



THE WATER CONSERVATION GARDEN AUTHORITY
FOUNDED 1992

**Regular Meeting of the Water Conservation Garden Authority
Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 3:30 p.m.
Water Conservation Garden Multipurpose Room
12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West, El Cajon, California 92019**

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

1.1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:39 p.m. by Director Lopez, who chaired the meeting.

1.2 Roll Call

- Voting Members Present:
 - Jose Lopez, Vice President (Acting President) (Otay)
 - Dan McMillan (Helix)
 - Nicole Beaulieu DeSantis (City of San Diego)
 - Steve Castañeda (Sweetwater)
- Member Agencies Absent:
 - Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District
 - San Diego County Water Authority
- Guests, Presenters, and Staff Members Present:
 - Brian Olney (Interim Administrator, The Garden; HWD General Manager)
 - Lauren Magnuson (Director of Garden Operations)
 - Jeremy Jungreis (JPA Counsel – Telephonically)
 - Steve Zolezzi (Garden Volunteer Coordinator)
 - Mike Williamson (Meeting Recorder/GCCCD)
 - Jennifer Bryant (Helix)

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Director McMillan moved to approve the agenda, and Director Castañeda seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, with Directors from GCCCD and SDCWA absent.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

5. ACTION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

5.1 Approval of the Minutes of the March 25, 2025, Regular Meeting

Director McMillan moved to approve the Minutes of the March 25, 2025, Regular Meeting, and Director DeSantis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, with Directors from GCCCD and SDCWA absent.

5.2 Update on Garden Operations and Finances

Lauren Magnuson presented an update on Garden operations and finances.

- A [report outline](#) was distributed to the board members.
- The Spring Garden & Butterfly Festival will be held on May 3, 2025.
- Garden Volunteer Yaily Gonzalez reviewed the items from the outline under the *Education/ Outreach/Community Programs* heading.
- Director Castañeda requested a sign be posted suggesting that visitors notify their respective water districts to let them know how wonderful the Garden is, especially those from Bonita to contact their representative on the Sweetwater Authority Board.
- Jennifer Bryant from Helix reviewed Treasurer's Report, making note of the following:
 - As a result of discussion at the previous meeting, a new Summary of Receipts and Disbursements was created to clarify expense and revenue sources.
 - There is also a new format for the Budget Summary, also to make the reporting clearer.
 - The consensus among the group is that the new formats are an improvement.
 - Director McMillan noted that revenue from educational programs and classes is all extra revenue which is not included in the budget.
 - Educational programs and classes are only using existing staff and volunteers, so there is no additional cost for these programs.
 - Director McMillan suggested that the financial statements include a footnote to reflect donations of time and material items to show the significant contributions of volunteers and others.

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

The Board discussed the options for continued funding and operations of the Garden after June 30, 2025, including the following:

- Director McMillan noted as follows:
 - Helix intends to move forward as a JPA member for at least a year, even if it means being the only member.
 - The Helix Board will rescind its letter of withdrawal.
 - The San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) is planning to discuss continued participation in the JPA at a meeting next week.
 - Rescinding withdrawal letters should be a starting point. There also need to be legal amendments to the JPA agreement and related legal documents, but there is not enough time to do that before 7/1/25.
 - The JPA budget will be brought back at the May JPA Board meeting. If there are questions, they will be addressed at June meeting, and hopefully there will be an approved budget before 7/1/25.

- Lauren attended board meetings at Sweetwater, Otay, Helix, and SDCWA to promote the Garden and answer any questions from their board members.
- Director Castañeda noted as follows:
 - Sweetwater will likely rescind its withdrawal letter.
 - Sweetwater requires assurances that the priorities of the JPA Board will be maintained.
 - Sweetwater requires fixed costs, and no “last person standing” clause.
 - If the JPA continues and wants to increase member allocations, it needs to be voted on by the JPA Board, and then ratified by everyone’s home district boards.
 - Similarly, SDCWA wants certainty of costs, and no proportional cost increases if a member withdraws from the JPA.
 - There is support for the Garden at SDCWA at their current level of financial commitment.
 - SDCWA will likely remain as a member of the JPA under the right circumstances.
 - SDCWA wants similar assurances as Sweetwater as to cost containment and commitment amounts being locked in.
- Brian Olney suggested a letter of intent from the JPA Board to the member agency boards, and offered to work with JPA legal counsel to put together principles of agreement and/or a letter of intent.
- Director Lopez noted that Otay is also more flexible, like Helix, and plans to rescind its letter of withdrawal.
- JPA Counsel Jeremy Jungreis noted the following:
 - The letters of withdrawal need to be rescinded.
 - After all letters of withdrawal have been rescinded, there will be some flexibility as to how to proceed.
 - One possibility is a side agreement as to who covers the cost if one of the members withdraws. Likely it would be Otay and Helix that would have to share the proportional costs if Sweetwater is capped at \$75,000.
 - He stressed that the group is very sensitive to the needs of the GCCCD.
 - There appears to be a solid commitment for 18 months at this point, possibly up to two years, based on Helix's level of commitment.

5.4 Board of Directors Comments

- Director McMillan noted the following:
 - The Garden is doing well, and he is happy to see enterprise areas expand which will bring in additional revenues.
 - The Garden spaces are being used as venues for community fundraisers. These events are being staffed by volunteers and Garden staff. The Garden has table at these events to promote Garden memberships.
- Director DiSantis noted that the City's full council will vote in May on continued membership in the Garden JPA. The outlook is not optimistic.

5.5 Board President Comments

Acting President Lopez had nothing further to report.

5.6 Acting Administrator Comments

Acting Administrator Olney had nothing further to report.

5.7 Legal Counsel Comments

Legal Counsel Jungreis had nothing further to report.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:36 p.m.

Next meeting Tuesday, May 27, 2025, 3:30 p.m. at the Water Conservation Garden Multipurpose Room.