

# Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency Board Meeting Minutes

March 25, 2024

Santa Rosa Utilities Field Office, 35 Stony Point Road, Santa Rosa  
[www.santarosaplaingroundwater.org](http://www.santarosaplaingroundwater.org)

## 1. Call to Order and Roll Call

**Chair Harvey** called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. and asked for a roll call. **Directors Coursey, Harvey, Spielman (Alternate for Director Jacobs), Nagle, Salmon, Sanborn, Sanchiotti, and Stapp** were present. **Director Hinton** arrived at 4:10 and **Director Hopkins** was absent. Also, in attendance at the meeting, were Andy Rodgers, Administrator; Indigo Bannister, GSA staff; Jenna Gelso, GSA staff; Bob Anderson, SRP Advisory Committee Chair; Peter Martin, SRP Advisory Committee Member (arrived at 4:08 p.m.); Claire Nordlie, City of Santa Rosa staff; and one other member of public.

## 2. Public comment on matters not listed on the agenda but within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board

None.

## 3. Action Items

- a. **FY23-24 Budget Adjustment.** Consider adjustment to Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget for adoption.

Andy Rodgers provided details on the FY23-24 budget adjustment. The budget was finalized in June 2023 and in September 2023, DWR awarded Santa Rosa Plain grant funding of just under \$5.4 million, with all funds to be expended by March 2026. Because the expenses and revenues were not originally projected in the FY23-24 budget, a budget adjustment is needed.

### *Board Questions/Comments*

**Director Coursey** – Is the decline in groundwater sustainability fees from GUIDE surveys? Are we getting closer to the final fees?

Rodgers – In part, it also captures the broader corrections made in Year One.

**Director Sanborn** – Why was the approved budget fund balance so much lower than the proposed budget adjustment?

Rodgers – We budget by a very thin margin. Through the grant, we can seek reimbursements back to October 2022 for work already completed and paid; it is a large part of the fund balance increase.

**Director Sanchiotti** – On the Fee Study, was there ever talk of increasing fees?

Rodgers – Probably, but there never was a plan to raise fees without cause.

**Director Harvey** – We included an expected grant allotment of 25%, which made me a little uncomfortable.

**Director Sanchietti** – I agree with an increase, but we cannot keep putting the costs of SGMA on farmers. The farming community will react badly to this.

**Director Harvey** – There are all kinds of state mandated reporting that do not always get accounted for.

Rodgers – The \$5 million in grant funding is toward GSP implementation that we previously did not have.

**Director Sanchietti** – We cannot pass these things on. Just try to be conservative.

**Director Hinton** – I made my point clear last time. I agree with an increase, but a 15% increase is way too high.

No public comment.

**Director Coursey** moved to adopt the FY23-24 budget adjustment; **Director Salmon** seconded. Motion passed **8-1-1**. **Director Hopkins** was absent.

#### Vote Roll Call

**Director Coursey** – aye, **Director Sanchietti** – no, **Director Harvey** – aye, **Director Hinton** – aye, **Director Hopkins** – absent, **Director Spielman** – aye, **Director Nagle** – aye, **Director Salmon** – aye, **Director Sanborn** – aye, **Director Stapp** – aye

#### b. Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget Preliminary Adoption. Consider Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget for preliminary adoption.

Andy Rodgers provided details on the FY24-25 preliminary budget, highlighting the changes made due to the influx of grant funding and operational changes made over time.

#### Board Questions/Comments

**Director Coursey** – Can you talk about the changes that are made to the fees in relation to cost per acre-foot?

Rodgers – In the preliminary budget, we used what was presented at the last Board meeting, which is \$46 per acre-foot.

**Director Coursey** – And what would the impact be to a rural residential user?

Rodgers – It would increase the cost from \$20 per acre foot to \$23 per acre foot.

**Director Harvey** – So, if we do not raise rates, we would be in the red?

Rodgers – Yes.

**Director Harvey** – And if we do not raise rates, we will need to cut items out of the budget?

Rodgers – Correct.

**Director Hinton** – At the last meeting, I was not against raising fees, but I was against raising them by 15%.

**Director Salmon** – It seems like we have a narrow majority here. At a future meeting, can we share options of what might need to be cut?

Rodgers – Certainly. I will go through more detail on the fee study during the Administrator’s report.

