

Santa Rosa Plain Groundwater Sustainability Agency Board Meeting

Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: February 13, 2020

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Location: Santa Rosa Utility Field Office

35 Stony Point Road, Santa Rosa

www.santarosaplaingroundwater.org

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairwoman Lynda Hopkins called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. **Directors Carnacchi, Dowd (Alternate for Director Schwedhelm), Fudge, Harvey, Hopkins, Jacobs, Nagle, Stafford and Zane** were present. **Director Dutton** was absent. Also in attendance were Jay Jasperse, Plan Manager; Andy Rodgers, Administrator; Marcus Trotta, Technical Staff; Simone Peters, minutes-taker.

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

No public comment.

3. Consent Calendar

- a. Approve Minutes of December 12, 2019 Board Meeting
- b. Approve Year-to-Date Financial Report

No public comment.

Director Harvey moved to approve the consent calendar as presented, **Director Stafford** seconded. Motion passed unanimously 9-0-0.

4. Directors/Subcommittee Report

No subcommittee meetings to report.

5. Advisory Committee Report

Bob Anderson, Advisory Committee Chairman, mentioned the Advisory Committee met on January 9. At the meeting they received word on grant applications for monitoring support. Apparently, there weren't an over-whelming amount of applications so Santa Rosa Plain is hopeful to receive some money. Anderson also mentioned that Doug Beretta, representing Rural Residential, resigned from the Advisory Committee for family health reasons. USGS presented at the meeting. The USGS study has been expanded to include the whole Russian

River, the Santa Rosa Plain Basin was taken out of the model with analyses being done by Sonoma Water. The Advisory Committee will be discussing the water budget at their upcoming meeting in March. Most of the meeting was spent discussing Sustainability Management Criteria and the lowering of groundwater levels.

Question **Director Nagle**: The USGS study is removing the Santa Rosa Plain Basin from their model?

Response Trotta –The USGS developed a computer model/groundwater flow model for the Santa Rosa Plain sub-basin, published in 2014. The USGS is doing a larger study of the Russian River basin but because there is an existing model for the Santa Rosa Plain, it won't be fully integrated into the Russian River model. We will be using the Santa Rosa Plain model in this basin. The USGS is also doing some updates to our local Santa Rosa Plain model with some funding from the CA State Water Resources Control Board that we are coordinating with the USGS closely for the updates we are doing to the model. The work we are doing to ready the Santa Rosa Plain model for the GSP primarily include re-evaluating some of the estimates of pumping in the model and including data up through 2018.

Response Jasperse – The regional model goes from Potter Valley to Jenner, it has lower resolution compared to the Santa Rosa Plain model we are using.
No public comments.

6. Information items

a. Groundwater Sustainability Plan and Sustainable Management Criteria Update

Jay Jasperse presented an update of the Groundwater Sustainability Plan status and provided a current working schedule. Of the seven sections of the GSP, sections 1 and 2 have been vetted, including background information. Section 3, worked on during the last year (basin setting); Section 4, sustainable management criteria and Section 5, are in progress, anticipated to be complete by the end of 2020. Section 6, projects and actions, and implementation plans – is due January 2022. SGMA has six sustainability indicators. We are starting with “lowering of groundwater levels” as there is the most data available. It is an iterative process with significant stakeholder engagement, modeling of future climate, growth, and projects and actions. The sustainability indicators are vetted by the AC as we move forward with recommendations to bring to the Board. For each indicator, there are three terms we are focusing on: undesirable results, minimum thresholds, and measurable objectives. Jasperse gave an overview of the development of Sustainable Management Criteria. Lots of technical work and outreach work in order to present policy options to the Board for consideration.

Question **Director Dowd** – Point 4 on page 15 “Do you think there are specific areas of the basin that have unique or different concerns or issues, than other parts of the basin?” It seems we have a unique area in the southern part of the county.

Response Jasperse – For Sonoma Valley there are two areas of depletion with possibility of saline intrusion. We will be looking at that in Sonoma Valley.

Question **Director Harvey** - For lowering of groundwater levels, we have monitoring wells. What kind of technology will we have for the other five indicators?

Land subsidence – There is technology available known as INSAR that DWR has made available.

Seawater intrusion – Not an issue in this basin.

Surface water depletion – Stage levels in the streams and seepage runs.

