

# FLATHEAD COUNTY WATER DISTRICT #101

POB 1141, Columbia Falls, MT 59912

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Special Meeting Minutes  
October 22, 2024

## Special Meeting to discuss the State of the District:

### I. Call to Order 6:59PM

Directors present include Nicole Bond, President, Russ Barnett, Vice President, Clarence Taber and Brian Rohletter

Additional present: Jeff Soyland, CWO and Tina Bondy, Board Secretary. Customers Jim Bellmore, Norm Nunnally, Ellen McRory, Casey Becker and Linda Parker; and Rob Smith – A2Z Engineering. John Toftum, by telephone.

### II. Time for Public Comment and Discussions - 5 min allotment / property owner.

Mr. Bellmore advised that (1) he hasn't yet received his water bill for this month and (2) he would like to know the difference between the commercial (\$90) and residential (\$45) rates and why small businesses such as the hair shop get charged a commercial fee. Water rates are determined by the size of water line to the site. The water usage rates though are the same - \$.0022 per gallon. Nikki clarified.

Rob explained the differences; in this water system because it's so small (<100 connections) a lot of categories were reduced. Only commercial (has to cover anyone hairdresser to hotel) got one size of a meter and residential got a smaller meter. Arguments can be made of course - but at the time decided to keep simple rate system.

Rob was introduced to the room as the project engineer for the water system.

Mr. Nunnally began aggressively challenging Rob's certification regarding state of Montana fire hydrants. Then turned his ire onto the Board and demanded to know how many of the board members didn't want to be here. His beratement and name calling continued.

Russ addressed Mr. Nunnally, advising that most of the Board members have been sitting on this board for 5-6 years, they were here when the complete rebuild was being planned and executed, they have each spent a lot of time and energy and have worked hard to get this heck of a job done.

Ellen McRory inquired about the letter from the DEQ regarding the manganese levels. It was explained by the Board, the CWO and the A2Z Engineer that MT gov't doesn't have a level that says - anything over .1 isn't recommended for infants / elderly. Since we are looking into a new system that would help further filter. It's a heavy metal and is not

currently regulated. Trying to be proactive looking at funding. Since we are looking into this – we have a template so we can send water patrons as to why we are looking into it. DEQ provided this – we are trying to let you know so that we can get it fixed / addressed before a regulation comes back from the gov't. Child/infant formula already has manganese – so when using water that has it – puts them over the ideal level. Chlorine is the most effective and affordable solution, per Casey. Best way trading evils. Regulate it do the best you can.

Jeff Soyland advised that he did a manganese flush yesterday and found that it was the heaviest load seen. Another issue is that the water pressure started to drop; may propose doing another flush – in the middle of the night when there is no other demand;

If there is a contamination level set – the filters will be at the pumphouse.

Casey Becker brought up the reclamation that didn't happen on his property following the system completion. The Board advised that they would make a call to John Toftum tonight; and he can address those concerns.

### **III. Business for Special Meeting**

#### **a. State of the District**

##### **i. Water System**

##### **1. 97 hookups – 10 active commercial lines**

Board in agreement – need some improvements. Working on the idea that we might hire a general manager that would have an open line to the customers, take care of those issues,

##### **ii. Financial/ Invoice Discussion**

##### **1. Glacier Bank Account Balances as of 10/17/2024**

- a. Checking \$50,459.98**
- b. Construction \$188.53**
- c. Asset Replacement \$71,824.79**
- d. Grants & Loans Required - \$12,405.00**

#### **b. Board Members**

##### **i. Current Board**

- 1. President – Nicole Bond**
- 2. Vice President – Russ Barnett**
- 3. Brian Rohletter.**
- 4. Clarence Taber**
- 5. *vacant***

#### **c. Contractors**

##### **i. Current Contractors**

1. **Jeff Soyland, Certified Water Operator** - as mentioned earlier, he did a manganese flush recently, also did a lead/copper sample. There are a couple of 3 year tests coming and he would like to get them done rather than wait. Will bring the other lab tests up at the December regular board meeting. Pressure drops that we have seen this summer; haven't had an issue - but usually the booster pumps are running in sequence, all summer they are running at once and continuously and not even getting to 65psi. This is likely because of the hotel.

Russ - There may be a leak - but the major probable is when they are filling the tanks at the motel it sucks all of the water out. Issue that needs to be addressed.

