

THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

MINUTES

COMMUNICATIONS AND LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

January 10, 2012

Vice Chair Peterson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. in Committee Room 2-456 at Metropolitan's Headquarters.

Members present: Vice Chair Peterson, Directors Abdo, Ballin, Barbre, Brick, Camacho, Fleming, Friedman, Griset, Heidel, Lewinger, Montalvo, Morris, and Record.

Members absent: Chair Ackerman, Directors Gray, Lowenthal, and K. Murray.

Other Board Members present: Directors Blake, Brown, Dick, Edwards, Foley, Grandson, Little, J. Murray, Steiner, Wilson, and Wright.

Staff present: Acuña, Benbow, Bennion, Breaux, J. Carrillo, Cole (via video), Escuadro-Dailey, Green, Harris, Hiltcher (via video), Kightlinger, Man, Patterson, Scully, Stites, Upadhyay, Waade, and Zinke.

1. OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE COMMITTEE ON MATTERS WITHIN THE COMMITTEE'S JURISDICTION

None

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND LEGISLATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON DECEMBER 11, 2011

Approved

Moved: Record

Seconded: Morris

3. COMMITTEE CHAIR'S REPORT

Vice Chair Peterson reported that President Obama signed the Hoover bill on December 20. He congratulated Metropolitan staff for the good work they did on the Hoover bill.

4. CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS – ACTION

None

5. OTHER BOARD ITEMS – ACTION

None

6. BOARD INFORMATION ITEMS

None

7. COMMITTEE ITEMS

a. Subject: Report on activities from Washington, D.C.

Presented by: Brad Hiltcher, Executive Legislative Representative

Mr. Hiltcher reported on the following activities in Washington, D.C.:

Overview

- The Second Session of the 112th Congress will begin on January 17.
- The President’s State of the Union Address is scheduled for January 24.

Desalination Research Legislation Enacted

- H.R. 2664 (Napolitano, D-CA) – the Reauthorization of the Water Desalination Act of 2011 was enacted at the end of the last session. This measure directs the Secretary of Interior to conduct demonstration projects to develop new water and energy technologies and create new supplies of usable water for municipal, agricultural, industrial, or environmental purposes.

Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) – Earmarks

- Both the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee and House Water and Environment Subcommittee members are asking staff to organize a Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) before spring. This may be challenging in the House, where project authorizations have been deemed “earmarks”, which have been banned by a self-imposed moratorium by Congress.

Secretary Salazar Announces Decision to Withdraw Public Lands near Grand Canyon from New Mining Claims

- Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced his decision on January 9 to withdraw over 1 million acres of federal land near the Grand Canyon from new mining claims for the next 20 years to protect the Grand Canyon and its watershed from potential adverse effects of additional uranium and other hardrock mining.

b. Subject: Report on activities from Sacramento

Presented by: Kathy Cole, Executive Legislative Representative

Ms. Cole reported on activities in Sacramento:

Legislative Deadlines

January 4: Legislature reconvened
January 27: Deadline to submit new bill requests to Legislative Counsel
January 31: Deadline for each house to pass 2011 house-of-origin bills

2012 Forecast:

Ms. Cole reported that Senator Bob Huff (R-Diamond Bar) was elected as the new Senate Minority leader to replace Senator Bob Dutton (R-Inland Empire). Huff last served as Vice Chair of the Senate Budget Committee and as Caucus Leader under Dutton's leadership.

State Legislation:

- 2012 Water Bond: Governor Brown has publicly announced that he prefers a smaller water bond for the ballot. Any changes to the existing bond program provisions for the November ballot will require a two-thirds vote of the Legislature.
- AB 157 (Jeffries, R-Riverside) which proposed a 25 percent across-the-board cut to all programs in the existing water bond, failed passage in the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee.
- SB 200 (Wolk, D-Davis) – Senator Wolk rewrote her bill to extend the Delta levee subventions program state matching formula through 2020 as an “interim” measure until the Delta Stewardship Council recommends priorities and recommendations for future Delta levee investments. SB 200 cleared the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee unanimously.

- AB 550 (Huber, D-Lodi) – Assembly Member Huber’s bill required the Legislature to approve any new Delta conveyance facility prior to construction. The bill failed passage in the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee.
- The Brown Administration renewed its negotiations on SB 900 (Steinberg, D-Sacramento) over the fall recess. The bill seeks changes to the Regional Water Quality Control Board’s governance structure. Ms. Cole stated that the bill is now in the Assembly, and she will keep the committee informed as discussions continue.

State Budget

- Due to a shortfall in projected state revenues, the Department of Finance, as required in the 2011/12 state budget, imposed just under \$1 billion in cuts to human service programs, education and public safety in December.
- Earlier than expected, Governor Brown released his \$92.6 billion General Fund spending plan for the next budget year. The Governor’s budget plan is designed to address a \$9.2-billion deficit through June 2013 and is conditioned upon the passage of his \$6.9 billion tax initiative that would seek to increase the sales tax and income tax on high income earners.

The Governor’s budget also includes proposals to:

- Increase the Department of Water Resources (DWR) budget by \$25.4 million to fund 135 new positions for DWR’s preliminary engineering work for the Delta Habitat Conservation and Conveyance Program (DHCCP).
- Transfer the roles and responsibilities of Colorado River Board to the Natural Resources Agency.
- Eliminate the Salton Sea Restoration Council.
- Add new positions within the Department of Fish and Game for the development of renewable energy projects in the Colorado and Mojave deserts.

Should the Governor’s tax initiative fail in November, the Governor proposes that DWR’s flood control program be cut just under \$7 billion.

c. Subject: Oral report on legislative review process

Presented by: Dee Zinke, Group Manager, External Affairs

Ms. Zinke stated that the purpose of the presentation was to provide an overview of the process by which Metropolitan staff analyzes and recommends positions on state and federal legislation.

Ms. Zinke reviewed the internal legislative review process at the federal and state levels and outlined the steps taken by staff to analyze and track legislation and make recommendations to the General Manager and the Board on bill positions.

- d. Subject: Update on AB 2376 (Huffman), Statutes of 2010:
Department of Fish and Wildlife Strategic Vision

Presented by: Brenda Burman, Special Projects Manager

Ms. Burman provided a report on the California Fish & Wildlife Strategic Vision Project. She stated that this project originates from passage of AB 2376 (Huffman, D-San Rafael). AB 2376 was signed by the Governor in 2010 and requires the development of a strategic vision and recommendations to the Governor and Legislature. Ms. Burman also noted that the bill was intended to improve and enhance the Department of Fish and Game's capacity and effectiveness to fulfill its public trust responsibilities.

Ms. Burman stated that the visioning process commenced in July 2011 with a series of hearings. Roger Patterson, Assistant General Manager of Strategic Water Initiatives, testified on behalf of Metropolitan at one of these hearings.

An interim draft strategic vision is expected to be released in February 2012 with a final document released in June 2012.

8. MANAGEMENT REPORT

None

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None

Director Record requested information on the impacts to the state General Fund to retire debt service if the 2012 water bond should pass.

General Manager Kightlinger responded that staff will provide that information to interested Board members.

Next meeting will be held on February 14, 2012.

Meeting adjourned at 10:42 a.m.

Glen Peterson
Vice Chair