

Regular Meeting of the Water Conservation Garden Authority
Tuesday, October 22, 2024, 3:30 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 3:37 p.m.

1.2 Roll Call

Attendance was as follows:

- Voting Members Present:
 - Kathleen Hedberg (Helix)
 - Dan McMillan (SDCWA)
 - Lynn Neault, Secretary (GCCCD)
 - Nicole Beaulieu DeSantis (City of San Diego)
 - Steve Castañeda (Sweetwater)
- Voting Members Absent:
 - Otay Water District
- Guests, Presenters, and Staff Members Present:
 - Brian Olney (Acting Administrator and General Manager of Helix)
 - Jeremy Jungreis (JPA Counsel)
 - Lauren Magnuson (Director of Garden Operations)
 - Stephen Zolezzi (Garden Volunteer)

2. Pledge of Allegiance

2.1 Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Acting Board President Hedberg.

3. Approval of Agenda

3.1 Approval of Today's Agenda

Director DeSantis moved to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Castañeda. The motion was approved unanimously, with Otay Water District absent.

4. Public Comments

4.1 Public Comments

There was none.

5. Action and Discussion Items

5.1 Approval of the Minutes of the January 23, 2024, Regular Meeting

There were no corrections to the minutes.

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Director Castañeda moved for approval of the Minutes of the January 23, 2024, Regular Meeting. The motion was seconded by Director Neault. The motion was approved unanimously, with Otay Water District absent.

5.2 Approval of the Minutes of the September 24, 2024, Regular Meeting

There were no corrections to the minutes.

Director Castañeda moved for approval of the Minutes of the September 24, 2024, Regular Meeting. The motion was seconded by Director Neault. The motion was approved unanimously, with Otay Water District absent.

5.3 Update on Garden Operations/Finances

Lauren Magnuson, Director of Garden Operations, provided an update on Garden Operations/Finances as follows:

- The 25th Anniversary event is coming up on November 9th.
 - The draft program was included in agenda packet.
 - The gift shop will be open for the event.
 - There will be a raffle.
 - There will be news coverage in advance of the event.
 - A craft fair will be taking place at the Museum of the Americas next door with about 20 vendors at the same time as the Garden's event.
 - Attendance and some refreshments will be free.
 - Pizza and some other items will be available for sale.
- There were multiple events at the Garden in September.
- Stephen Zolezzi provided a volunteer update as follows:
 - New volunteer training is scheduled for this coming Saturday.
 - Trainings will continue every three months.
 - 51 volunteers participated for a total of 583 hours in September.
 - Acting Administrator Brian Olney noted that the process for onboarding volunteers has been formalized. There have been some unanticipated difficulties with Live Scan due to the advanced age of many of the volunteers.
- The County of San Diego's Watershed Protection Program will be holding workshops at the Garden starting in January 2025 and running through May of 2025, which will provide revenue for the Garden.
- The Garden expects to hear from the Rice family Foundation in November regarding a \$15,000 grant.
- Neighborhood Bank being considered to replace of US Bank, as the Garden continues to experience problems accessing the US Bank account.
- The Statement of Activity included in the agenda does not show budget versus actuals due to the ongoing difficulties with US Bank.
- The General Ledger was provided through the end of September.
- Expenses for events exceed revenues for events because some of the expenses are for upcoming events that have yet to generate revenue.

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- It was noted that future agendas will include a consent agenda.
- The flier for the 25th Anniversary event is being shared on social media and being sent out by the water agencies.
- It was suggested that email blasts be done to promote the 25th Anniversary event.

5.4 Resolution 24-04 Authorizing Banking Signers on the Garden Bank Account

- This resolution authorizes Mark Robak, Board President, and/or Lauren Magnuson, Director of Garden Operations, as signers on the existing US Bank account. Sahar Abushaban also has signing authority.
- It was clarified that Sahar Abushaban is still the official treasurer for the Water Conservation Garden Authority, but the daily operational accounting is being performed by the contracted CPA firm.
- If the Garden switches banks, this resolution will need to be redone.
- Expenditures over \$2,500 will require two signatures.

Director McMillan moved to adopt Resolution 24-04 Authorizing Bank Signers on the Garden Bank Account, with the caveat that expenditures over \$2,500 shall require two signatures. The motion was seconded by Director Castañeda. The motion was approved unanimously, with Otay Water District absent.

