain facilities and the installation of meters. He also discussed IRWM funding, which is anticipated to allow the City of Livingston to rely more heavily on surface water versus groundwater for parks.

Director Ramirez and the Board engaged in discussion regarding metering and the potential for separating certain folks from the calculation to allow a better reflection of the reductions made to groundwater pumping by the City of Livingston. They discussed, in particular, separating out Foster Farms from the calculation and creating a separate calculation for monitoring reductions.

Director Elwin provided an overview of recent actions by the City of Merced to reduce groundwater pumping. Director Elwin noted that the City of Merced has done a tremendous amount of work toward reduction. He said that the City has achieved 100% metering, retained a water conservation specialist, and adopted ordinances that prohibit waste and established specific watering days. He also discussed the City's public education and outreach efforts.

Mr. Elwin and the Board engaged in a lengthy discussion regarding the potential for a group approach for monitoring reductions to groundwater pumping in urban communities.

Director Benevidez discussed improvements toward reduced groundwater pumping. She mentioned that the Le Grand CSD provides a large amount of public education and outreach materials to its customers. She indicated that those efforts have helped folks to understand water waste, and in return the CSD has realized a significant amount of reduction to pumping. She indicated that the CSD is currently at 90 % efficiency and she hopes to improve on this in the future.

Mr. Beaman provided an overview of actions to reduce groundwater pumping, as provided by Planada CSD. Mr. Beaman noted recent actions include the installation of additional meters, replacement of aging/leaking infrastructure, enforcement of water restrictions, and public education and outreach efforts.

Mr. Beaman provided an overview of actions to reduce groundwater pumping, as provided by Winton Water and Sanitary District. Mr. Beaman noted recent actions include metering all services, reducing watering days, and continuing public education and outreach efforts.

The Board engaged in a detailed discussion regarding the reductions in groundwater pumping made by agricultural users and the reductions made by urban users. They discussed the baselines to be established and the need for a stakeholder committee to provide input moving forward.

**CLOSED SESSION**

None.

**ADJOURN**

On motion by Director Elwin, seconded by Director Benavidez; the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at approximately 10:15 A.M.