**MEDFORD IRRIGATION DISTRICT**

**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**

**November 13th, 2024 @ 1:30 pm**

Present: Dennis O’Donoghue, Tom Brookins, Sean Naumes; Jack Friend: Manager/Secretary

Absent: Henry Vaninetti, Matt Borman

**Call meeting to order:** Vice Chair O’Donoghue called the meeting to order at 1:26 p.m.

**Minutes:** The regular board meeting minutes on September 11th, 2024, were reviewed. Vice Chair O’Donoghue asks if there are any comments or corrections to the minutes. Director Naumes motions to approve September 11th, 2024, minutes, Director Brookins seconds the motion, and the motion carries. The regular board meeting minutes on October 9th, 2024, were reviewed. Vice Chair O’Donoghue asks if there are any comments or corrections to the minutes. Director Naumes had one revision. Director Brookins motions to approve October 9th, 2024, minutes with revision, Director Naumes seconds the motion, and the motion carries.

**Financials:** Manager Friend: Not a whole lot of changes. We are getting closer to what we budgeted. On the balance sheet, the Cash On Hand will be significantly higher when we get our reimbursement funds from the projects. Hopefully we can receive that money before the end of the year to have a better look at where we are at.

Director Brookins: How are we looking for a carryover and do we have any predictions?

Manager Friend: We have reserves.

Director Brookins: I like the custom detail expenses sheet however, I would like to see the items that are purchased.

Flanakin: We can do that. All items purchased is entered into the correct line item expense category.

Director Naumes: Under the expenses “Above the Drop” It shows 33K for the year and we are at 12K. Is there going to be an increase in that category before the end of the year?

Flanakin: We still have a couple months of billing to do for Rogue River Valley Irrigation District.

Vice Chair O’Donoghue: Do we have a motion to accept the financials?

Director Naumes: I motion to accept the financials for October 2024, Director Brookins seconds the motion, motion carries.

**Delinquent Accounts:** Flanakin: This month I included the current year delinquent patrons as well to get a clearer picture of all delinquent accounts and it’s total. There will be a significant amount of foreclosure letters and lien letters going out next year providing this list of delinquent accounts are not paid in full. For the Taylor/Miner account their last payment is this month, and they are all paid. I contacted them through email to let them know the last payment amount and if they still wanted to continue to have the irrigation rights for the property. There is one landowner that is left from the foreclosure list and that account is below 10K and payments on time. The bankruptcy account is receiving payments monthly for the most part. The current balance after the bankruptcy is now going to foreclosure is not paid by next March 2025.

Director Brookins: Are there letters sent out to the current ones on the list?

Flanakin: Yes, those that haven’t paid by the due date is sent a letter stating that there will be a late fee and interest applied to their account if not paid by the due date.

Director Brookins: So, you send out a letter for two cents?

Flanakin: You don’t. In our policy, we do not rebill or send a letter unless the amount is over ten dollars.

Director Brookins: When do those letters go out?

Flanakin: The go out before the first of March.

Director Brookins: So, none of these people know that they are possibly delinquent?

Flanakin: They do know because they have accrued a late fee and interest, and they choose to still not pay their bill. So, they will proceed to the 2-year delinquent if not paid by March 1st and accrue a lien fee as well. We also sent out the water management policy along with our new prices for 2025.

Director Naumes: Since we haven’t seen the current year delinquent patrons, is this a normal amount compared to prior years?

Flanakin: I will look up that answer for you and bring it to the next meeting.

Director Brookins: When the normal billing goes out, is the outstanding balance on the new billing?

Flanakin: Yes, it will be under previous balance. Currently, Dusk is doing an audit of all the accounts to make sure we have the current information for all accounts. In doing so, she has made many changes which results in billing those accounts a new account fee due to name change in the title of the property.

Manager Friend: It really helps to see if there are lot line adjustments that we are not aware of. It affects the water rights, acreage, sale of property, etc. It is the property owners responsibility to keep us informed of any changes that are made.

**Elections:** Director Brookins makes a motion to appoint Matt Borman to the Board of Directors for Medford Irrigation District, Director Naumes seconds the motion, motion carries.