2. **Tina Bondy, Board Secretary**
3. **Roxy Smith, Bookkeeper**
4. **Excavator - John Toftum, as needed**

Russ - will get another quote to compare the excavator jobs.

Called John Toftum - when ready to do move of the hotel meter, just need to schedule it. When talking about reclamation, etc., the Final walk through was all signed off, so John thought that would have been complete. Casey refuted this, and advised that what he wants done is out on the county right of way, and is standard.

John inquired about software for the meter reading. He is concerned that the leak detection isn't on. Secretary confirmed that Leak Detection is indeed on. Discussion about what happens when we see a sizable bill? That we should be reaching out and letting the customer know. John mentioned he has had 2 of these, a couple of weeks apart.

Russ asked and discussed the cause of the two leaks: - moved the trailer out - and water meter didn't get shut off. Other one - bad frost free that leaked/froze.

Discussed with John about flushing the tank that was to have happened last spring. This was an agreement with John when the tank was built; there is a leak in there and it was supposed to have been cleaned and sanitized. Asking John if this can happen in the next month?

#### **d. General Manager Position - Drafted job description**

Russ - Board is in agreement that we need some improvements. Working on the idea that the Board might hire a manager that would have an open line to the customers, take care of those issues. Ben (CWO at Hungry Horse, Martin City and one other district) looked at this, and does the CWO job, which is a state licensed position. Mentioned that the CWO can also act as a Manager handling the district. His thought was that this position could be handled by the CWO.

Further discussion about this role and where to look for resources. Russ will call MT Rural Water about input, also asked Jeff to get together and discuss this – ideas where we could go with this. We have ways to go – but it’s not insurmountable.

Board discussion continued to the bookkeeping challenges and noted that someone with the Board or CWO should be sitting down with the bookkeeper monthly to make sure the bills are correct going out.

Russ advised that for this role, the District is going to need to pay. \$45/month for reasonable service, get you a right bill, make sure testing is all right. The District has been through a lot of increases in costs of products, etc., but haven’t passed off to the customers. We can’t always get grants for everything – but we need a new water tank, that has increased capacity. A big nut to crack over the next 5-10 years; we did most of it – fortunately we insisted with the state that we upgrade the pumphouse with new pumps, etc. But we didn’t have millions to work with – and it won’t take millions to do this next step but we have a fund that will be used to upgrade and if we can get a grant to cover the chlorination system, that would be great – but this is important!

Russ continued pointing out that the Board knows there is a lot of work to do. We don’t all have 20 hours a week to devote to this. Everyone has their issues. Will redouble our efforts. When Nikki took over – it was not an easy position w/o a streamlined system.

Nikki’s goal is that by the time she is done with her 2<sup>nd</sup> term as president – that it will be a ready to transition; Up to date, digital and more modern. Referring back to the drafted job description – everything duty that is listed, someone is doing already, and mostly on volunteer time. This is why she believes we need one person to be responsible, to be the point person. Harold used to be that guy – and we got spoiled, but we need someone to do this.

Customer Nunnally pointed out that everything on the proposed job description is already under Nikki’s responsibility, so as President, she should be doing this. It was once more pointed out to the Customers present that the Board has refused the \$60/meeting stipend.

Jeff Soyland was asked whether he had any comments. Maintenance items that need attention: the backflow preventer at the pumphouse needs fixing; pressure tank needs to be replaced, will have to hire a plumber.

Clarence wanted to discuss the Board only having quarterly meetings, doesn’t think that the issues that need to be fixed can do so only meeting 4 times a year. Brought up the election concern, his challenge with finding the previous Minutes of meetings, the amounts that the District is paying for services.

#### **IV. Correspondence and Additional Discussion**

Russ - agrees with Clarence - want to have communication with board. Happy to have Clarence on the board - bringing valid points, and we are going to make progress.

Nikki - General mgr position. Russ- would like to see what MT Rural says. They have probably addressed situations like this in the past. If no CWOs that want to do the whole thing - we will have to work around it. See what we can do. If we get it fined tuned - good website, no billing issues, maybe manager job is not as big as we think it is.

\*\*Nikki said she would send Russ the contact info for MT Rural Water.

**V. Adjournment 8:40 pm**

-- President to announce the next General Meeting of the Board is scheduled on December 3, 2024, 7pm, at the Badrock Fire Department.