

**MINUTES OF THE  
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE  
MIDDLE RIO GRANDE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT**

**FEBRUARY 8, 2023 - 9:00 AM**

Directors having been duly notified; Madam Chair Russo Baca called the special meeting to order at 9:05 pm. The following Directors and Staff were present:

<b>DIRECTORS</b>		<b>STAFF</b>	
Stephanie Russo Baca, Madam Chair	Present	Jason Casuga	Chief Engineer/CEO
Karen Dunning, Vice Chair	Absent	Lorna Wiggins	General Counsel
Barbara Baca, Director	Present	Pamela Fanelli	Secretary-Treasurer/CFO
John Kelly, Director	Absent	Eric Zamora	Chief Operating Officer
Joaquin Baca, Director	Present		
Glen Duggins, Director	Present		
Michael T. Sandoval, Director	Present		

The following names of individuals were interested viewers, callers and/or participants.

Doug Strech, MRGCD	John Thompson, MRGCD Lobbyist	John Fleck, Utton Center
Ernie Marquez, AES	Eli Lovato, AES	Teresa Smith de Cherif, VSWCD
Greg Prudencio, AES		

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Jason Casuga, CE/CEO, led the Pledge of Allegiance at today's meeting.

Madam Chair Russo Baca declared a quorum, and the meeting was publicly noticed. This meeting was a hybrid meeting with some members attending online.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 2 – APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

There were no changes made to the agenda.

Chair Russo made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA**. Director Sandoval seconded the motion. Rollcall vote was administered, and the **MOTION CARRIED**.

Chair Russo Baca	Yes	Director Duggins	Yes
Director Sandoval	Yes	Director Dunning	Absent
Director Barbara Baca	Yes	Director Kelly	Absent
Director Joaquin Baca	Yes		

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 – REVIEW/DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION RELATING TO DELAYING UNTIL 2025 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LOCAL ELECTION ACT AS APPLIED TO DISTRICTS CREATED PURSUANT TO THE CONSERVANCY ACT OF NEW MEXICO**

Jason Casuga explained that the bill was proposed at the time the agenda was posted but had been introduced recently as Senate Bill 335 (SB0335). He continued to give a brief history regarding the local elections act which was passed in 2018. He stated it made significant changes to the way MRGCD elections would be administered. It would be changing the day

from within June to be November 7<sup>th</sup>, the first Tuesday after the first Monday. Most importantly it took the responsibility of administering the election from MRGCD and handed it to the counties under the direction of the Secretary of State. He reported it was communicated that the Secretary of State needs more time to be able to work on fully implementing the Local Elections act as contemplated by the law passed in 2018. Presented the bill for review that would return the administration of MRGCD's election back to the MRGCD. Also, said that the date of our election would no longer be in November for this year, but the current bill before us moves election date to October third, which is the first Tuesday after the first Monday in October. He also said all other parameters of MRGCD's election would stay the same and would administer it based on land owners. Those are current qualified electors. We have done research and made sure that this is one of the crux and main reasons why they need to get it back to us. Mr. Casuga stated that this bill does not change who can vote. It just gives the election back to the MRGCD to administer.

Director Barbara Baca added that the committee kept it succinct and as simple as they could. She reported that the Legislative Committee has been working with the Secretary of State's office, with our lobbyist, John Thompson, and Jason Casuga. She felt it to be a good bill and very pleased. She thought the date certain of October third was important because there were so many changes that were being contemplated. They felt like it was important to actually have that for the public, for the Board itself, for the upcoming election, because there has been so many uncertainties that one. The other she wanted to reiterate what Jason (Casuga) spoke about working with the Secretary of State's office to address all of the other issues that they have talked about, and that they will be committed to working with us and taking the lead. She urged everyone's support.

Director Joaquin Baca reiterated what Director Barbara Baca said and felt that it's not an easy situation but the best that can be accomplished at this time.

Director Duggins also agreed that it's a good deal and wants to move forward.

Chair Russo Baca added that she appreciated the legislative committee due to the fact that she'll be up for re-election. She has been had somewhat of a screened between talking with the Secretary of State's office about these matters, and she appreciated Director Barbara Baca and Director Joaquin Baca taking this on fully. She also agreed that this is a good path forward, and that we do have a certain date of October third in the legislation although knowing this could change.

John Thompson, MRGCD Lobbyist, noted that the bill is tentatively scheduled for Monday in the Senate Rules Committee. Should it pass Rules Committee, it would advance to the Senate Judiciary Committee, and then from there go to the Senate floor and then repeat same process in the House. He noted that this is a legislative process, that it is the will of the legislature, but as the bill is drafted now, that is the form that will be heard on Monday. He stated should he hear of any amendments or any potential changes that come his way, he would surely advise Mr. Casuga.

The Chair stated that this is the board making a motion to support this legislation, however, before it's finalized, voted and signed by the Governor, there will be adequate time for public comment. She encouraged individuals to reach out to their representatives, and both in the Senate and the House, to make comments to them directly, because the Board cannot approve, but can take a vote to approve the Board's consensus on this legislation. She thought it could change drastically, she clarified that the Board would be approving the consensus that they are in support of the bill, but the Board cannot approve this legislation.

Director Barbara Baca made the **MOTION FOR SUPPORT OF THE SENATE BILL**. Director Sandoval seconded the motion. Rollcall vote was administered, and the **MOTION CARRIED**.

Chair Russo Baca	Yes	Director Duggins	Yes
Director Sandoval	Yes	Director Dunning	Absent
Director Barbara Baca	Yes	Director Kelly	Absent
Director Joaquin Baca	Yes		

With no further comments, questions, or concerns, Madam Chair Russo Baca adjourned the meeting at 9:22 am.

Approved to be the correct Minutes of the Board of Directors of February 8, 2023.

**ATTESTED:**

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Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM  
Secretary/Treasurer

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Stephanie Russo Baca, Madam Chair  
MRGCD Board of Directors