

# APPROVED

## CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE VENTURA COUNTY WATERWORKS DISTRICT NO. 17 MINUTES OF THE APRIL 15, 2025

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Ronald Marks, Christopher Shubeck  
Neil Sokoler, Steven Price, Greg McHugh

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: None

COMMITTEE MEMBER VACANCY: None

STAFF: Jeff Palmer, Assistant Agency Director PWA  
Gregg Strakaluse, Agency Director PWA  
Art Aseo, Deputy Director  
Jean Fontayne, Staff Services Manager-zoom  
Sara Negrete, Accountant II-zoom  
Homer Arredondo, Engineering Manager

GUESTS: Melissa Raff  
Robin Kviatkorsky  
Yossi Kviatkovsky  
Mike Klein  
Steve Rasnick  
Bob Clarke  
Barry Schehr  
Bill Napier  
Kevin Keegan  
Jane Plant  
Tim Redfield  
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1. CALL TO ORDER - The Meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.
2. Approval of the Minutes of January 21, 2025, Meeting. Steve Price asked for motion to approve the minutes, Neil Sokoler 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. All Members present approved of the minutes.
3. PUBLIC COMMENT  
None.
4. DISTRICT STAFF REPORT
  - A. BELL CANYON RESERVOIR NO. 3 PRESENTATION

Jeff Palmer introduced himself, Assistant Director Public Works, County of Ventura. He introduced the discussion topic for the evening is Bell Canyon Reservoir No. 3. The project objective is emergency support, resiliency, and

redundancy on water supply. This goes back to the time of the Woolsey Fire and the Thomas Fire. We are looking at developing a new water storage reservoir at the highest location. The question is where do you put a water tank? I wanted to talk about the water system in Bell Canyon. Water comes into this vicinity in Ventura County, the Calleguas tunnel. There is a connection from Calleguas to Simi Valley. The red line that starts at the top is where the water system starts, comes down this ridge to a 2-million-gallon reservoir. One of the situations we find is, if you put a tank on a hill, the water will drain down to the customers. There is a lot of technical research needed, you must worry about the site and water pressure. You also need to think about the size of the tank. Water will become bad if you don't use all the water fast enough, water can lose its disinfection and it's no longer safe to drink. Water systems are sized for domestic use, irrigation, and fire supply. There is a bill going through the state to specify that water districts be more proactive in being prepared for a fire disaster. Basically, to fill their tanks when there is an emergency. We have a control system so that we can electronically fill the tanks, in hours not days.

Question was asked, how are you guaranteeing that adding another tank won't have the same failure as the others did during the Woolsey Fire? If the power is shut off how is a third tank able to furnish water to the community? Jeff responded: one, the Simi Valley tank here, it's all downhill, it doesn't need power to push the water. Question: You said you must have someone manually push water to the system. Answer: Our operators will override the system to fill the tanks to capacity during high winds and fire warnings. manually/remotely. Our operating plan is to keep tanks full during any potential emergency. We can deliver 2.7 million gallons per day through contractual arrangements.

Question: Are there drought conditions that limit the amount of water we can use? Answer: Not today. Most of the time, in drought conditions they want you to cut down on irrigation as in 2023 and 2024.

Jeff turned it over to Homer regarding the Bell Canyon Reservoir No. 3. Homer said, we have a project that we have been working on for a couple of years to develop and construct. A third tank for Bell Canyon for resiliency, redundancy, all the things we were talking about. Some of the history, before the Woolsey fire there were thoughts on how we could benefit Bell Canyon. Tanks would be needed to construct a whole new water system. Maybe putting in a third storage tank reservoir would be reasonable.

We were able to broach and tentatively acquire an ASADRA Loan from the State Water Resources Control Board. It's up to a \$10.5 million loan, 30% forgiven and 70% at 0% interest. The Woolsey Fire happened, and the staff and community members thought a third tank would be beneficial. Doing a

feasibility study, soils investigations, concept design, detail design, to see if it made sense to construct this reservoir.

Going into history. The map of Bell Canyon, up at the Northern top, there are two reservoirs. Gravity feeds them into Bell Canyon. At one time Bell Canyon did have pump stations then we made it more redundant becoming gravity feed.

Property to the top is controlled by Boeing. We were told that due to agreements, the land was not available and would never be available. Property to the left and south is designated as open space and held by several conservancies. That pushed us into looking at the area in Bell Canyon itself. Research and feasibility studies were done. We settled on site 3A at the end of Bell Canyon Rd. We needed to keep the tank 100-200 ft higher than your house for pressure purposes. Various valves keep the pressure running at a good rate in your homes right now.

The tank is designed around 1.5-million-gallon tank. Our existing tanks currently have 3-million-gallon capacity. The land is owned by the Bell Canyon HOA. Its location is on a very steep grade, 20-40% slope on a high knoll. We would need to build water pipes, SCADA, electrical, storm drains, controls, line of sight and the water main close to the site. To get water up to that site (which was designed and constructed in the 70's), we use pressure, but it's only rated to 100PSI, and we would need to raise the pressure a little higher to ramp up flow to the tank.

