

Sonoma Valley Groundwater Sustainability Agency

Board Meeting

Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: January 27, 2020

Time: 4:00 p.m.

Location: Valley of the Moon Water District, Board Room
19039 Bay Street, Sonoma, CA 95476

www.sonomavalleygroundwater.org

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairwoman Susan Gorin called the meeting to order. **Chairwoman Gorin, Vice-Chairman Mike Sangiacomo** and **Directors Ron Prushko, Bruce Abelli-Amen** and **David Rabbitt** were present.

2. Public comment on matters not listed on the agenda but within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board

None

3. Consent Calendar

- a. **Approve minutes of November 18, 2019**
- b. **Approve Year-to-Date Financial Report**
- c. **Approve Year-to-Date Member Agency Contributions**

No comments or questions from the public or Board. **Director Sangiacomo** moved to approve the consent calendar as presented, **Director Prushko** seconded. Motion passes unanimously 5-0-0.

4. Directors/Subcommittee Report

None.

5. Advisory Committee Report

Advisory Committee Chairman Fred Allebach submitted an update included in the Board packet. He reported to the Board that the Advisory Committee is working well with staff, and he is hopeful the committee will arrive at consensus on issues around

developing the Sustainable Management Criteria. He shared that staff has provided a lot of information to the Advisory Committee.

Chairwoman Gorin: Thank you Mr. Allebach for chairing the Advisory Committee and tackling these hard issues.

6. Information Items:

- a. **Groundwater Sustainability Plan:** Overview and discussion of developing Sustainable Management Criteria, including schedule and possible all-basin work groups.

Jay Jasperse, Plan Manager, presented the work plan for the seven sections of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. Sections 1 and 2 are in draft for internal review, and Basin Setting Section 3 is about halfway done, with the Water Budget being actively worked on. Section 3 goes “hand in glove” with Section 4, Sustainable Management Criteria (SMC). The Management Area will also be developed as part of the SMC discussions.

Staff is looking at how other basins developed Sustainable Management Criteria. Some basins have addressed one Sustainability Indicator at a time while basins group Sustainability Indicators. Staff will be reviewing the GSPs submitted by the critically over-drafted basins, which are due on January 31. Sonoma Valley is starting with the Lowering of Groundwater Levels. Setting the criteria involves stakeholder engagement and data. Each of the six indicators need to identify what is unacceptable, what are desired conditions and how these can be described quantitatively.

The Advisory Committee is working on “guiding” questions on creating minimum thresholds. The first question addresses what is unacceptable; the second question addresses desired conditions; the third question gets to geographic scale; and the fourth question gets to unique characteristics in basin (for example, depleted groundwater areas that need special attention).

Question: It seems like question 1 is driven by the state law that you can't drop below a certain level and that question 2 is aspirational. Is there any mechanism in the latter that dictates why not just avoid undesirable results not enforced by law?

Response: Both are locally derived, we have local discretion as long as you justify sound practice and principles. In question 1 versus question 2, the concept is not a static single level but how we pump and operate

through climate change and a range of operations. This establishes a bottom. Question 2 is aspirational – where we would like to get to.

Question: What does it take to get to that objective? Is there a buffer?

Response: Yes, to help us get to where we want to go, we get to define the range.

Question: What is the given area to monitor? Is it around each well or around the entire basin?

Response: Both are part of all of this. We will not use every single well to measure on every indicator. We will pick out key monitoring wells in the basin to use for each Sustainable Management Criteria (although some wells may be used for more than one SMC). Maybe you exceed the levels in one well, but depending on how you set the threshold, you could still be OK if you don't exceed in the other wells. Marcus Trotta and the team are going through the monitoring wells and identifying wells that meet the criteria established by the Department of Water Resources.

Question: We know we have contaminated water, is that something we will evaluate in the Plan?

Response: Yes, when we look at water quality and seawater intrusion SMCs we will decide what we monitor and possibly correlate water quality/seawater intrusion to groundwater levels.

