

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

MARCH 13, 2023 - 2:00 P.M.

Directors having been duly notified; Madam Chair Russo Baca called the special meeting to order at 2:07 p.m. The following Directors and Staff were present:

DIRECTORS		STAFF	
Stephanie Russo Baca, Chair	Present	Jason Casuga	Chief Engineer/CEO
Karen Dunning, Vice Chair	Absent	Lorna Wiggins	General Counsel
Barbara Baca, Director	Present	Dr. Charles DuMars	Chief Water Counsel
John Kelly, Director	Present	Pamela Fanelli	Secretary-Treasurer/CFO
Joaquin Baca, Director	Present	Eric Zamora	Chief Operating Officer
Glen Duggins, Director	Absent	Anne Marken	Water Operations Div. Mgr.
Michael T. Sandoval, Director	Present	Matt Martinez	Water Distribution Div. Mgr.

The following names of individuals were interested viewers, callers and/or participants
Jan Maples, The Connecting Point
Gabrielle Coughlin, MRGCD
Holly Dietz
John Fleck, Utton Center
Brittany Bade, MRGCD
Linda Dietz

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Madam Chair Russo Baca declared a quorum, and the meeting was publicly noticed. This meeting was a hybrid meeting.

Brittany Bade led the Pledge of Allegiance at today's meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2 – APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

There were changes to the agenda.

Director Joaquin Baca made the **MOTION TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA**.
Director Kelly seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED**.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 - CONSIDERATION/DISCUSSION OF THE GOALS TO MEASURE
THE CHIEF ENGINEER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S PERFORMANCE**

Director Kelly spoke on behalf of the Personnel Committee, stating they looked at Mr. Casuga's performance over the last year and went over the evaluation with Mr. Casuga on some things that he did well and things that needed improvement.

Mr. Casuga thanked the Board for the opportunity to be their CEO and talked about the struggles of the first year, things he could improve upon, and his priorities for 2023 and the coming years. Mr. Casuga went through a list of topics of what he planned to work on over the next year.

The first topic he discussed was CEO professional development, which included executive training in conflict, management, and resolution, media and political relations, and government leadership and best practices. He stated he had already started to identify other training courses to attend to further his knowledge and experience.

Director John Kelly added that as a professional engineer, he needed to keep up with his professional development hours.

Director Joaquin Baca added that leadership and management were very specific skill sets and often times gets lost with a lot of professionals, so he thought that the goals set forth were great. He added that the UNM School of Law had some great courses.

Mr. Casuga went on to discuss his administrative goals, which was to facilitate a successful election, consolidated and post online MRGCD policies and procedures, continue progress with the Secretary of State on implementation of the Local Elections Act in 2025, work with the MRGCD Public Information Officer, the Board, and others to develop a program to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the New Mexico Conservancy Act, continue to support Bernalillo County in completing the Atrisco Acequia Madre Master Plan, ongoing pursuit of grant applications for capital infrastructure, work with District area legislators to address matters of mutual interest for serving constituents, and continue to develop and maintain strong working relationships with state, federal, and local government agencies.

Dr. DuMars stated Mr. Casuga gave a really accurate description of what he would be addressing, but thought it was important for the Board to know there would be competition at the state level to take control of the water resources within the Middle Rio Grande.

Mr. Casuga went on to discuss capital infrastructure, including the five-year project schedule and proposed funding. He stated they would complete coordination and design of the Corrales Siphon replacement project and were on schedule for the Socorro Main Canal Channel Lining funded by the Water Trust Board. He said the El Vado Dam Steeling Basin project was still cloudy but were still working with the federal government on that. He talked about the completion of the Socorro and Cochiti infrastructure assessment data collection and the ongoing asset management plan.

Mr. Casuga then discussed the topic of water delivery. He stated they were developing an irrigation system operator application. He said last year brought hope and enthusiasm. He stated no ISO should go home not having filled out their book and that management would be able to track where the data was filled out. He noted there was still ongoing work with the federal, state, and tribal landowners to leverage funding for MRGCD's delivery system and efficiency.

Mr. Casuga then moved on to the topic of water operations, where he talked about the implementation of the new public facing water data server. He stated they were working on it and expected it to go live and to use it through the irrigation season. He stated the work with BOR on the River Mile 60 Outfall project remained a priority and would hopefully lead to better Compact status. He talked about other goals, which included constructing six new water measurement structures within the Belen Service Area, construction of 60 new measurement structures throughout MRGCD, developing strategy and operation changes to meet or exceed the District's commitment to the biological opinion, and to continue to work with the State of New Mexico and federal partners on reauthorizing the Low Flow Conveyance Channel to assist in managing New Mexico's Compact debt.