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

- Director Neault requested that her name be removed from future Ad Hoc Committee board reports, as she is no longer a member of the Ad Hoc Committee.
- There are no models in California of a community college operating a community garden with public access.
- Director of Garden Operations Lauren Magnuson will prepare a report/presentation for the water agency boards to encourage them to consider extending funding of the Garden.
- Grants, education programs, and events will be cited as principal revenue sources.
- The following handouts were distributed to the Board and discussed:
 - [Benefits Analysis of JPA Support for WCG](#)
 - [JPA Governance Options](#)
 - [Cost Analysis of JPA Contributions for The Water Conservation Garden](#)
- The Ad Hoc Committee will meet once more before January.
- In an effort to clear up some misinformation in the community, Director Neault shared the following:
 - The Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District (GCCCD) is committed to the Water Conservation Garden operating and open.
 - GCCCD is not requesting to take over operations of the Garden.
 - If GCCCD does take over operations, there is no intention to close it to the public.

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- GCCCD is committed to using the Garden's volunteers to the extent allowed by law.
- GCCCD has no intention of closing and/or repurposing the Garden property.
- If GCCCD takes over operations, the structure of the Garden must align with the mission of the District: Education.

5.6 Options for Extending Garden Funding After June 30, 2024

Acting Administrator Brian Olney reviewed the board report included with this agenda item, and led the discussion on options for extending Garden funding after June 30, 2024, as follows:

- The water agency letters of intent to withdraw from the JPA could be rescinded.
- The funding could be extended using an MOU.
- Each agency needs to go to their respective boards before we reconvene in January to determine ongoing support for the Garden.
- Director Hedberg noted the following:
 - Much progress has been made at the Garden.
 - January would be a great time to invite Lauren to water agency board meetings to share information about the Garden.
- Support for the Garden may be affected by the election of new board members at the water agencies.
- It will be very helpful to know what time period the water agency boards would be willing to commit to for funding the Garden.
- GCCCD needs a solid time commitment for planning purposes. The solid commitment is more important than the actual amount of time. However, two years would be a comfortable amount of time for planning purposes, as long as that is a dependable commitment.
- The Sweetwater Authority is currently not amenable to extending funding of the Garden, and will need additional data to be convinced otherwise.
- The City of San Diego is also currently not leaning in the direction of extending funding, but also may be convinced otherwise if additional data is provided.
- The water agencies need to determine the value the Garden provides for their customers.
- Acting Administrator Olney and Director of Garden Operations Magnuson will work on getting as much data as possible to satisfy the Sweetwater Authority Board, as well as the other water agency boards.
- Magnuson stressed the value of education to the different agencies and their customers.
- All the water agencies bear some responsibility to market the Garden.
- Legal Counsel Jungreis suggested that using an MOU to extend Garden funding may be more palatable to the water agency boards than rescinding their letters of intent, noting that there are several legal options that could be used to extend funding.

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- Jungreis noted that the State of California mandates water agencies to meet certain conservation targets.
- Most local agencies are well within their state-mandated conservation targets.
- The Sweetwater Authority Board does not want to see the Garden closed down, and may be amendable to a two-year MOU for funding.
- Legal counsel will have multiple legal options to extend funding available for consideration before the JPA meets in January 2025, including a sample MOU.

5.7 Acting Administrator Comments

- The November and December Regular Board Meetings will most likely be canceled due to their proximity to holidays and the unavailability of many directors and staff.
- There may be a Special Board Meeting scheduled in December.

5.8 Legal Counsel Comments

- Attorney Jungreis noted he is impressed that all of the water agencies in the JPA are meeting their conservation targets.

5.9 Board Tour of the Garden

- Following adjournment of the meeting, several directors and staff members took a walking tour of the Garden.

6. Adjournment

6.1 Meeting Adjourned

- Director Hedberg congratulated Director Neault on being named to receive a Partnership of the Decade Award by the East County Economic Development Council.
- Director Hedberg noted that she attended a Fall Mixer put on by the Foundation for Grossmont and Cuyamaca Colleges.
- Director of Garden Operations Lauren Magnuson noted that Tripadvisor has ranked the Garden #1 in “Things to do in El Cajon.”
- The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.