Jay Jasperse – referring to the slide “What are Significant and Unreasonable Effects DWR has defined for the GSP?” You want to describe them in a qualitative form that include geographic references so you can develop a monitor network to look at it. There needs to be a correlation with groundwater pumping, and it must show cause and effect.

Question: Are the beneficial uses straight from the basin?

Response: The beneficial uses identified in SGMA is where we will start, and we can look at other beneficial uses.

Jasperse then discussed the initial Advisory Committee feedback on what is significant and unreasonable and on measurable objectives.

Question: What does it mean to “drop below historical levels”? What does history allow for?

Response: We are flushing it out. There are ways to interpret that. For example, do you want to set the level to what it is now, or to where it

was on a different date? If you set the level to today and it continues to decline you would be in violation straight out of the gate.

Response: You can always adjust it in five years.

Question: Why would you set a threshold lower if you have five years to get there?

Response: To show the baseline for projects.

Question: Was there a baseline set by SGMA?

Response: Yes, but you can choose a higher bar. The measurable objective is the ideal destination.

Jasperse continued with the next steps on Lowering of Groundwater Levels. This is where we are trying to turn qualitative into quantitative statements. Marcus Trotta and his team are looking at all the data. We could have interim monitoring wells but we will look at the complete network that meets all of the requirements right out of the plan. The Advisory Committee will continue their discussion and bring recommendations forward in March. They will continue to move through the indicator at each Advisory Committee meeting.

Question: I thought the draft examples of significant and unreasonable effects from other basins were useful, but are they approved?

Response: No, but the plans are due this month for the critically over-drafted basins.

Question: Have they had feedback from DWR?

Response: No formal feedback, but DWR staff is looking at it in critically over-drafted basins. We have asked DWR staff to attend more meetings to make sure we are on track. In February, DWR will hold a workshop to talk about the initial plans.

Ann DuBay – SGMA requires outreach – stakeholder feedback. One of the reasons the Advisory Committee was created is to get feedback. The Advisory Committee members are helping us identify stakeholder groups in the basin. Staff is developing terminology and a one-page handout on the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. We anticipate holding a community workshop in the spring. The intent is to talk about draft basin conditions and tabletop discussions about what the AC is considering. We want to know what the community thinks would be significant and unreasonable and what you would like to see. And something on cost, getting the initial thoughts on topics and issues.

Another workshop will be held in the fall where all the draft SMCs will be discussed. Andrea Rodriguez is developing an online social media survey, and we continue providing information through the Monthly Update.

If the Proposition 68 grant is awarded, we will do an outreach campaign to the rural residential community. The good news is we are working with DWR on final questions about grant specifics and could be awarded the \$1 million. We should know within a few weeks if we get the grant.

Question: Would the Prop 68 grant be part of overall outreach?

Response: No, the grant is project specific.

Question: How do we incorporate feedback? Is it filtered through the Advisory Committee and Board or the stakeholders?

Response: We will work with the Advisory Committee and stakeholders on summaries. On any potential survey you would get direct information.

Question: Your survey will have an educational component? We don't want inflammatory questions out there.

Response: It would be an educational campaign on the GSP, and to hear what concerns are. If people have concerns about groundwater, the GSA needs to hear that. This is a two-way conversation.

Comment: This is a policy Board, I don't want information and recommendations to be filtered when it gets to us. I want to be sure we don't limit ourselves on the discussion. But we should also do outreach and ask if people are having a problem with groundwater and learn about it.

Response: We are not in a rush for rural residential outreach, but the grant has a short deadline. Ideally the grant would be funded by spring then outreach would begin in summer.

Question: The Advisory Committee work on SMC's, will they have "fully baked" recommendations for the Board? And what if it doesn't sit well – do we send it back?

Response: You can always send back recommendations and staff will recommend "bookends" options for criteria. If you are looking at higher criteria, it might cost more and you'll have to deliberate on that. Giving you policy options is key.

Question: So you'll have costs when you present the SMC?

Response: We won't have costs as we go through each recommendation and look at the criteria. Once these are folded together and we have scenarios, you can look at projects to achieve a goal.

