

South Texas Water Master Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

7/21/2020

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 pm by Laurie Gharis, Manager, Watermaster Section. A quorum of the STWAC was present. Everyone present including STWAC members, TCEQ staff and visitors introduced themselves. In attendance via Skype or Call included:

STWM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Stuart Barron
Patrick Brzozowski
John Byrum
Cameron Ocker
Mario Escobar, Chairperson, STWAC
Melissa Bryant, Secretary, STWAC
Daniel Deng for Mark Van Vleck
Michael G. Short
Charles Hickman

Visitors

Jaime Gonzalez
Pablo Martinez
Joe Fernandez

TCEQ STAFF

Alisha Multer
Angela Sander
Cesar Alvarado
Iliana Spaeth
Kim Nygren
Laurie Gharis
Shannon Ray
Diana Villenas
Kim Nygren
Kelly Mills
Travis Ripley (Intern)

Absent

STWM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ann Kercheville
Adam Conner
Richard "Rick" Coleman
Kirk Schoppe, Vice Chairperson, STWAC
Frank Granieri

ED's NOMINEE FOR NON-VOTING MEMBER OF THE STWAC

A.J. Jones

Patrick Brzozowski moved and Charlie Hickman seconded to approve the meeting minutes from the July 9, 2019 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

FY 2021 Budget

Laurie Gharis, Manager, Watermaster Section presented the proposed FY2021 budget. The FY2021 Operating Budget needs totaled \$725,276.55. This assessment is necessary based on 99% collection rate equaling \$732,602.58. Ms. Gharis noted that the decrease in the budget is primarily due to budget savings from a turnover in positions and a budget carry forward of about \$9,000.

She also reported that the municipal, industrial and combined rates are proposed to be \$0.2279/acre-feet. TCEQ is proposing to purchase a vehicle in FY2021. Things are still unsure on the traveling budget, but in the past travel has been too low. Staff did propose an increase in travel this fiscal year, but it may change depending on the travel ban with the current situation of COVID-19.

TCEQ staff responded to questions from the committee members present. There were no concerns expressed regarding the proposed budget. Mario Escobar moved to recommend approval of the proposed budget to the TCEQ Executive Director. John Byrum seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Watermaster Advisory Committee Membership.

Ms. Gharis introduced the new members. Steve Raabe retired from the San Antonio River Authority, so Melissa Bryant will be his replacement on the committee. John Byrum moved to appoint Melissa as the new Secretary. Charlie Hickman seconded, and it passed unanimously. Our new secretary for the South Texas Watermaster Advisory Committee is Melissa Bryant.

Ms. Gharis also introduced Claire Weirich, who is now the Victoria TCEQ Representative and will be conducting site inspections in the area. Joseph Nichols has moved to San Antonio and will be one of the San Antonio deputies.

Old Business

Stuart Barron asked about the Texas Water Bank. Ms. Gharis provided the following updated information:

- Individuals within the Texas Water Bank would continue to pay fees, if they were within a watermaster area. The Texas Water Bank facilitates the transfer, sale, or lease of water and water rights within the state. For more information on the Texas Water Bank, please visit the Texas Water Development Board website here: <https://www.twdb.texas.gov/waterplanning/waterbank/bank/index.asp> .

Future Business

Questions were asked about the future rental costs of facilities given several staff are now working from home. Ms. Gharis mentioned that the \$33,000 rent on the facility budget has remained the same. Corpus Christi and San Antonio are the only areas where the state is leasing buildings. There are currently four staff members in the San Antonio

office and one staff member in the Corpus Christi office. Staff will be looking at needs across the agency, as several staff already have home offices or work out in the field. They will be looking at space needs as leases expire on the current buildings. TCEQ is working to do more on a digital platform. They have transitioned to paperless permitting, so applications are online, and reporting can also be done online.

Next Meeting

The next regular meeting of the committee will be in July 2021.

John Byrum made the motion to adjourn. Stuart Barron seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 2:16 pm.