

**Special Meeting of the Water Conservation Garden Authority
Friday, June 7, 2024, 1.00 p.m.**

Water Conservation Garden Multipurpose Room
12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West, El Cajon, California 92019

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

- The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.
- Attendance:
 - Voting Members Present:
 - Mark Robak, President (Otay)
 - Kathleen Hedberg, Vice President (Helix)
 - Dan McMillan (SDCWA)
 - Nicole Beaulieu DeSantis (City of San Diego)
 - Absent
 - Dr. Lynn Neault, Secretary (GCCCD)
 - Steve Castañeda (Sweetwater)
 - Alternates Present
 - José Lopez (Otay)
 - Guests, Presenters, and Staff Members Present:
 - Lauren Magnuson (The Garden)
 - Tim Townsley (The Garden)
 - Jeremy Jungreis on Zoom (JPA, legal council)
 - Brian Olney (Helix, General Manager)
 - Ed Woodruff (Friends VP)
 - Stephen Zolezzi (Garden Volunteers)
 - Kristin Kjaero (Minutes)

2. Pledge of Allegiance

- The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

3. Approval of Agenda

- Director Hedberg moved to approve, Director McMillan seconded; it passed unanimously.

4. Public Comments

- Rachael McCurry
 - Expressed her pleasure at how the garden has carried on. She praised Lauren Magnuson's leadership, and the volunteer's hard effort.
- Sue Bell
 - She has never seen anyone work harder than Lauren Magnuson and staff. She paused Lauren's team building, communication and reaching out to the community and media. She praised how Tim Townsley and Lauren Magnuson listen and how helpful they are to the volunteers.
- Carol Marliere
 - Volunteers on the art team and in the children's garden. Expressed her support for Lauren Magnuson and Tim Townsley.
- Rose Steinhardt

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- Expressed her support for Lauren Magnuson and Tim Townsley. Appreciates how they communicate and give the volunteers the tools needed to do their jobs. Praised how social media has helped more people know about the Garden.
- Rosalie Dosik
 - Has volunteered at the Garden more than 20 years. Out of all the Directors over that time, no one has done such a wonderful job as Lauren Magnuson, who has increased the Garden's visibility and "resurrected it from the dead." People are coming in having learned about The Garden on the radio, TV and social media. It will soon no longer be a "hidden gem."
- Ed Woodruff
 - He's been a volunteer here more than 20 years as well as on the Board. When you look at what came before versus now, it's like night and day. He expressed his support for Lauren Magnuson and Tim Townsley continuing, calling them the glue that hold us together. He's never heard the volunteers so optimistic before.
- Vince McGrath
 - In all the years he's been here, since Lauren Magnuson became Interim Director it's the first time the Garden is being run like a business. He'd like to see our volunteers get more involved in sharing social media posts.
- DeAna Verbeke
 - She's been involved at the Garden a long time, both on the JPA and as a volunteer. She is happy to see how the volunteers are being utilized now. She is happy that Lauren Magnuson was chosen as Interim Director. She wanted to recognize the improvement in the Garden, volunteer attendance at JPA meetings, and Mark Robak and Brian Olney's efforts. She praised Lauren Magnuson and Tim Townsley leadership, and hopes they will continue in the future.
- Mary Jane Bailey
 - She's a long time volunteer. She praised Lauren Magnuson's leadership, who stepped into the fire while others were ran. Many volunteers left under the previous administration's mismanagement, but most have returned now that Lauren is Director. The Garden has its own culture, and volunteers bring a variety of skilled backgrounds. Lauren puts in extra time even when she's off the clock. She's healed the disharmony that existed before. Bailey wholeheartedly supports her continuing as Director.
- Frank Kalinoski
 - He wants Lauren Magnuson and Tim Townsley to continue at the Garden. He praised their problem solving abilities. Any alternatives to this management team would probably result in loss of confidence among the volunteers.
- Nancy Kamp
 - She has volunteered for one and a half years, and could sense the distrust when she arrived. She can feel how much better team spirit and stability is now under Lauren Magnuson's leadership.
- Kathy Holmes-Hardy
 - She has volunteered here for three years, and could sense that things weren't quite right previously. She praised Lauren Magnuson's management and communication skills, transparency, and how she has increased our community partnerships. Lauren has a talent for conflict resolution. She praised how Lauren has made things more businesslike, and how the budget meets the needs while keeping it modest.

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- Emily Routman
 - She's volunteered here for two years, but has over forty years experience in leadership roles at other organizations. She praised Lauren Magnuson's leadership. Previously volunteer opportunities were limited, but they have been expanded and are utilized now. She praised how media and social media presence now brings in more people. She feels excitement and confidence at the Garden now, except that Lauren is interim. "You no longer need to keep looking, the best person is already on the job."
- Harold Bailey
 - He is a long time volunteer and former Board President. Since 2010, the Garden has not engaged an executive Director with any previous public garden work of management experience until now, and the inexperience has been a detriment. He recommends forming an ongoing advisory board with a horticulturalist and professional public garden experience as a resource for the Board. He feels we need a strategic plan as soon as possible. He commended Lauren Magnuson for doing an outstanding job, and hopes she will continue as the Executive Director.