Bannister – By approving this preliminary budget, it does not commit us to any fee. That would be approved through a separate resolution at your June Board meeting.

**Director Coursey** – Is there some time pressure for this item to be passed?

Rodgers – Yes, the JPA requires a preliminary budget be approved by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

No public comment.

**Director Coursey** moved to adopt the FY24-25 preliminary budget; **Director Stapp** seconded. Motion passed **8-1-1**. **Director Hopkins** was absent.

#### Vote Roll Call

**Director Coursey** – aye, **Director Sanchietti** – no, **Director Harvey** – aye, **Director Hinton** – aye, **Director Hopkins** – absent, **Director Spielman** – aye, **Director Nagle** – aye, **Director Salmon** – aye, **Director Sanborn** – aye, **Director Stapp** – aye

## 4. Administrator, Plan Manager, Legislative, and Legal Counsel Report

Andy Rodgers gave a report on the Rate & Fee Study Update. **Chair Harvey** suggested that an ad hoc be formed to delve further into the Rate & Fee Study and associated cost basis. **Directors Hinton, Spielman** (on behalf of **Director Jacobs**), and **Sanchietti** expressed interest in serving.

There were no Plan Manager, Legal Counsel, or Legislative reports.

#### Board Questions/Comments

**Director Harvey** – We have started encouraging water conservation, have we budgeted for how that would impact the fees?

Rodgers – We have not yet done the water-use efficiency assessment, so we do not know what that impact will be.

Bannister – The fee structure as currently established is designed to apportion the fees across the basin and is not strictly an extraction fee. We generally do not charge for actual use.

**Director Sanchietti** – With folks using less water, would farmers continue to be charged more?

Rodgers – It will depend. We budget for some reduction in use in our fee estimates through an appeals allowance. If use decreases beyond the appeals allowance, it could result in future fee increases.

**Director Sanborn** – One thing that has come up recently is that Rohnert Park needs to maintain their wells, even if they are using them less.

**Director Harvey** – We just had a presentation by Sonoma Water on how much the rates may go up.

**Director Nagle** – At the last meeting, we were shown the recharge maps. A few years back, we were in drought. Very little of the proposed budget will contribute to annual recharge to improve the basin. Some of the frustration with these grants is what we will be getting out of it.

**Director Harvey** – Is there a way to reorder/reprioritize what we work on first?

Rodgers – We need to better explain the benefits of the grant. We have already talked about the benefits of the conservation program. However, there are a lot of other projects that the grant is funding that will help get us ‘move the needle’, including on-farm recharge and ASR planning, etc. Without this grant funding, we would not be making progress toward those goals. We will be sure to explain what the positive implications of this work will be on the benefits to the basin.

**Director Harvey** – We need to be able to explain what this funding will get us. And what steps we are taking now. It would be helpful to show that we are moving towards achieving our goals.

**Director Nagle** – I served on the Advisory panel over 10 years ago and have not seen the progress.

**Director Coursey** – I know the Board of Supervisors has approved a couple of million dollars for recharge projects at Sonoma Water wells.

Rodgers – We get reports and are staying closely aware through our Plan Manager, Marcus Trotta. At this point the wells are not yet providing any recharge.

**Director Coursey** – Can you talk about where the \$823,700 comes from?

Rodgers – This was what was developed in the original fee study.

**Director Harvey** – It would be helpful to show what is covered by the fees versus what is grant funded.

Rodgers – We could do that.

**Director Salmon** – We will not have a meeting prior to the adoption of the final budget?

Rodgers – That is the current plan.

**Director Salmon** – So the Board will not have further time to engage on this before we are expected to adopt a fee increase?

**Chair Harvey** – Are you suggesting that we have another meeting before then?

**Director Salmon** – I would like to see a budget increase of 5%; if the staff proposes a 15% increase at the June meeting, it could be difficult.

**Director Hinton** – I don’t think we should have an ad hoc and a May meeting. There is no time for that.

**Chair Harvey** polled the Board and the Board recommended that a Fee Study workshop occur in May.

**Directors Spielman, Salmon, and Harvey** offered to serve on an ad hoc ahead of the May Fee Study workshop.

## 5. Adjournment

**Chair Harvey** adjourned the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

The next Board meeting will be on June 13, 2024 and the next Advisory Committee meeting is May 13, 2024.

*Minutes produced by Simone Peters, GSA Staff, from notes and a recording,*