

March 22, 2022

**NOTICE OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
VENTURA COUNTY WATERWORKS DISTRICT NO. 19
SOMIS CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a special meeting of the Ventura County Waterworks District No. 19 Somis Citizens' Advisory Committee will be held **Thursday, March 24, 2022 from 3:30 p.m. to adjournment** via Zoom. To electronically join the meeting please follow the provided steps – At the specific time (3:30 p.m.) dial the number (669) 900-6833, when prompted enter the meeting ID 470 052 7072. You can also join the meeting by visiting this link - **Join Zoom Meeting** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4700527072>

Advisory Committee Members: Please contact the District Office by telephone at (805-378-3005), or by email at wspc@ventura.org, no later than March 23, if you are unable to participate on the call.

Sincerely,



Joseph C. Pope, P.E.
Director, Water and Sanitation

AGENDA OF MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. PUBLIC COMMENTS - Members of the public may address the Citizens' Advisory Committee on items of interest to the public that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Committee but do not appear on the agenda. With respect to agenda items, the public will be given an opportunity to address the Committee when the item is reached in the meeting.
3. COMMITTEE MEMBER'S COMMENTS - Members of the Citizens' Advisory Committee may address the meeting with information or observations relevant to the operation of District 19 but do not appear on the Agenda.



4. ACTION ITEM - Review and approve a letter from the CAC to the ratepayers of District 19 regarding the status of the District.
5. ADJOURNMENT

*The next District 19 regularly scheduled Citizens' Advisory Committee meeting will be held on April 21, 2022.

****NOTICES:** The following information is provided to help you understand, follow, and participate in the Board meeting: Public Comments – Public comment is the opportunity for members of the public to participate in meetings by addressing the Citizens Advisory Committee in connection with one or more agenda or non-agenda items.

- Observe the Citizens Advisory Committee meeting live at:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4700527072>
- If you wish to make a comment on a specific agenda item, you may attend the meeting via Zoom, and you will be given a chance to be heard. If you prefer to submit a written comment ahead of time, please submit your comment via email by 5:00 p.m. on the day prior to the Committee meeting. Please submit your comment to WSPC@ventura.org. Please indicate in the Subject Line, the Agenda item number (e.g., Item No. 3A). Your email will be read by the Water and Sanitation Director and placed into the record.
- If you are watching the live stream of the Committee meeting and would like to make a general public comment for items not on the day's agenda or to comment on a specific agenda item as it is being heard, you may attend the meeting via Zoom, and you will be given a chance to be heard. If you prefer to submit a comment in writing, please submit your comment to WSPC@ventura.org. Please indicate in the Subject Line, the Agenda item number (e.g., Item No. 3A). Every effort will be made to read your comment into the record, but some comments may not be read due to time limitations. Comments received after an agenda item will be made part of the record if received prior to the end of the meeting.

IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, IF YOU NEED SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS MEETING, PLEASE CONTACT (805) 378-3005. REASONABLE ADVANCE NOTIFICATION OF THE NEED FOR ACCOMMODATION PRIOR TO THE MEETING (48 HOURS ADVANCE NOTICE IS PREFERABLE) WILL ENABLE US TO MAKE REASONABLE ARRANGEMENTS TO ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY TO THIS MEETING.



Report from your Citizens Advisory Committee to District 19 Rate Payers [version March 21,2022]

We have your backs

Your Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) of Ventura County Waterworks District 19 recognizes that there has never been a more important moment to preserve and protect the essence of our exemplary community. Each CAC member resides within District 19 and enjoys the enviable environment of our beautiful rural area; all of us grateful to be living here. Though District 19 serves a tiny population within its boundaries, its agriculture and open spaces benefit the well-being of the greater Ventura County community — safeguarding the health, the environment, and the climate of all.

[.....*Diana Enos comment*]. Optional

The majority of your Committee members are also small farmers, growing avocados, citrus, berries, and other specialty crops. We, like most Las Posas Valley farmers, are good stewards of the land: decades ago adopting efficient irrigation practices and employing soil conservation methods far ahead of the curve.

...*One small sample the importance of maintaining agriculture and open spaces*

1 acre of mature avocado trees sequesters 2.6 tons of carbon dioxide per year
One avocado tree can absorb all the carbon dioxide produced by car driven 26,000 miles
One single avocado tree releases enough oxygen to support two human beings

Many District 19 farmers depend solely on its water to irrigate their crops. Those of us that do, suffer the pain of the high agricultural water rates (\$1,316/AF). It requires us to subsidize our own farms, working second (or third) jobs or drawing on personal savings to cover farm expenses. So, small farmers, we understand and support you. We encourage you to join us at our CAC meetings where your questions, opinions, and suggestions can be heard.