Degraded quality – Sample existing wells.

Reduction of storage – Will be derived from groundwater levels.

SGMA allows us to use groundwater levels as a proxy.

Question – **Director Carnacchi** – Wilson Grove - Salinity could be a problem with the wells that Sebastopol is getting water from. If we aren't really looking at the effects of what happens with Sebastopol's water, it doesn't make much sense that Sebastopol is part of the Santa Rosa Plain GSA.

Response Jasperse – Would have to be looked at more, let's speak offline.

Question **Director Hopkins** – When talking about the degraded quality of the water, what is the baseline condition especially as pertains to water quality?

Response Jasperse – There are regulatory laws focused just on that. It isn't for SGMA or the GSA to assume those responsibilities. There are also naturally occurring secondary contaminants such as arsenic. We'll get more of a practical sense/understanding of what is naturally occurring and work with other agencies.

Director Hopkins – So you would also liaise with the Department of Public Health?

Response Jasperse – Yes, with Environmental Health and State Board, etc.

Next steps on Lowering of Groundwater Levels include: Advisory Committee providing written feedback and additional comments; Staff turning qualitative statements into options for quantitative measurements; Staff developing a Representative Monitoring Point network to identify where Sustainability Management Criteria will be established and tracked within the basin; Advisory Committee reviewing and continuing the discussion in March; Initial recommendations from the Advisory Committee will be brought to the Board for discussion and feedback at their April meeting. Throughout 2020, the Board can expect to discuss one or two Sustainability Indicators at each meeting.

Question **Director Nagle** – You have received qualitative statements of criteria from the Advisory Committee?

Response Jasperse – These are high level statements of what we have. How many wells do we have with 50 years of data? We have enough hydrological flex,

etc., to look at what the minimum process should be. The idea is to have options that we narrow down, not only one path.

Response Rodgers – I would like to emphasize that it is an iterative process.

There will be another meeting with the Advisory Committee in March, adding to feedback.

Ann DuBay – SGMA engages people to find out their concerns about groundwater. There is a series of things we are working on. The Advisory Committee will be speaking with stakeholder groups, there will be community workshop later this spring to give a preview of the first sections of the GSP, and table top discussions with the public to get their feedback. Andrea Rodriguez is working on an online social media survey that will be sent out via our social media channels and our monthly update that is sent out to about 1600 people.

Comment **Director Harvey** – Happy to see we have more community workshops coming up. It is beneficial to have round table discussion in a small group setting.

Question **Director Jacobs** – Do we have any active super fund sites?

Response Jasperse – Yes we do, three I believe.

Public comment

John Rosenblum – I am an Advisory Committee member, representing independent water suppliers. We have historical records we can use long before 2015, to get a general picture that will represent our basin. Our main concern is that it includes the City of Sebastopol and Mutual Water Suppliers. Our water supply is from the Wilson Grove Highlands. There is a cluster of CASGEM wells. What will happen to them as climate change occurs? The problem is that SGMA has a boundary and those wells are outside the boundary. Fish and Game is looking at the impact on creeks and we know the creeks are suffering. I am pleading to have the model more specific using historical data. What special areas are there that need to be considered? Even though SGMA and DWR have very exacting requirements for the monitoring points, before we get a decade of very accurate monitoring, we need to use the historical data.

Comment – **Director Jacobs** – Marcus Trotta came to the independent water meeting in January and gave a very detailed presentation. Thank you to staff for taking the time to hear our concerns on the west side.

Comment **Director Hopkins** – Thanked Mr. Rosenblum for his good comments and Mr. Trotta, for joining the independent water meeting.

b. Groundwater User Registration Program

Andy Rodgers provided an update, talked about the key elements of implementation, and the current schedule. A Beta test will be done by all three GSA advisory committees, asking for feedback from the Advisory Committee members and staff. The Beta testers will be provided a secure link to the beta Groundwater User Registration Program webpage, interactive map, auto-populated information exchange form, and a form to provide

organized comments and feedback on each section of the program. Rodgers mentioned the draft mailer which will be sent out after a beta test is completed. If the Board has any input regarding the schedule, beta test, draft mailer, and any aspect of the Groundwater User Registration Program website and survey, please send to Andy Rodgers. The Program is expected to be launched later this spring.