We would also have to upgrade the pressure-reducing station.

One of the benefits of this alternative is it is not near the other two tanks. You will now diversify your water distribution. The pump stations do not have any backup generators. We are talking to Simi Valley to get this to happen.

Question: If Simi's Box Canyon Reservoir goes low what happens to our water? Answer: We have 3 million gallons worth of storage for Bell Canyon. We have plenty of storage, state regulated and mandated.

Question: Is there any provision for earthquake issues where delivery systems get damaged by an earthquake?

Answer: Water tanks have an isolation valve on them, if a tank moves it can flex right at the connection to the pipeline. There is resiliency things built into the tank.

We have 20 operators for Bell Canyon. If anything happens, we're here right away. We have all the equipment to handle any broken pipe. We won't wait for days. We would repair it immediately.

Various formulas are used, and another component is fire. One of the parameters the state has set up, about 740 homes, the minimum gallons of storage required is 400,000 gallons of storage. Bell Canyon has 3 million gallons of storage. Simi has 2.7 million gallons. Bell Canyon is not deficient. We take information at the time we get it. Our costs, knowing the soils, topography, design, administration, infrastructure, our latest cost, grant

administration. The construction total is \$22 million.

In 2020, we took out and tried to compartmentalize the key infrastructure aspects. Back then it was \$5 million for this job and now it is \$22 million. A lot of the cost is grading, road improvements and reservoir costs with a concrete tank buried on the side of the hill. The grant we received is \$10.5 million. Still short \$12 million.

Question: Who said yes to this project 5 years ago? Answer: The CAC and the rate payers.

Question: Can we increase the size of an existing tank?

Jeff said we can do a little thumb nail of two metal existing tanks, make them taller, make them deeper and continue the conversation.

We have three options

Option 1:

- Proceed with the project, we would seek to maximize the \$10.4 million ASADRA funding. Seek \$11.6 million additional funding from the State Revolving Fund through SWRCB, 30-year term at 2% interest (based on economy and bond rating).  
30% water rate increase 1<sup>st</sup> year followed by 7% the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. To build up the cash reserves to fund the loan.

Option 2:

Doesn't have a cost. We can aggressively pursue Grants that are based on 50% match.

- Complete the substantial design and obtain land rights and explore grant opportunities.

Option 3:

- \$3 million in access road improvements by HOA  
Water Rate increase 30% 1<sup>st</sup> year, 4% 2<sup>nd</sup> year.

Question: What will it take to upgrade our infrastructure using this money vs. spending on another tank.

Could be a better approach to work on the infrastructure, because down the line, we will have to replace aged pipes. Facilities Master Plan is looking at infrastructure.

Question: Who owns the tanks, the water is stored in? Answer: WWD17 owns the tanks, otherwise PWA.

**B. BUDGET AND FINANCIAL REVIEW – An update on the budget and financial status of the District.**

- Right on track

C. O&M UPDATE

WATER SALES TO BUDGET, SYSTEMS STATUS AND AMI

- January was a little on Water Sales
- Main line leaks-0, Service line leak-1

5. DIRECTOR'S INFORMATIONAL ITEMS – Provides the opportunity for the Director to present items that are not within the subject matter of the District's Staff Report.

A. HOA/EQUESTRIAN CENTER WATER USAGE

B. CALLEGUAS MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT/METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA UPDATE – An update on decisions and rulings by these agencies which may impact the District.

- None

C. BOARD LETTER TRACKER-UPDATE ON VENTURA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AGENDA ITEMS RELATED TO THE DISTRICT

- None

D. UPDATE ON AVENUES OF PUBLIC OUTREACH – How the District is reaching out to its customers concerning water conservation.

- We have a new PIO, and we have tasked her with helping to spread the word on water conservation. The state is above average in the reservoirs.

6. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' COMMENTS/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Neil said Thank you for coming and sharing what is going on with our reservoir options.

Secondly, more than ½ of our community is receiving/paying paper bills. Many of our customers are not in favor of not receiving a bill. In the past, our bills used to show a bar graph of historical usage. There is a significant number of people who do not use electronics.

Jeff said he will figure out how to make it work.

Director search, we have hired a gentleman, he should start the middle of May, he is a grade 5 Wastewater Operator.

Steve said I think we should go with Option 2. I agree we should continue to pursue other grants.

The climate on how the government treats these conservancy agencies is changing. We may be able to get a grant for this.

The CAC Members reviewed Option 2 again. We have to receive some rights from Bell Canyon HOA on the easement in writing. We must have no objections to continuing this project. We have very little design work to do. The members voted

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on Option 2. Greg moved and Steve 2<sup>nd</sup>. All members approved.

If there is some way to increase the existing tanks, let us know.

7. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting adjourned at 9:03 PM  
Next Meeting July 15, 2025.