



## District Manager Report March and April 2020

### For the Board of Supervisors April 25<sup>th</sup> 2020 Regular Meeting

#### April meeting action items:

- ❖ Approval of the February 15<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting Minutes
- ❖ Review of the Agreed Upon Procedures (AUP) audit for fiscal year 2019 (a Tier 6 audit). The report submitted in December was approved and released by the State Auditor's Office (OSA). Johnny Mangu, Assurance Accounting, will present the report to the Board as required by the OSA. The Board may take some action related to the report. The Treasurer and I both attended the exit meeting for the AUP and have determined a couple of procedures and policies that need to be established regarding findings; I will be able to update briefly on these at the meeting.
- ❖ Review, approval and signing of the Memorandum of Agreement with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- ❖ Proposed letter from the Land Use Plan Committee to be sent to Pattern Energy regarding the Western Spirit Transmission Line.
- ❖ Becoming a signatory with the Rio Grande Watershed Group.
- ❖ February and March 2020 expenditures approval. These are provided through the Wells Fargo general fund bank reconciliations for February and March which show all disbursements or payments that were paid as well as revenues coming into the District during those months.
- ❖ Budget and Accounting item 2: additional capital outlay of \$75K secured for phase 2 of the building program at Whitfield; that is a total of \$175K of the \$460K needed to complete construction.
- ❖ Budget and accounting item 3: Whitfield equipment needs; a tractor, stairwell for 2<sup>nd</sup> floor storage in maintenance building and replacement of the mower for efficient management at Whitfield main and the other units.
- ❖ Budget and accounting item 4 request for reimburse of some or all of Kirsten Coeuvas' travel to the NACD Annual Conference in Las Vegas Nevada as a newly recognized Soil Health Champion from Tome New Mexico. She travelled alone to Las Vegas but she and her husband Nathan or the soil health champions.
- ❖ The Whitfield Complex Comprehensive Management Plan was sent for review last Saturday by Andrew Hautzinger to the Board and it is being resent today with Board packets for Board

**approval at the April meeting. The Plan includes the Whitfield main, Rio Abajo and Stacy Units in the plan.**

- ❖ **Determine what is essential business for the May meeting which may be conducted remotely as well currently scheduled for Saturday May 16<sup>th</sup> at 9 am.**

#### **Activities and Updates March and April 2020:**

- The Whitfield Committee met April 10th to review the Whitfield Manager's proposed final draft of the Whitfield Complex Comprehensive Management Plan. This is on the agenda for April 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Isleta Reach Stewardship Association meetings: March 5<sup>th</sup> at Whitfield and April 7<sup>th</sup> IRSA via zoom:
  - The March 5<sup>th</sup> meeting at Whitfield was well attended. Andrew Hautzinger, Sue Small, and Gail Goodman of the District did attend along with Whitfield staff. The meeting agenda was extensive and significant land managers spoke regarding their interests in conservation of the Isleta Reach area.
  - The meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup> was specifically regarding education and outreach about the Isleta Reach area. Much of the meeting was spent reviewing a draft public questionnaire about the Rio Grande in the Isleta reach area. All participants also provided who their contacts and channels were for getting the questionnaire out to as many people living in the area as possible.
- March 16<sup>th</sup> site visit with Gabriella Coughlin and Claire (last name?) at Ron Moya's farm in Tome for field soil assessment and soil collection as part of the compost applications study. Ron Moya planned to apply the compost as a slurry on seeds for planting of bell pepper crop.
- March 31<sup>st</sup> met with Caitee Steele via zoom, SW Climate Hub Center. The announcement about her free training for Districts is in the NMDA report for April. We were able to share my desktop so that she could determine what data we do have in conjunction with the mapping for the Land Use Plan which is intended to be updated regularly. This helped her in planning the syllabus for training. Given the current COVID-19 restrictions she is preparing for remote classes with Districts with no more than 5 attendees per class – she stated she can be conducting more than one class at a time. Likely we would meet at least once or 2 x a week – remotely – for GIS training. Ciudad and East Rio Arriba SWCDs are also interested in the training at this time so we were thinking only 2 from VSWCD per class. I will share the syllabus with any Board member if interested in the training or just for information and feedback. I am very much looking forward to this and the District's ability to communicate and plan with geographic information. The instructor Caitee Steele is contracted through NM State University. She is working on obtaining student licenses of ArcGis for other SWCD attendees and possibly reduced cost licenses for Districts in general.