[.....*Kirby Thomas' comment*]. Optional

Stabilizing District 19

Through much work and outside the box thinking, real progress has been made this year toward stabilizing our District. There is, however, more work to do. Our present Director of Waterworks, Joe Pope, continues to listen patiently and work with us.

District 19 is in good financial shape without raising rates for the past 2 1/2 years Our bottom line is positive

Progress: 2021 to date

- Ventura County Waterworks has a **new, energized staff** assembled by Director Pope. We are pleased.
- The new Deputy Director of Operations and Maintenance, Scott Meckstroth is listening, too.
At our request, he is providing CAC with a Quarterly Report of each repair and maintenance job performed on our extensive infrastructure, including the cost of the repair and amount billed to the District. It provides us with an accurate, up-to-date picture of the ongoing expenses for maintenance of an aging D19 infrastructure.
- The maintenance and repair costs, a large expense, have been lower this past year, indicating a more efficient O&M department.
- Purchase of expensive imported water from Calleguas MWD has been virtually eliminated. The 2022 wholesale Calleguas water rate **exceeds** the final rate for water delivered to your meter. If only imported water was used, our water rates could easily soar to over \$2000/AF.
- This year, District 19 is sourcing nearly all water from the Las Posas Valley Basin under our FCGMA pumping allocation, wisely pacing its use to remain under our allocation and avoid punitive surcharge rates. Smart. It is a major savings to the District.
- We received approval for a line of credit from Ventura County financial planning committee.
Director Pope and CAC's financial wizard, Kathy Janowski, spent many hours examining the financial statements for District 19. They developed a creative plan to make our atypical District sustainable (and able to pay our debts) without a perpetual water rate increase. Director Pope courageously presented this plan to a somewhat

irritated Financial Planning Committee, skeptical of financials that don't include a rate increase. We are pleased at the outcome: the Credit Line was approved and the Waterworks District 19 community was duly noticed.

- With the Credit Line funds in hand, the Well 2 Fe and Mn Filtering Project has moved from its stalled shovel-ready state to under-construction. The ground breaking ceremony was held on July 14, 2021. Soon our residents will be free of the brown water, aesthetically displeasing and staining our plumbing and laundry, caused by the otherwise harmless iron and manganese present in our ground water.

What needs attention

At present we are pleased that District 19's income statement shows a positive balance, particularly after no rate increase for more than 2 years. However, we are aware that our Cash Reserve fund is insufficient to meet emergency needs and the compensate for swings in revenue unique to our District:

There are two overriding risks to our rural District:

- 1) Our revenue depends in large part, on the weather.

The District's income is derived principally from water sales to agricultural and residential customers. Agricultural rate payers contribute more than 50% of this revenue stream. The actual revenue collected from agricultural irrigation use depends each year on the weather, most importantly, the annual rainfall. We all know how unpredictable that is.

During dry episodes, irrigation water usage is high, and the District's revenues increase substantially. In wet years, this source of revenue for can drop significantly, as farmers stop irrigating. The result can be unnerving, negative cash flow.

- 2) Unanticipated and costly repairs to our Wells.

It is critical to keep our Wells operational and repaired quickly, when an unexpected problem occurs. Some repairs can be shockingly expensive. The alternative is to purchase water from Calleguas whose cost is around 300% higher than the cost of pumping groundwater.

*To offset these risks, CAC recommends that beginning July 1, 2022, a
2.5% rate increase to build our Cash Reserve*

We urge you to support the modest rate increase proposed in the Proposition 218 Notice

- Director Pope and your CAC have agreed that the decision to change water rates will be decided year by year, for one year only, based on the financial state of our District at the time.

Our regards to all in our beautiful, peaceful, and safe community,
Your Citizens Advisory Committee for VCWW District 19

Lynette Buchanan-Roth, Committee Chair

Physicist for 25 years in high technology research
Farmer of certified organic blackberries, avocados, and olives; local homeowner.

David Hutter, Committee Vice Chair

Homeowner, avocado grower, and retired telephone company executive.

Diana Enos

Human Resources Professional and Somis homeowner.

Kathy Janowski

Healthcare Executive Director of Finance
Somis homeowner, avocado and grape grower

Kirby Thomas

Somis homeowner, avocado farmer, and lawyer