

MINUTES
BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY
Thursday September 21, 2023

The Board of Water Supply, County of Kaua'i, met in a regular meeting in Līhu'e on Thursday, September 21, 2023. Chair Kurt Akamine called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. The following Board members were present:

BOARD:

Mr. Kurt Akamine, *Chair*
Ms. Julie Simonton, *Vice Chair*
Ms. Micah Finnila (*remote*)
Mr. Larry Dill

EXCUSED:

Mr. Tom Shigemoto
Mr. Ka'aina Hull
Mr. Troy Tanigawa

Quorum was achieved with 4 members present at Roll Call.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Scheduled Meeting: Thursday, October 19, 2023

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved with no objections.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

1. Regular Board Meeting – August 17, 2023
2. Executive Session – August 17, 2023

The meeting minutes were approved with no objections.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Public testimony was received by John Moore, Director of the Hawaiian Sustainability Foundation, a member of the Get Fit Built Environment Task Force, one of the co-founders of the Community Coalition of Kauai and has also been involved as a builder in the project at the North end of Kapaa. Mr. Moore expressed his appreciation for the transformation of the Water Department, which he described as miraculous compared to the history of difficulties everyone on the island faced. He shared that many of his friends who are plumbers and contractors have expressed amazement at getting permit approvals in a matter of days, and Mr. Moore himself has been trying to get an approval for 19 years. Mr. Moore stated that what the county has done on every level to transform DOW with new people that are cooperative, helpful, and go out of their way to try and solve issues and get things done is truly miraculous, and though he does not know what is happening or how its coming about, he is greatly appreciative of such positive change.

STAFF REPORTS

1. Fiscal:
 - a. Monthly dashboard
 - b. Budget Report for August 2023

Waterworks Controller Renee Yadao provided an overview of the Fiscal monthly dashboard noting that the Fiscal Division is now fully staffed. The last remaining Accountant position was filled on September 1, and the Account Clerk is being redescribed to an accounting assistant. The summer intern will be filling the account clerk position as an 89-day hire and has been instrumental in assisting the billing section with the rebuild. Ms. Yadao reminded the Board that

the billing section continues to work towards catching up with the backlog of customer accounts needing adjustments, which are needed to determine actual consumption used. They were able to work with software consultant, Prithibi, who developed a software enhancement that has taken a six-step process down to a 1-step process that has significantly reduced the amount of time it takes to perform.

Manager Tait commented that a year and a half ago the Department was not able to get a true picture of the Department's financial standing, but we are now seeing that light switch change with hiring staff to reduce overtime, getting a handle on what our actual power costs are, and finally capturing what we had hoped to do in previous years' Finance meetings. He feels that once Renee's team is fully staffed and situated, we will get to where we need to be.

2. Operations – Monthly dashboard

Assistant Chief of Operations Ryan Smith provided an overview of the monthly dashboard, highlighting that they had an increase in the amount of work orders generated and completed for the last month which is mainly due to all the meter changeouts. The coordination between the billing staff and ops staff resulted in the field crew being able to use the remainder of the transponders they had in the warehouse, which equated to a couple of months of back-logged work they were able to catch up on. Due to that, the margin of the non-revenue water in the monthly water audit was brought down significantly. In addition to the use of all the transponders and replacements, the meter mechanics have been focusing on the large meters and were able to get 5 back in operation in the last 3 weeks.

Mr. Smith noted they are continuing recruitment for pipefitter helper and electrician helper, and hope to have one more meter mechanic starting October 1.

3. Engineering – Monthly dashboard

Engineering Division Head Jason Kagimoto noted that Engineering has removed the charts and graphs from their dashboard to try and better convey the oversight on the project work. Regarding staffing, they are moving forward with one of the inspector positions, but they are still having difficulties hiring engineering positions, which reflects in their overtime costs. They currently have about 30 ongoing projects, 5 projects currently in construction and 1 currently in the bidding process. That project will have a several year construction period but will have a great benefit to the community as far as water restrictions. They are also trying to bid out another project at Kuhio Highway between Hardy and Oxford. They are very busy, moving full steam ahead and appreciate everyone's willingness to help to keep projects on track. Manager Tait asked how many staff they have to work on those 30-some projects to which Mr. Kagimoto replied 2 engineers, a Project Management Officer and himself.

Board member Hull asked if capabilities to increase the GE tax were allowed, and the flow of money came to DOW, would there even be the capacity, staffing-wise, to be able to get more projects online? Mr. Kagimoto replied that his history on the wastewater side was always a shortage of money, and you did what you could based on the amount of money. At DOW funding has not necessarily been an issue, but rather the manpower issue. His approach is to take and move forward whatever they can, and they have been able to move projects forward by hiring and managing consultants. If DOW can obtain more money to take on more work, they are happy to do everything they possibly can. Manager Tait added that from his level, he looks at groups like Bowers and Kubota that provide a service with expertise that the Department does not possess, which makes sense. However, with traditional engineering and construction positions, we are unable to hire those staff members because of salary restrictions. We are

currently the only island that does not allow us to use the full salary range in our existing State classification.