- COVID-19 restrictions:
  - March 16<sup>th</sup>, the Chair met with staff and in line with State COVID-19 emergency orders, the VSWCD office, Whitfield visitor center and Whitfield grounds were closed to the public. All events from that day on were being cancelled or postponed until further notice; updating our outreach channels and partners and participants in programs and planning has been time consuming; Allison and Lindsey have been making swift transitions for their educational outreach and keeping programming alive even if not in person.
  - At this point both Allison and Lindsey started to work from home, and Victor Chavez was authorized for administrative leave until further notice. Ted requested to work from home starting March 19<sup>th</sup>. With the order from the State Secretary of Health on March 23<sup>rd</sup> we further limited scheduling of essential business at the office by alternating morning and afternoons for Johnny and I in carrying out necessary duties at Whitfield. Starting April 20<sup>th</sup> after a remote staff meeting on Thursday April 16<sup>th</sup>, The Whitfield staff and I felt that Victor could work solo on conservation area work starting back to the grounds on a half time basis.
  - Administrative leave is the standing policy the District has for exceptional circumstances for leave for staff unrelated to their personal status. Any leave related to the COVID-19 restrictions is possibly reimbursable to the District if we elected to pursue that up to 2 weeks; the process for doing that is not in place yet. It is recognized as sick leave and includes stay at home orders without quarantine for illness of the employee or their immediate family. Our payroll service has been providing updates on the federal and state labor support acts which is helpful.
  - The transition to remote work for staff has been an unexpected and significant turn since the Board last met in February. In initially reviewing options for staying connected, setting up a Microsoft Teams account for staff seemed our best option; each staff member is currently a licensed user to give them access to software for documents creation, time management, collaboration, communication and meetings; I believe even when restrictions are lifted we should consider continuing with Teams to move away from email as the default platform for team, program and project management. Our account allows us to interact with the Board through teams as well. This may change our office network and setup and is under review. I will share a proposal with the personnel committee regarding these possible changes and if there are cost savings – a proposal as part of budget planning for the upcoming year.
  - The field staff has been doing some remote work including inventory updates for Victor, and Johnny has been providing significant technical support in transitioning our workplace – ‘other duties as assigned’. I cannot thank Johnny enough for his skills in this capacity. Initially we were onboarding and troubleshooting for use of Zoom for planning for the April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting after deciding to postpone the March Board meeting. However after questions arose about Zoom security for the District as well as public attendees at a Board meeting (only one week ago) we have decided to move forward for remote Board meetings with Cisco-Webex which has end to end encryption and security measures for secure public

meetings. Since determining to change over to the webex platform the learning curve for onboarding is also more rigorous. I am still in need of more learning of the basic system and all that is needed for management of a Board meeting on the technical side of things. Johnny is an 'alternate host' for our Board meetings management.

- **On the other side of meeting management;** how to effectively conduct a Board meeting remotely, the simple protocol Jeff Witte captioned from the Attorney General's temporary remote public meetings guidance is quoted following for your reference.

In part the NMAG states (underline added for emphasis by NMDA):

“The Office of the Attorney General’s Open Government Division (OGD) advises all public entities subject to the OMA to first and foremost follow the guidance of the Department of Health and other health officials to ensure the health and safety of both

members of the entity and the public. Accordingly, the most prudent thing to do to ensure compliance with OMA would be to postpone/cancel a public meeting. If, however, a board or commission has a time-sensitive matter to attend to, it may proceed with a virtual meeting, provided its notice of meeting contains detailed information (password, phone number, etc.) about how members of the public may attend and listen via telephone, live streaming or other similar technologies.

More specifically, if a public body decides to proceed with a virtual meeting, it should:

- At the start of the meeting, the chair should announce the names of those members of the public body participating remotely.
- All members of the public body participating remotely must identify themselves whenever they speak and must be clearly audible to the other members of the public body and to the public.
- Members of the public should be afforded remote access, via live stream or other similar technology, if possible, or call-in number for listening by phone.
- Chair should suspend discussion if the audio or video is interrupted.
- All votes of the public body must be by roll call vote.”

**Incoming correspondence:**

- Requests for reimbursement for financial assistance program award items completion from FY 2020 awardees Ray Feldbusch, Amelia Vogel, and Lee & Angela Godfrey.
- Requests for soil testing.

**Outgoing correspondence:**

**Soils testing results.**

**Please see Allison and Lindsey's updates for educational outreach.**

**Wishing for everyone to stay well, stay strong 😊**

***Respectfully submitted,***

***Madeline Miller, District Manager, Valencia SWCD***