Mr. Casuga discussed financial goals, including developing a debt service and capital infrastructure fund with a recurring revenue stream, implement ACH (Automated Clearing House) vendor payment, implement accounts receivable lockbox. Mr. Casuga discussed the topic of protecting the District and its constituent's water rights, including continuing to monitor

and potentially protest water right transfers out of the benefited area, working with the legal and consulting team to develop a basis for a defensible water rights protest process and policy to protect irrigators and allowing for private property rights to be exercised with proper permit conditions, and provide a proof of beneficial use application to the state engineer that would define the upper limits of the District's water rights and depletion within the benefited area.

Mr. Casuga then discussed field operations, which included implementing a digital work order process, continuing to evaluate equipment needs and determine if new or different equipment were needed, and to assess division resources to better balance operational abilities.

Mr. Casuga talked about the goals of the safety program, which included an update on staff wide OSHA 10 and 30 training, implement regular administrative safety training programs, implement emergency action plans for all offices, and ongoing implementation of standard operations procedures for various O&M activities.

Director Kelly requested a presentation from our safety program manager in the near future to which Mr. Casuga concurred.

Mr. Casuga continued regarding HR priorities which included the implementation of a more middle management leader training similar to his own. He went on to discuss planning, scheduling, and conducting workforce analysis with the Chief Operating Officer's core operations for the Division, which they were actively doing. He added goals of designing and implementing an internal job application process and procedure, develop off-boarding and on-boarding process and procedures for employees, develop and implement a pilot of the employee self-service module, and develop and schedule protocol for regular HR policy review and rollout.

Mr. Casuga discussed goals of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) contract, which were to negotiate the new BIA contract and establish a solid working relationship with designated engineer and annually work with Middle Rio Grande Pueblos Coalition and BIA to manage prior & paramount (P&P) storage allocations under the 1981 agreement.

Mr. Casuga talked about goals for the conservation program, which included developing and executing a Soils Lab processing procedure, developing a better working relationship with NRCS, identifying additional storage outfall locations for MRGCD system in Isleta and Angostura Reaches, working with NM ISC and others to develop the Big Hole Fire and Restoration Plan, updating Rio Grande Valley State Park JPA and COA, finalizing the update to MRGCD's existing 2015 Conservation Act Plan, developing an new and cooperative agreement with the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and BOR, working with federal, state, and tribal landowners to leverage funding for on-farm efficiency improvements, and developing storage and accounting framework for unused water from the environmental leasing program.

Director Joaquin Baca added that he really liked the irrigation training resource materials as part of the education program and thanked Jason for including that. He stated he spent much time on formation of the program and had a lot of conversations about it.

Madam Chair Russo Baca suggested to avoid using acronyms to prevent autocorrections in the final edits, like the NRCS EQIP program.

Director Kelly also suggested not to forget about the Letter of Map Revision for the San Acacia Levy. Mr. Casuga appreciated the director for pointing it out and stated that should be in his administrative goals.

Director Barbara Baca stated she thought that was well done, but not to forget to and make sure to breathe.

Dr. DuMars added it was a wonderful outline and description of what they were hoping to accomplish and suggested that Jason (Casuga) and the Public Information Officer produce a list of goals that the MRGCD intended to input onto paper.

Madam Chair Russo Baca stated that she and Vice Chair Dunning met with Mr. Casuga to discuss all the goals with him and the goals the Board had discussed at the prior meeting. She felt he was doing a fabulous job.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 - ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR (COMMENTS ARE LIMITED TO SIX (6) MINUTES)

Linda Dietz

Ms. Dietz stated she was confused about whether or not MRGCD had title to the property in Bernalillo County or inly in Socorro and Valencia County.

Mr. Casuga stated they only completed title transfer in Valencia and Socorro, and had not been completed in Bernalillo and Sandoval, so it remained the federal government's interest.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 - EXECUTIVE SESSION

a. NMSA 1978 Open Meetings Act, Section 10-15-1(H)2

i. Limited Personnel Matters

- 1. CE/CEO Performance Evaluation**
- 2. Secretary-Treasurer/CFO Performance Evaluation**

Mr. Casuga stated executive session was also advertised for the normal meeting as well, so he asked legal counsel if they could move it to the regular meeting. Ms. Wiggins answered that the Board had the ability to do so.

Director Kelly made the **MOTION TO TABLE ITEM 5 AND ADDRESS IT AS ITEM 16 IN THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING**. Director Joaquin Baca seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED**.

With no further comments, questions, or concerns, Madam Chair Russo Baca adjourned the meeting at 2:59 p.m.

Approved to be the correct Minutes of the Special Board of Directors Meeting of March 13, 2023.

ATTESTED:

Pamela Fanelli, CMA, CGFM
Secretary/Treasurer

Stephanie Russo Baca, Madam Chair
MRGCD Board of Directors