Question **Director Harvey** – Glad to see the revised letter says you can review, correct, improve, etc. Thank you for adding that. On the information phone line, will there be multiple lines in case it is busy?

Response Rodgers – Yes, we need to manage expectations. If there is a voicemail, it has to be clear with options. We are also considering options for a virtual call center the first couple of weeks.

Comment **Director Hopkins** – Said she was proud of the work that has been done on this, the iterative process, and for getting feedback from the Advisory Committee. Well done, a lot of work has gone into this, thank you.

Comment/Question **Director Carnacchi** – In reviewing the draft mailer. Do we need to add “will not be disclosed unless required by law” in the last sentence? I think it should end with a “thank you for participating” or like sentence. Will we use the information?

Response Rodgers – Legal Counsel suggested it be included. We would be required to disclose it like a utility would be. There could be cases when we would have to disclose some information. The real purpose of doing this is for sustainable groundwater. Thank you for the idea of closing the letter on a positive note, good idea.

Comment **Director Harvey** – Can someone do a ‘public records’ on this information or is it outside of that realm?

Response Rodgers – I think so but I will have to check on that with Legal Counsel.

Comment **Director Jacobs** – It might be a good idea to send folks to a Frequently Asked Questions to diffuse some of the questions.

Response Rodgers – Good suggestion!

Question **Director Nagle** – In what database will this reside? Will it connect to a State database?

Response Rodgers – The new information we collect will go into a separate database.

Response Trotta – The current database is a combination of what has been compiled from County, State, and Raftelis data. At this point Permit Sonoma is doing most of the work on the database. Who owns/manages it and where it resides, is ultimately still to be decided.

Comment **Director Nagle** – To be more specific – CASGEM. The State emergency water requiring people in Mark West and Wilson Grove to put in their information in 2014/15. Private residential well information is on CASGEM now because they responded to the survey. Will this end up being on a public database that can be observed?

Response Trotta – This will allow the owner to verify information we have on the wells.

Response Rodgers – We can look into that and get back to you.

Public comment

Douglas Emery – A mailer is informative but if I am going to be taxed in the future, list a couple things that will be beneficial to me as a user - something that says my benefit is going to equal my dollars. Maybe something about monitoring for toxic intrusion, or why we have to start being charged.

Response **Director Hopkins** – Yes, good idea. I appreciate those comments.

7. Action Items

a. **Fiscal Year 2018-19 Audit.**

Receive report from auditor and consider adoption of audit.

The JPA requires an annual year-end audit. Brett Bradford, from Pimenti and Brinker made a brief presentation. The audit found no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in the GSA's finances. Pimenti and Brinker proposed no audit adjustments to the financial statements.

No public comments.

Director Dowd moved to approve the draft 2018-2019 audit as presented, **Director Harvey** seconded. Motion passed unanimously. 9-0-0.

b. **Fiscal Year 2020-21 Budget.**

Review and approve preliminary Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget.

Andy Rodgers mentioned the JPA requires a budget before end April. The proposed budget would add \$5,000 to unspent reserves for a total of \$25,000 in unspent reserves for the Agency. This is lower than the goal of the June 13, 2019 adopted policy which sets a goal of reserves equal to three months of on-going operating expenses – or \$84,250 for fiscal year 2019-2020. The big difference in revenues from the current year is the Groundwater Sustainability Plan – there is more associated revenue coming from the DWR grant. On the expenses side, we are spending more time on the GSP and processes associated with it. West Yost will be managing the groundwater user registration program. Another change is in the grant administration for the second DWR grant that we are in negotiations right now to execute. Also, we need to get prepared for another rate study the following year with some funds allocated to get reserves up for that, and there is ongoing outreach and our meetings.

Question **Director Carnacchi** – What happens to the GSA if we run out of operating expenses?

Response Rodgers – We have enough because of the way our revenues are set up – the municipal water pumpers pay us at the beginning of the fiscal year and that will happen again. If that didn't happen, that would be an interesting conversation. We would be on life support for a little while as we figure out how to comply with state law.

Question **Director Harvey** – How comfortable are you with the number for the well registration program? That will be intense.

Response Rodgers – We spent a lot of time on it this year, we can get a lot done. I am hoping this number gets us through. I am not able to identify additional dollars yet.