5. Action and Discussion Items

a. Approval of the Minutes of the February 9, 2024, Special Meeting

- Director McMillan moved to approve, Director Robak seconded; it passed unanimously.

b. Update on Garden Operations and Volunteer Efforts

Lauren Magnuson gave an update:

- Lauren reported on operations update from the accountant. Revenue from April 1 to May 31: \$27,794 membership, 255 new members since December. Admissions \$9,751. Gift Shop \$3,689. Plant sales \$1,174. Uncategorized income, mostly uncategorized plant sales and donations, \$1,651.
- Garden Grounds
 - Coral tree trimming and palms are being addressed arborists.
- Volunteers
 - Over 60 volunteers attended the meeting about background and security, 35 have done the Livescan. The deadline is July 1.
 - New volunteer training sessions will be June 22 and 29.
 - There is a vacation drop in volunteer hours during summer vacations, and interns and the proposed budget staffing will help cover.
 - The intern program has resumed for summer interns. We have three possible student interns who are required to do 70 hours. Intern orientation will be June 27. There will be 3-5 additional interns from SDSU, UCSD, SDCC and GCCCD.
 - Volunteer Appreciation Lunch will be June 17.
- Marketing and PR
 - CBS 8 Spot-Zip Trips featured the Garden last week.

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- KUSI will be here next Thursday to help publicize Free Friday on June 14, which will feature a butterfly release, a table with water district and membership information.
- Events
 - We have more than ten events on the calendar which will bring in revenue. Prices were lowered, bringing in more bookings.
 - 25th Anniversary celebration will be November 9, 9 am to 4 pm. There will be food, music, tours, raffles and a community mosaic. The committee is working on details not to get to the agencies by the end of July. Valhalla High School Academy is partnering with the Garden this month to make two 30-45 second videos for marketing the Garden's is soon and 25th Anniversary, to be used on social media.
- Friends filed for bankruptcy May 23.
- Steps moving forward
 - Finalizing the budget and employee handbook
 - Hiring additional staff
 - Coordinating with the JPA, Water Districts and Master Gardeners on classes and educational offerings.
 - Continued communication and collaboration with the JPA, volunteers and community.
- Director McMillian asked what she anticipates for events. Lauren expects venue income to rise with all the publicity we have been receiving. She enumerated the various rental rates. Brian Olney pointed out that the proposed budget is based on current income numbers. We get multiple weekly inquires for wedding venues.
- Director Hedberg asked about revenue reporting. Brian Olney said they have been establishing a tracking system; starting in July the JPA will receive monthly reports.

Stephen Zolezzi gave an update on the volunteers.

- Volunteer support for Lauren Magnuson and Tim Townsley is overwhelming; it has brought a cultural revolution to the Garden that we want to ensure continues.
 - The volunteers appreciate Mark Robak's presence periodically here as the face of the JPA.
 - This last month more than 1,000 volunteer hours we logged; we are working on training volunteers to be consistent about logging hours.
 - We are up to 23 volunteer teams now.
 - There are 10 people signed up for the upcoming training.
- c. Proposed Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget and Member Agency Annual Contributions for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Brian Olney presented a PowerPoint "FY 2024-2025 Board Report on Proposed Budget." A package of the following documents are available to be viewed: FY 2024-2025 Proposed Budget – Attachment A; and FY 2024-2025 Proposed Budget – Attachment B.

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- Revenue
 - In April the JPA agreed to continue to use the existing contribution amounts, on which the proposed budget is based.
 - There have been revenue spikes during the turmoil, this budget tries to normalize the numbers.
- Expenses
 - This budget proposed three full and three part time employees.
 - A contingency line item has been included.
 - Insurance has been acquired and will be in force, with the exception of property insurance, as of July 1.
 - He explained line by line what is included in the various categories on the spreadsheet.
- Allocations
 - Net works out of \$505,523 funding obligations JPA members collectively. He presented how that breaks down for each agency individually.
 - Agencies will be credited for any amounts that carry over from the interim period.

Discussion:

- Director McMillan moved for approval, with the flexibility for agencies to choose whether to pay in one or two installments. Director Hedberg seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- Brian Olney explained how the hiring will be conducted, starting with discussions about the hiring process in July.

d. 5.4 Resolution 24-01 Approving the Water Conservation Garden Authority Employee Handbook, Effective July 1, 2024

Brian Olney presented a PowerPoint, Board Report, Draft Resolution, and Draft Employee Handbook.

- He presented a brief background and scope of what will be included in the handbook.
- Moving forward it will be a living document, able to adapt as employment legislation changes over time.
- Director Hedberg moved to approve the Handbook. Director McMillan seconded. It passed unanimously.

e. 5.5 Update from the Ad Hoc Committee to Review and Discuss Operating Plans and Future Development of the Water Conservation Garden

Director Mark Robak read the Board Report from the Ad Hoc Committee.

- It would take two years lead time for the College to take over the Garden, if that were the decision.
- The Committee recommended:

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- More members be added.
- Another Committee.
- Jose Lopez, Otay Alternate, said yesterday Director Robak announced at an Otay Board Meeting that he would resign from the JPA today, so that he might become CEO at the Garden. He said while he knows Robak could be an asset and it may be legal, the perception of self dealing would become an issue. Do we really want this perception?
 - JPA Attorney Jeremy Jungreis, participating on Zoom, said that they have not yet researched whether it is legal, and if JPA members want to discuss this it needs to be agendized first.

6. 5.6 Acting Administrator Comments

Brian Olney thanked everyone for their discussion today. Coming up they will look at the Operations Agreement allocations, true up allocations, and they look at refining the Employee Handbook with the Attorney. In July they will look at the hiring process. Until hiring decisions have been made, Lauren Magnuson and Tim Townsley will continue as employees, but no one will have the title of CEO.

7. Legal Counsel Comments

Nothing to report. Appointing a CEO can only be done at a regularly scheduled meeting, so the JPA will have to establish a regular meeting time before then.

8. **Adjournment**

- The meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Next meeting will be July 10 at 3:00 p.m. at the Garden.



DocuSigned by:
Mark Robak 8/8/2024
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