Public Comment

Staff included a good comment in our packet of materials – that developing the SMC's is an iterative process. Everyone is new to this and we are learning as we go. I think the turn-around on the iterative process is short. I don't think we have time for a long drawn-out process.

Response: Once we have the plan out in 2022, every five years we have a chance to adjust.

Question: Who generated the Proposition 68 grant?

Response: Sonoma Water did the grant application, we have staff that does grant writing.

7. Action Items

a. **Pisenti & Brinker- Fiscal year 2018-19 Audit**

The audit was presented by Andrea Lifo with Pisenti & Brinker, LLP. In the complete audit, Pisenti & Brinker reports an unqualified opinion that the financial statements are materially accurate. There were no significant deficiencies or material weakness identified in internal controls.

Risk Assessment was included to gain understanding of the GSA operating characteristics, practices and procedures. Future area of emphasis identified in the audit includes communicating between parties involved, frequently and thoroughly, including the Board of Directors, GSA Administration and County Auditor Controller's office. Pisenti & Brinker propose one adjustment to the financial statements on the grant estimate. They did not observe any discrepancies nor where there any difficulties in dealing with management during the audit.

No comments or questions from the public or Board. **Director Sangiacomo** moved to accept as presented, **Director Rabbitt** seconded. Motion passed unanimously 5-0-0.

b. Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Budget: Review and provide input on Draft Fiscal Year 2019-2020 budget

Ann DuBay, Administrator, provided a presentation on the draft FY 2020-21 budget. The JPA requires a budget 60 days before the end of the fiscal year, which is why she provided a draft. The budget will need 2/3 vote at the March meeting, and Member Agency contributions require a unanimous vote.

We expect the FY 2020-21 to be the largest year in expenses because of the timing of the GSP. There is an estimated carry-forward (just got audit on Friday, will make an adjustment to make sure it's accurate) and the anticipated Proposition 68 grant funding from DWR. On the expenses side, the Well User Registration program has a placeholder. Sonoma Valley will track the Santa Rosa Plain form and program. Santa Rosa Plain will implement the program in the spring. In March, SV Board will see the SRP form and have a discussion about what a well user registration program will look like in the Sonoma Valley basin.

Question: When you say form – do you mean a paper form to fill out?

Response: No it is an online process, unless people request a paper form.

Question: Do we have any feedback from any other jurisdiction on participation? It seems to me it will take a while to get people to understand what it is.

Response: Yes, it is an opt-out program. If you have a well, you could be on a neighborhood well, you would be registered. The form will allow people to correct that information.

Comment: There are some fire survivors that may have a non-functional well and others who have abandoned wells. We will encounter that.

Response: Yes, and we will work with the county who has records on those lots.

Comment: You would think the county has a list of well permits.

Response: In this basin we found out how incomplete the records are, especially with older wells. Permits may not have been submitted or digitized. The border parcels of the basin are questionable, in regard to well location and if it's in the basin or outside. We will have to determine it.

Question: Do we have the number of parcels in the basin?

Response: Yes, we have good records. Part of prop 68 grant is for PRMD to update records. We are trying to get better information on what the well water is used for. For Santa Rosa Plain, they estimated rural residents use ½ acre foot per year, but residents say they are using a lot less than that.

DuBay continued, noting the draft budget does not meet minimum reserve, but that is not a significant concern since Sonoma Water handles all the grant funding and time lag between being reimbursed.

Comment: VOMWD is a special district, the total of all three should be broken out on the spreadsheet.

Feedback from Board on draft budget: Please send any feedback to Ann DuBay.

c. 2020 Calendar:

The November meeting date is currently scheduled during the week of Thanksgiving, Board can choose to hold a meeting the week before on Monday, November 16.

Director Abelli-Amen moved to adopt, **Director Rabbitt** seconded. Motion passed unanimously 5-0-0.

8. Legal Counsel, Plan Manager and Administrator Report

No legal or Plan manager reports. The Administrator report is in the packet.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m. The next meeting will take place on March 23, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.