

**Special Meeting of the Water Conservation Garden Authority  
Wednesday, July 10, 2024, 3:00 p.m., Water Conservation Garden Multipurpose Room**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

**1.1 Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 p.m.

**1.2 Roll Call**

Director Hedberg moved to approve remote participation by Director Neault, Director McMillan seconded it; the motion passed unanimously, with Sweetwater absent.

Attendance was as follows:

- Voting Members Present:
  - Mark Robak, President (Otay)
  - Kathleen Hedberg (Helix)
  - Dan McMillan (SDCWA)
  - Lynn Neault, Secretary (GCCCD) – Via Zoom
  - Nicole Beaulieu DeSantis (City of San Diego)
  - **Sweetwater not represented**
- Non-Voting Alternates Present:
  - Sahar Abushaban (GCCCD)
- Voting Members Absent
  - Steve Castañeda (Sweetwater)
- Guests, Presenters, and Staff Members Present:
  - Brian Olney (Helix, General Manager)
  - Lauren Magnuson (The Garden)
  - Stephen Zolezzi (The Garden)
  - Harold Bailey (The Garden)

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**2.1 Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board President Robak.

**3. Approval of Agenda**

**3.1 Approval of Today's Agenda**

Director Hedberg moved to approve the agenda, Director DeSantis seconded it; the motion passed unanimously, with Sweetwater absent.

**4. Public Comments**

**4.1 Public Comments**

Board President Mark Robak spoke regarding his interest in the Garden's Executive Director position and his past involvement with the Garden.

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**5. Action and Discussion Items**

**5.1 Approval of the Minutes of the June 7, 2024, Special Meeting**

Director Hedberg moved for approval, Director McMillan seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

**5.2 Update on Garden Operations and Volunteer Efforts**

Lauren Magnuson provided an update on Garden Operations as follows:

- Landscape/grounds maintenance is underway.
- Cuyamaca College's Ornamental Horticulture (CCOH) program has been providing significant volunteer labor at the Garden.
- Three part-time workers have been hired from CCOH.
- A volunteer coordinator has been hired.
- The Garden is hoping to get new interns from CCOH to replace the ones whose terms are coming to an end.
- "Free Friday" is coming up. It would be nice to have one of the water districts table at each Free Friday, along with others tabling.
- The Sweetwater Authority Board and General Manager came to the Garden for a tour.
- Efforts are being made to connect people interested in the Garden via the Garden's website.
- Interim financial statements will be presented at the August meeting.

Stephen Zolezzi provided an update on the volunteer program at the Garden as follows:

- Volunteers provided 600 labor hours last month.
- All 80 volunteers currently working on-site have completed the Live Scan process.
- A new training session is scheduled with new training materials, using the employee training manual.
- The training team is meeting next week to coordinate.
- More frequent training sessions are anticipated. The goal is to have four sessions per year.
- Organization and structure of the volunteer teams was discussed. There are currently 23 volunteer teams.
- Gift shop sales and plant sales are improving. A more detailed report will be provided at the next meeting.
- The Garden would like to do more tours similar to the one led by Lauren for the Sweetwater Authority's Board.

Harold Bailey provided an update on the Garden's plant inventory project, noting the following:

- Each plant should be assigned an accessioning number so that inventory can be tracked in a database.
- The database could be shared with the public to increase sales.
- This project will take at least six months to complete.
- Patrons have asked many times in the past for a plant list.

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Director Neault was assured that everyone currently working at the Garden has gone through the Live Scan process, and this procedure will continue into the future. Brian Olney will send a sheet to Director Neault showing who has gone through the Live Scan process.

**5.3 Resolution 24-02 Establishing the Frequency and Time of a Regular Board Meetings**

The JPA Agreement requires at least one regular board meeting per year. The consensus was that there needs to be more than one. Options for regular meetings were discussed. It was determined that everyone would need to check their calendars to see what dates would work best, and bring this item back to a future meeting for a more informed discussion and action.

No action was taken.

**5.4 Options for Filling the Position of Executive Director of the Water Conservation Garden**

The Board discussed options for filling the position of Executive Director of the Garden. The selection will have to be made at a “regular” board meeting. Therefore, this cannot take place until a regular board meeting schedule has been established.

Discussion regarding the selection process for an Executive Director included the following:

- One option would be a standard recruitment, including advertisement, time for applications, committee reviews, and a recommendation to the full Board.
- Another option would be appointment by concurrence of the Board.
- Brian Olney will continue to assist the Garden, but will need to have some of his workload as General Manager relieved by the Executive Director. Thus the selection of a permanent Executive Director needs to move forward expeditiously.

Further discussion on this item included the following:

- Effective July 1, 2024, Lauren Magnuson continues to serve as the Interim Executive Director.
- The Garden currently has two full-time employees.
- There is a job description for the Executive Director position, which Lauren will send out to the directors.
- The directors were encouraged to review the job description and come back to the next meeting ready to decide whether the selection should be done by recruitment or appointment.

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

Ad Hoc Committee Members McMillan and Castañeda would like to have a meeting with Director Neault. Director Neault's office will arrange the meeting.

Discussion regarding operating plans and future development of the Garden included the following:

- Directors were encouraged to think about what they would like to see in an operating agreement if GCCCD were to operate the Garden.
- Director Hedberg would like to see the Garden stick with its mission, and for the water districts to provide input on an ongoing basis.
- Director Neault noted that if expectations are not in alignment with GCCCD's mission, an agreement would not be possible. She suggested that the water districts could provide input as an advisory committee.
- It was noted that the Garden and GCCCD missions would include keeping the Garden open to the public.
- Volunteers would be included in the Garden's future, either with or through the college district.
- There may be a place on an advisory committee for Garden volunteers.

**5.6 Acting Administrator Comments**

Acting General Manager Brian Olney reported as follows:

- All insurance required under the JPA Agreement has been secured, with the exception of property insurance. An on-site broker meeting is scheduled, and a package will be put together for property insurance.
- The conflict of interest code will need to be brought forward for review, hopefully at the August meeting.
- There will be financial updates at the next meeting.
- The documents related to the transfer of vehicles was discussed. Brian will work with Jeremy to get the information requested.

**5.7 Legal Counsel Comments**

Changes are needed to how the JPA is operating, and a new structure needs to be formalized, as the way it is being operated now does not match the JPA agreement structure.

**6. Adjournment**

**6.1 Meeting Adjourned**

It was announced that Sweetwater Authority intends to give its one-year notice of withdrawal from the JPA.

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Consensus was reached that the next special board meeting would be on Tuesday, August 6, 2024, at 3:30 p.m., in the Water Conservation Garden Multipurpose Room.

The meeting adjourned at 4:28 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
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Michael Williamson  
Recording Secretary

DocuSigned by:  
*Mark Robak*  
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Mark Robak  
Board President