**Administration:** Manager Friend: We need to change the December meeting from the 11th to the 18th. All agreed.

I have included some reservoir storage graphs and graphics from the US Drought Monitor. Jackson County is still in a D1 Moderate Drought at this point. October was dryer than normal and combined reservoir storage is still below average. We have been managing our storage in Fish and Fourmile differently than in the past due to the uncertainty of water availability year by year while we navigate the tribal call on Fourmile supply. Fish lake is currently at 56%. That is 111% of the average for this time of year. Fourmile is at 13%. That is 32% of the average for this time of year. Combined storage for the two is 64% of the average for this time of year. As you can see from the southern supply graph, they are almost exactly where they were this time last year.

Fortunately, we are starting to see cooler temperatures and precipitation. The Fourmile and Billy Creek Snotel sites have shown 10” of snow over the last week. Fish Lake has not had measurable accumulation yet. The higher elevation snowpack appears to be sticking around and should provide a good base for accumulating. The weather predictions for our area show equal chances of above or below average precipitation and temperatures.

The OWRC annual conference is December 2-4 in Hood River. I have included the Agenda in this report. MID, RRVID, and TID will all be attending. We will have a meeting with the BOR regional director, Jennifer Carrington to discuss Trans basin diversions and the Fourmile call. We will also be meeting with FCA to discuss the projects we are working on and the vision for Ag in the Rogue basin as a whole. If there is any interest from the Board to attend the conference, Please let me know as soon as possible so that I can get you registered, and a room booked. On Wednesday night the 4th there will be the annual banquet. This is a great opportunity to provide raffle items from the Rogue Basin. If you have any products that you would like to donate towards the raffle, I can take them up with me. In the past, we have received donations like wine or pears from our patrons or board members.

There will also be a specific fundraising portion of the banquet for the Oregon Water Resources Foundation Scholarship Program. This 501©3 was created a few years ago by the Board of OWRC to honor the legacy of past leaders and members of OWRC. Jim Pendleton’s passing was the impetus to create the foundation. There will be donations towards the scholarship program and a live auction. I have included a page from the OWRF website that explains the foundation.

The district staff completed the CPR/First aid classroom training, and we will have the hands-on skills course next week. That will provide a two-year certification for the entire staff.

Dam operator training is due every four years and reclamation is holding the training in Bend this year. I will be taking our main dam operator and the alternative to this training in December.

Dowl is moving forward on the JSC phase one design work. We are expecting an alternatives analysis before the meeting with FCA at OWRC.

FCA is moving along on the watershed plan EIS. We will have some discussions around the conserved water coming up. We plan to discuss this with RRVID and if there is anything different than we have already agreed to in the past. We will likely need to hold a joint board meeting. I will keep you informed.

We signed the interconnection agreement with Pacific Power for the floating solar project. The BABA requirements added 1 million dollars to the project. We are currently working with Wyden and Merkley staff to push for reconsideration on the BABA Waiver. That will bring the cost back down and make the process of procuring the equipment much easier. This delay has pushed the completion of the project to 2025.

Brian Hampson and I met with Allan Horton and Keith Kueny from FCA to discuss the hydro project on the end of the Joint system canal. There are a lot of different options and both districts have other projects going on, so it was good to sit down with a map and brainstorm what we want to do with this opportunity. Their team is running numbers and looking at the SIP model to determine what plan is best and the feasibility of the different ideas. There will be a meeting with an update on the energy side with FCA at the OWRC conference.

**Transfers:** Manager Friend: Huggins transfer on. 1971 Jasmine Ave. off of South Stage Road. 0.35 acres. I recommend for approval of the transfer.

Vice Chair O’Donoghue: Do we have a motion for approval? Director Brookins motions to approve the transfer on for the Huggins family, Director Naumes seconds and motion carries.

**Old Business:** Friend: I have a question regarding the Employee Handbook. Once this policy is passed, what happens to the employees that are operating under the old policy, regarding benefits? (i.e. sick benefits) are they grandfathered in or how does that work?

