



APPROVED BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

February 10, 2021

The Board of Directors for the Merced Irrigation-Urban Groundwater Sustainability Agency (MIUGSA) met virtually on the above date pursuant to notice at 9:00 A.M., consistent with temporary authorization to deviate from Brown Act meeting guidelines issued through Executive Order by California Governor Gavin Newsom.

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

At 9:00 A.M., Chair Hicham Eltal welcomed those present and called the meeting to order. MIUGSA Board Coordinator, Jennifer McMaster made an announcement regarding changes that have been made to the Board meeting procedures in order to make good faith efforts to comply with the Governor’s Executive Orders and allow the public the opportunity to observe, participate and comment in the Board’s meeting.

Ms. McMaster stated that she had not received any emails from members of the public requesting a link to the video portion of the meeting, nor had she received any public comment on any agenda item. Ms. McMaster also summarized the procedure members of the public should follow in order to submitting comments both before, and during the meeting.

ROLL CALL

Roll call showed the following MIUGSA Representatives present:

Name	Organization
Hicham Eltal (Chair)	Merced Irrigation District
Ken Elwin (Vice Chair)	City of Merced
Justin Vinson	City of Atwater
Jose Antonio Ramirez	City of Livingston
Cynthia Benavidez	Le Grand Community Services District (CSD)
Daniel Chavez	Planada Community Services District (CSD)
Carlos Valencia	Winton Water and Sanitary District (CSD)
Phillip McMurray	General Counsel
Jennifer McMaster	Board Coordinator

*(**Note – Board members Valencia and Ramirez were present during the Board’s meeting, however during the meeting they experienced technical difficulties and were unable to signify a vote during consideration of the Board’s action items. For purposes of these minutes only, Board members Valencia and Ramirez are noted to have abstained from the vote.)*

CORRECTIONS OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Meeting Minutes: January 13, 2020

On motion by Director Elwin, seconded by Director Benavidez; the Board unanimously accepted the Consent Calendar, as presented. A roll call vote was taken and the votes were as follows:

Ayes:	Eltal, Elwin, Vinson, Benavidez, Chavez
Noes:	None
Abstain:	Valencia, Ramirez
Absent:	None

REPORTS

Chair Eltal discussed suggestions received regarding representatives for the development of a basin-wide stakeholder advisory committee to help guide the implementation phase of the GSP. Chair Eltal thanked the MIUGSA member agencies for their recommendations and welcomed any additional suggestions for representation moving forward.

Chair Eltal noted that staff received approximately 33 applications from individuals interested in sitting on the committee. He mentioned that a number of those applications were from individuals representing the different areas within the MIUGSA. Chair Eltal noted that applications from interested parties will be presented to the Coordination Committee for recommendations at its upcoming meeting. He also noted the list of stakeholders developed as part of this process may later be used to develop a committee to assist in establishing policies for implementation of the GSP within MIUGSA.

The Board asked and staff responded to various questions relating to the development of the stakeholder advisory committee for the implementation phase of the GSP.

Chair Eltal discussed and provided an overview of ongoing inter-basin coordination with the Turlock, Chowchilla and Delta-Mendota Subbasins. He discussed, in particular subsidence and water gains/losses identified across boundary lines. He noted that continued coordination between the adjacent basins is necessary and may also require discussion with additional basins as well. He noted, for example, discussions with Modesto may become necessary when working with Turlock and discussions with Madera may become necessary when working with Chowchilla.

Chair Eltal discussed an upcoming meeting to be held between the Delta-Mendota, Chowchilla, Turlock, and Merced Subbasins regarding subsidence. He indicated that the meeting

date has not yet been confirmed. He discussed representation for MIUGSA at the upcoming meeting and asked for feedback from the Board. Based on feedback from the Board, Chair Eltal and/or Director Elwin will attend the upcoming meeting.

General Counsel, Phillip McMurray provided an overview of a new standing item on the Board's agenda. He noted that he will be tracking a variety of legal, legislative and regulatory activities at the state and local levels, and will provide general summaries for the Board on an as-needed basis.

Mr. McMurray discussed and provided an overview of recently proposed legislation, Assembly Bill 252 (AB 252). Mr. McMurray indicated that the proposed bill would create a new program within the Department of Conservation for the purpose of providing grants to GSA's and other specified entities to repurpose land taken out of agricultural production, and to support fallowing programs that may be included as part of a GSP. He noted that the program, if approved, could fund a variety of different repurposing projects. He also noted that it is still very early on in the process, so there may be more detail that gets fleshed out as the bill moves along.

ACTIONS/DISCUSSION

Chair Eltal discussed establishing sustainability criteria and thresholds for groundwater levels in areas lacking domestic wells. He discussed, in particular, undesirable results as it relates to domestic wells going dry. He noted that there are several areas that are not within two miles of a domestic well that have no set criteria for measuring reductions. Chair Eltal noted that if this matter is not addressed, it could have adverse impacts on both agricultural and urban areas in MIUGSA. He discussed a push for more monitoring wells in those areas as an urgent matter, and noted that this topic, in addition to sustainability criteria, should be discussed at an upcoming Coordination Committee meeting.

Chair Eltal discussed suggestions from Woodard and Curran and review of other basins in regard to how criteria has been established in other areas. Chair Eltal noted that addressing this issue may require an amendment to the GSP. Chair Eltal requested feedback from the Board on how to proceed.

The Board recognized the importance of this item and provided feedback, based on that feedback sustainability criteria and groundwater levels in areas lacking domestic wells will be addressed at an upcoming Coordination Committee meeting.

Chair Eltal led a discussion and provided an overview of implementation issues associated with the GSP for the Merced groundwater subbasin. He discussed the various committees that have been working on the framework of the GSP. He mentioned that things have been moving rather slowly and there may be a need to work on policies separately within MIUGSA, specifically as it relates to implementation of the GSP.

Chair Eltal provided an overview of potential items that should be addressed when developing GSP implementation policies within MIUGSA. He discussed, in particular, the need to develop plans to collect and/or estimate data sufficient to inform policies and to identify and establish components to reach sustainability criteria within MIUGSA.

Chair Eltal discussed the need to establish policies and metrics to address carryover and losses of groundwater, including imported and recharge water. Chair Eltal discussed the establishment of policies for groundwater operations and noted that MIUGSA would like to work with others within the basin on this item, but may need to establish these policies separately. Chair Eltal also discussed the development of a groundwater exchange/credit system and enforcement issues to be considered.

Chair Eltal discussed the potential need to hire a consultant to assist with MIUGSA's policy development, if the Board decides to move forward in developing its own set of GSP implementation policies. Chair Eltal discussed some potential options for hiring a consultant to assist in policy development and asked for feedback from the Board.

The Board engaged in a lengthy discussion regarding the concept of the plan to establish policies for GSP implementation within MIUGSA, then provided feedback. Based on feedback from the Board, staff will engage with consultants and send ideas forward for further discussion at an upcoming MIUGSA Board meeting.

CLOSED SESSION

None.

ADJOURN

On motion by Director Vinson, seconded by Director Elwin; the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at approximately 10:07 A.M.