

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

1.1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:36 p.m. by Director Hedberg, who chaired the meeting.

1.2 Roll Call

- Voting Members Present:
 - Kathleen Hedberg, Vice President (SDCWA)
 - Jose Lopez (Otay)
 - Dan McMillan (Helix)
 - Nicole Beaulieu DeSantis (City of San Diego)
 - Steve Castañeda (Sweetwater)
 - Lynn Neault, Secretary (GCCCD)
- Guests, Presenters, and Staff Members Present:
 - Brian Olney (Interim Administrator, The Garden; HWD General Manager)
 - Lauren Magnuson (Director of Garden Operations)
 - Mike Williamson (Meeting Recorder/GCCCD)

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Director Lopez led the Pledge.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Director Castañeda moved to approve the agenda, and Director Lopez seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

5. ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

5.1 Approval of the Minutes of the January 28, 2025, Regular Meeting

Director McMillan moved to approve the agenda, and Director Castañeda seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, with Director Lopez abstaining.

5.2 Update on Garden Operations and Finances

Lauren Magnuson presented an update on Garden operation and finances.

- A [report outline](#) was distributed to the board members.
- The Garden received the Environmental Stewardship Award at the East County Chamber's Honors Gala.
- The annual JPA audit is complete.
- The audit is more complex now that JPA is managing the Garden.
- The tortoise enclosures are being updated, thanks to the help of a generous donor.
- The Garden is partnering with Cuyamaca College to welcome K-12 students as part of the college's recruiting efforts. The students consist primarily of high school juniors.
- The JPA Endowment Fund has been created. Disbursements will begin in March. It will generate roughly \$28,000 per year of guaranteed income.
- Lauren will be doing a presentation for the Garden at the next board meeting of the San Diego County Water Authority. Director Castañeda encouraged Lauren to stress the urgency of making a decision on supporting the Garden.

- The financial statements included with the agenda were reviewed.
- The Garden staff is working on a simplified one-page statement of funds showing all revenues and expenses.
- A special meeting may be needed in March to review the Garden's financial data.
- Director Neault suggested having continuing revenue and one-time funds shown separately in the financial statements to help get a clearer picture of what the regular income is that can be depended on.
- The Garden is now fully staffed, so expense figures should be a good indication for what next year's budget will look like.
- Director Neault emphasized that the volunteers are the backbone of operations at the Garden.
- Several group tours have taken place at the Garden, including the Bonita Garden Club, which made a generous donation to have a space for their lunch. Some of their members also purchased Garden memberships.
- There are many event rentals coming up in March, as well as the Tomatomania event.
- The Garden website has been updated. Lauren encouraged everyone to take a look.
- Free passes to the Garden were handed out to the directors to pass out to their constituents.

5.3 Options for Continued Funding and Operations of the Garden after June 30, 2025

- This MOU was provided to the board after the agenda was posted.
 - [Link to MOU](#)
- The MOU is very much a draft, and is an attempt to memorialize the concerns of GCCCD and the water agencies.
- It assumes the withdrawal of the City of San Diego from the JPA. The San Diego City Council will make its decision formal in April.
- The MOU is intended to be interpretive of the existing JPA Agreement, but does not supersede it.
- Director Castañeda noted that the Sweetwater Authority will not support an increased amount to cover the withdrawal of the City of San Diego from the JPA, and will also not support any sort of accelerating payment schedule. Sweetwater wants to know what the cost will be per year for their JPA membership.
- Director Neault noted that the MOU is not responsive to GCCCD's needs. It leaves GCCCD in the same boat as before, with no notice at all if the other JPA members leave the JPA.
- Sweetwater may commit to a defined contribution, but will not commit to an unknown or accelerating schedule.
- GCCCD needs an irrevocable commitment from the other JPA members. Without it, GCCCD cannot guarantee Garden operations will continue if the other JPA members withdraw. GCCCD would like to have two years' notice to be able to ensure continuing operations at the Garden.
- Helix is fully committed to continuing membership in the JPA. They understand costs may go up, and revenues may go down, especially if other agencies withdraw.
- Director Hedberg encouraged all JPA board members to be actively engaged in promoting the Garden.
- Otay has invested heavily in the Garden and owes it to their rate-payers for the Garden to survive. Otay is committed to the Garden. Fortunately, Otay currently has a board with a long history with the Garden, and who will support the Garden after so many years of commitment.
- Director Castañeda suggested a special meeting to discuss further the position of each agency.
- GCCCD is also fully committed to the Garden, and does not want to take it over. However, if operation of the Garden gets dumped on GCCCD suddenly by the other JPA members withdrawing, continued operations at the Garden cannot be guaranteed.
- Executive Director Magnuson noted that with 10 years of experience at the Garden, she knows where the revenues and expenses are. The big expenses have already been cut, and she knows where to look for more revenues. It is important to capitalize on the things the Friends were doing right.
- Acting Administrator Olney will continue to work with the general managers of the water agencies, and will stress the importance of moving forward expeditiously with their decisions on support of the Garden JPA. He will encourage the other general managers to get this issue agendized for their respective boards.
- JPA Counsel Jeremy Jungreis noted that it will be easy to accommodate GCCCD's needs in the MOU. However, if the percentages for JPA member contributions change, then the MOU may not suffice, and the JPA agreement may have to be amended.

Regular Meeting of the Water Conservation Garden Authority, Tuesday, February 25, 2025, 3:30 p.m.
Water Conservation Garden Multipurpose Room, 12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West, El Cajon, California 92019

- The MOU will need to include a provision that the agencies rescind their withdrawal letters, and agree to an irrevocable notice of withdrawal period of at least 18 months.

5.4 Transfer Titles of 2006 Ford F150 and 2014 Nissan Rogue from GCCCD to the Water Conservation Garden Authority

- This agreement to transfer the titles was provided to the Board after the agenda was posted.
 - [Link to Agreement](#)
- Acting Administrator Olney explained that this agreement was crafted between JPA and GCCCD counsel. It transfers the titles to a 2006 Ford F150 and a 2014 Nissan Rogue to the Water Conservation Garden Authority.

Director Castañeda moved to approve an agreement between the Water Conservation Garden Authority and Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District to transfer the titles to a 2006 Ford F150 and a 2014 Nissan Rogue to the Water Conservation Garden Authority, and Director DeSantis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5.5 Acting Administrator Comments

- Due to a conflict for one of the directors, it was suggested that the regular meeting currently scheduled for June 24, 2025, be canceled, and that a special meeting be scheduled for June 17, 2025. The directors were asked to notify the Garden if that scheduling change was acceptable or not.
- Mike Williamson will be retiring in June, and the JPA will need to make alternate arrangements for preparation of agendas and minutes.

5.6 Legal Counsel Comments

- JPA Counsel Jungreis will work with counsel for GCCCD to get a revised draft MOU out quickly to the group for review.
- Elections for the board vice president will be held at the March regular meeting.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Next meeting March 25, 2025, 3:30 p.m. at the Water Conservation Garden Multipurpose Room.