Board member Tanigawa commented that staffing is one essential element to move projects forward, but projects also rely on other agencies' services. He noted that one agency that has resulted in some project delays is the State Historic Preservation Division and asked for some elaboration on the tasks that remain on the Weke, Anae, Mahamahi and Hee Roads project before it is ready to bid out. Mr. Kagimoto stated that they are just awaiting agency review and final agency approval from Public Works Engineering and DOT Highways. They have exchanged comments and the plans will be updated to address DOT's comments. The goal is to be able to bid this out in the next 2 months. In response to Mr. Tanigawa, Mr. Kagimoto confirmed that they have secured concurrence from Historic Preservation.

Board member Shigemoto asked once lines are replaced, what is the lifespan to which Mr. Kagimoto stated it depends on the soil conditions, construction and quality of materials used. However, they have been replacing lines that are 50-70 years old. Mr. Shigemoto referenced earlier discussion about sea-level rise and its effect on ductile iron and asked when the County intends to make adjustments to standards if we do not have current standards in place. Mr. Kagimoto explained that in areas where there is concern about pipes being in ground water, especially on the coastline, they have been moving towards using PVC.

The Water Resources and Planning division is currently holding public meetings for the Water Use and Development update. They just received an update on the long range plan for which they are doing stakeholder interviews, and they are moving forward with the Lead and Copper Rule Revisions. Mr. Kagimoto emphasized that he is happy to report that they have been doing more with less, and all of the projects mentioned are being done with the existing staff they have. He expressed his pride in seeing his team being able to do all they have been doing with their limited resources.

Board member Hull referenced the fires in Maui, noting that the temperature of the fire was hot enough to melt engine blocks. He asked whether the infrastructure could withstand that heat at the depth they are at whether they are ductile iron or PVC. Mr. Kagimoto stated he is unsure but noted that the PVC pipes on Maui did melt.

Chair Akamine acknowledged Joe, Michael, and Jason's leadership, noting that the teamwork that is happening within Engineering is incredible. He also pointed out that a big hurdle has been the ability to obtain enough staff and having to utilize consultants which come at a cost. However, knowing that we want these projects to move forward and if there is funding available, perhaps that is something to consider.

4. Administration:
 - a. Monthly dashboard

Manager Tait provided an overview of the dashboard, noting that the vacancies with Administrative Staff have not been the priority because fiscal and engineering is doing the heavy lifting. There has been great help from all divisions to assist with things they would not normally do. Administration is undergoing a dramatic culture shift where everything used to flow through one person, but the model being implemented is to be bifurcated to relevant people. Manager Tait is looking to incorporate a resource pool type model where everyone on the 2nd floor is cross trained to back up one another. It is a model that is foreign to County DHR, so there are some challenges with the Position Descriptions with HR.

- b. Public Relations – updates on Public Notices & Announcements, Community Outreach & Education, and Upcoming Events
 - c. Human Resources – updates on Personnel Vacancies
 - d. Information Technology – Monthly update
5. Manager and Chief Engineer – Required communications to the Board, and update of Department activities

Manager Tait has continued to reach out and has now been getting significant response from folks at the elected level and from Water Industry associates regarding federal funding opportunities. DOW has a big advantage in that we have never defaulted in federal monies, but the downside is that we never sought out federal funding.

TOPICS FOR NEXT BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY MEETING:

- 1. Discussion and Possible action to determine criteria for Annual Evaluation of the Manager and Chief Engineer

TOPICS FOR FUTURE BOARD OF WATER SUPPLY MEETING

- 1. Water Systems Investment Plan Briefing *(July/August)*
- 2. CIP Update

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Pursuant to Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) §92-7(a), the Board may, when deemed necessary, hold an executive session on any agenda item without written public notice if the Executive Session was not anticipated in advance. Any such executive session shall be held pursuant to HRS §92-4 and shall be limited to those items described in HRS §92-5(a).

Pursuant to Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Sections 92-4, 92-5(a)(3), and 92-5(a)(4), the purpose of this Executive Session is to deliberate on the acquisition of public property, specifically, property identified by tax map key: 4-3-018-001 and for the Board to consult with the Board's attorney on questions and issues pertaining to the Board's powers, duties, privileges, immunities, and liabilities as they relate to this agenda item.

The Board entered into Executive Session at 11:05 a.m.

The Board resumed in open session at 11:25 a.m.

In accordance with Act 19 Relating to Public Agency Meetings, Chair Akamine reported the Board's desire to ratify actions taken in Executive Session to allow the Board to consider acquisition of public property and to delegate or authorize the Manager and Chief Engineer to do due diligence as such.

Board member Shigemoto moved to ratify actions taken in executive session, seconded by Mr. Hull; with no objections, motion carried with 6 Ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:26 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cherisse Zaima

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Commission Support Clerk