Anderson: If the accrued sick leave is changed to less than the current amount of 480 hours, there are a couple options, you may have employees that have a significant amount of accrued sick leave hours, cash out or they simply go away.

Director Naumes: We seem to be above and beyond the required. Was the 480 hours an incentive to entice employees?

Manager Friend: Matt had mentioned last meeting how a large amount of sick accrual would work for agricultural employees. The type of work that needs to be done at different times of the year makes for a good incentive for employee retainment.

Anderson: The reason for this subject is brought to light is because of the Paid Leave Oregon benefits. These are benefits that the employees were not entitled to before but are now.

Vice Chair O’Donoghue: If they have 90 days of paid leave and don’t use it, do we have to pay them out if they are terminated?

Manager Friend: That was another question, on the second page of your memo where MID pays out all accrued hours upon termination of employment with 10+ years of employment. The longevity credit for the payout of sick leave accrued was linked to filing with PERS within 30 days of retirement to receive that payout.

Vice Chair O’Donoghue: Did you have questions about the overtime?

Flanakin: I believe the discussion of overtime for agriculture workers was brought up in the memo. I spoke to the qualification of overtime for agriculture workers verses others. We currently do pay for overtime however, we are not obliged to with the current law including irrigation districts.

Manager Friend: The last thing was electronic timekeeping. The issue here is if we had a discrepancy with a terminated employee questioning their breaks and lunch.

Director Naumes: Are you thinking we should move to electronic as a new system or are we still comfortable with the paper one. I’m not sure if it would be an issue with the employee having the application on their personal phone.

Flanakin: One of the things that I was looking at for cost efficiency was to modify our current timecards to add columns for breaks and lunches to check off each day that they did in fact take those breaks and lunch.

Director Brookins: We do the paper ones now and they work fine?

Flanakin: Yes, we do.

Director Naumes: We could go electronically down the road. We can also strike the introductory period as well per recommendation.

Manager Friend: Did Matt have questions about the introductory period?

Flanakin: I remember that he had good input regarding the overtime.

Anderson: Do you want to just leave the current sick accrual as is and not change it?

Director Naumes: Should we just leave the current sick accrual with the current employees and for new hires they would have a different limit of accrued sick time? Do you guys have any thoughts on that? That is quite the accrual for sick leave.

Flanakin: There are quite a few districts that have the 480 cap for sick leave.

Vice Chair O’Donoghue: Really? Wow.

Manager Friend: The other option brought up was to pay out those in the old system and everyone start fresh with the new amount going forward. Bring reports of those employees who have a large accrual to the next meeting to discuss.

Anderson: You can also let the current employees keep their accrual and start with the new system in January 2025.

Manager Friend: Would you like to see a spreadsheet of where everyone is and get an idea of what we are talking about? What their bank is and their usage is.

Vice Chair O’Donoghue: I think if you just move it to 80 hours and leave those with remaining amounts would use as they go.

Flanakin: We would go from 480 to 80 hours?

Vice Chair O’Donoghue: Yes

Flanakin: We did have an employee that had an emergency surgery, and his accrued sick time saved him.

Director Brookins: I was looking at hospital stays and things like that. Maybe a short/long term disability program do fill in if someone is hospitalized.

Manager Friend: Does paid leave pay 100%?

Flanakin: Up to 40K per year or less pays out 100%. Above 40K it becomes a percentage that results in a lower wage available.

Anderson: You could use the sick pay to fill in the pay that Paid Leave Oregon doesn’t pay.

Manager Friend: Are all other benefits protected while the employee is on PLO?

Flanakin: Yes

Manager Friend: Would we eliminate the 50% payout at the end of each year with the new proposed benefit? The ditch riders rely on that to take some extra time off and having that little extra is an incentive.

Director Naumes: We don’t have to act on this right now. We can use a little more information to help decide.

Manager Friend: We can get you all that information.

**R.B.W.U.C.I:** Friend: September Billing $1,749.98. Director Naumes moves to approve the RBWUCI bill for September, Director Brookins seconds the motion, motion carries.

**Adjourn:** 3:10 pm

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Vice Chair Dennis O’Donoghue Jack Friend – District Manager/Secretary