Director Harvey – You said it would be pretty intense to get the information we need for the Groundwater Sustainability Plan. Are you fairly comfortable with the funds needed to do those documents?

Rodgers – We have increased expenses associated with getting the GSP done this year, there are lots of activities such as public workshops. It was a pretty detailed budget when applying for the grant. It looks like the projections until now have been pretty accurate.

Public Comment

Douglas Emery – As we start looking at property fees/taxes, I would also like you to keep considering looking at people that are heavily mining our groundwater – beer (noted Russian River Brewery), and wine going into exports. These are our heavy water users, impacting roads with large trucks, etc., and make huge profits. How can we not just tax the rural residential user but the larger corporations making a profit with our groundwater? If you continue with the fee study, make this system equitable.

Comment **Director Fudge** – I am responding to the question about Russian River Brewing. They looked at every way they could use recycled water, went to a lot of effort. They even ended up having to change state law. I want to give them some credit for that.

Director Zane moved to approve the preliminary Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget as presented, **Director Harvey** seconded. Motion passed unanimously 9-0-0.

c. **GSA Board Advisory Committee Appointments.**

Seven of the 18 Advisory Committee members are appointed by the Board. The following seats have been vacated mid-term: one Rural Residential and one Environmental. Staff recommends the applicants be appointed.

Andy Rodgers mentioned the two vacated seats. Environmental – an application has been updated to be specific to the environmental seat. The Board directed creating an ad hoc at their December meeting. When the ad hoc met on February 3 to review four highly qualified applications they decided Beth Lamb would be best to replace Sebastian Bertsch through the end of this year. In

January this year, Doug Beretta, also said he would have to step down for family health reasons. This news was received before the ad hoc met on February 3 so they had the opportunity to discuss the application process for the Rural Residential seat and recommended the GSA advertise the Rural Residential well owner seat opening as soon as possible. They decided to use the same process to solicit applications and go through another review for the Rural Residential seat.

Question **Director Harvey** – Do we allow people to apply again at the expiration of a term?
Response Rodgers – Yes, Beth Lamb would be allowed to apply again.

Public Comment

John Rosenblum – Is there a procedural reason to wait?

Response Rodgers – Not if the Board gives the go-ahead to advertise the position. We will also reach out to the applicants that applied for the Environmental position as some are qualified to serve in the Rural Residential seat.

Comment **Director Harvey** –The first position was advertised as an Environmental seat so we want to be fair and transparent to others and advertise the Rural Residential seat separately – not only source from the applications received thus far.

Public Comment

Douglas Emery – It looks like some heavy hitter environmental organizations support Beth Lamb. One of the other applicants, David Noren, has been involved in the Regional Water Quality Control for a long time. He has much experience. He co-founded the Sebastopol Water Information Group and remained an active member. Noren is also a well owner. There are some strong activists in our county and California weighing in behind David. I highly recommend David Noren be hired.

Comment **Director Harvey** – I was torn between David Noren and Beth Lamb, tending to favor Mr. Noren. I hope Mr. Noren lives in a rural residential area and can apply for the next seat.

Director Nagle moved to approve as presented, **Director Harvey** seconded. Motion passed 8-1-0 (**Director Carnacchi** opposed, he favored David Noren).

8. Administrator, Plan Manager and Legal Counsel Report

Jay Jasperse, on Prop 68, said that DWR recommended we get \$1m grant. The comment period ended earlier this month. On the SGMA funding we are currently at \$6.3 million dollars county-wide that has been brought in from the State. Three major components for this basin: funding for outreach and coordination, working on getting good estimates for rural residential and agriculture, and working with Permit Sonoma on land use evaluation

and integrating the well permitting and data collection program. This grant will include four discrete multi-level well clusters in addition to looking at surface groundwater interaction, in up to 60 locations. Jan. 31, 2020 was the first batch of Groundwater Sustainability Plans due to the state. There are 43 plans for 18 critically over-drafted basins. Now in 75-day public review. The state has two years to respond with their assessment.

Question **Director Harvey** – It would have been useful for our Plan to get reviews. Do we have to wait two years or will there be preliminary reviews?

Response Jasperse – Although they have two years, they will release reviews as they become available.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:53 pm. The next meeting will take place on April 9 at 1:00 p.m.