

MINUTES OF THE  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF  
VISTA IRRIGATION DISTRICT

October 22, 2024

A meeting of the Public Affairs Committee of Vista Irrigation District was held on Tuesday, October 22, 2024, at the offices of the District, 1391 Engineer Street, Vista, California.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Sanchez called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Committee Members present: Sanchez and Kuchinsky.

Directors absent: None.

Staff present: Brett Hodgkiss, General Manager; Ranae Ogilvie, Board Secretary; Shallako Goodrick, Director of Administration; and Brent Reyes, Management Analyst.

Other attendees: None.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda was approved as presented.

**4. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

No public comments were presented on items not appearing on the agenda.

**5. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

See staff report attached hereto.

Management Analyst Brent Reyes stated that at its December 20, 2023 meeting the Public Affairs Committee (Committee) reviewed the communication related goals contained in the District's Strategic Plan and requested that staff develop a new stand-alone Communications and Engagement Plan (Plan) to bring back to the Committee for review. He said that staff has prepared a draft Plan for the Committee's review and feedback; it was noted that the Committee's input from December 20, 2023 meeting had been incorporated.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the various components and goals of the Plan. Director of Administration Shallako Goodrick highlighted the Communication Approaches in the Plan, noting that the communication approach selected will be based on a number of factors including the audience, message to be conveyed and/or project to be highlighted. The Committee suggested assigning one person as the point of contact to oversee the Plan.

The Committee commended staff for incorporating all the elements previously discussed. It was suggested that staff include the type of communication approach(es) to be utilized to communicate key messaging about specific projects in future staff reports and/or division reports.

The Committee thanked staff for their hard work and recommended taking the Plan to the Board for its review and consideration.

**6. PUBLIC RELATIONS SERVICES**

See staff report attached hereto.

Ms. Goodrick stated that at its December 20, 2023 meeting the Committee discussed the need to engage a public relations (PR) firm to assist the District with its public communications related to implementation of its capital improvement program (CIP). She noted that the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget included \$100,000 for public relations services. Ms. Goodrick said that when staff prepared the draft scope of work for PR services, the need to have an accessible resource available to staff for messaging and communication efforts upon request was considered; in addition to the public outreach services related to the implementation of the CIP, the scope of work was structured to provide as-needed PR services for various tasks, providing more flexibility in the type of work to be performed.

The Committee concurred with structuring and content of the scope of work for public relations services and directed staff to move forward with finalizing a draft request for proposal for review by the Board.

**7. COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM**

See staff report attached hereto.

Committee member Kuchinsky said that providing a community grant program would support non-profit organizations' water education projects/programs and enhance District community outreach efforts. He suggested utilizing a portion (\$2,500) of the scholarship program budget to fund a community grant program. General Manager Brett Hodgkiss stated that the District has a Charitable Contributions Policy that sets very specific guidelines for funding community programs/projects, including that it must have a direct benefit to the District and it must be in the best interest of the District's ratepayers. Staff advised the Committee that the Hans and Margaret Doe Charitable Trust and Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's (Metropolitan) Community Partnering Program offer local water related grant programs for non-profit organizations. After further discussion, the Committee suggested that staff promote the Hans and Margaret Doe Charitable Trust and the Metropolitan Community Partnering Program in lieu of the District administrating its own community grant program.

**8. SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST**

See staff report attached hereto.

Mr. Reyes provided a brief overview of the scholarship contest stating that the essay question has been updated, and the application packages and brochure will be distributed to high school counselors in December. The Committee reviewed the essay question, providing feedback and suggesting minor changes. It was suggested that the required number of letters of recommendation be changed from two to one. Mr. Hodgkiss noted that changes to the application requirements would need to be reviewed by the Board and suggested having the Board consider changes to the following year's scholarship contest when they review the Committee's recommendations for winner(s) in spring 2025. The Committee requested that staff incorporate their suggested changes into the essay question for their review before distributing to application packages counselors.

**9. 2024 ANNUAL REPORT AND 2025 NEWSLETTER**

See staff report attached hereto.

The Committee discussed topics and provided ideas for content for both the 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Newsletter.

**10. COMMENTS BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

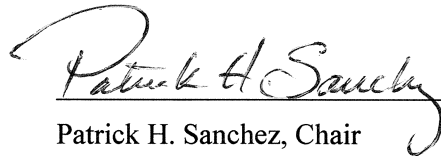
Committee member Kuchinsky commented on a rate-related exercise that he participated in during his attendance at the San Diego County Water Authority Citizen's Water Academy.

**11. COMMENTS BY GENERAL MANAGER**

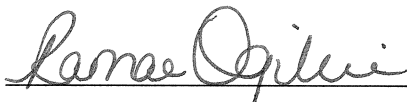
None were presented.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Committee, at 12:57 p.m. Chair Sanchez adjourned the meeting.

  
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Patrick H. Sanchez, Chair

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ranae Ogilvie, Secretary  
Board of Directors  
VISTA IRRIGATION DISTRICT



**PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
STAFF REPORT**

**Meeting Date: October 22, 2024**  
**Prepared By: Brent Reyes**  
**Reviewed By: Shallako Goodrick**  
**Approved By: Brett Hodgkiss**

SUBJECT: COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

RECOMMENDATION: Review and provide input on the draft Communication and Engagement Plan.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION: None.

FISCAL IMPACT: Unknown.

SUMMARY: At its December 20, 2023 meeting, the Public Affairs Committee discussed preparing a Communications and Engagement Plan (Plan), including its contents. The Committee requested staff develop a draft Plan incorporating the elements discussed during the meeting. Staff has prepared a draft Plan based on the input received at the meeting.

DETAILED REPORT: The District's Strategic Plan contains a section that outlines goals, objectives, and work plans for the District's public communications; however, it does not provide the level of detail or guidance that is contained in a stand-alone Plan. At its December 20, 2023 meeting, the Committee met with staff to discuss the changing communication needs of the District and the development of a stand-alone Plan. Staff has prepared a draft Plan, incorporating the Committee's input, for the Committee's review and feedback.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Strategic Plan, Goal 5 – Customers and the Public
- Draft Communication and Engagement Plan



**PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
STAFF REPORT**

**Meeting Date: October 22, 2024**  
**Prepared By: Brent Reyes**  
**Reviewed By: Shallako Goodrick**  
**Approved By: Brett Hodgkiss**

SUBJECT: PUBLIC RELATIONS SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION: Review and provide input on the draft scope of work for public relations services to support District public outreach activities.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION: None

FISCAL IMPACT: The District included \$100,000 in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget for public relations services.

SUMMARY: In the coming years, the District will be replacing much of its aging infrastructure, including the 100-year old Vista Flume, and will need to ensure its customers are well informed about the projects (e.g. cost, funding sources, community impacts, etc.). The District will need assistance with carrying out public outreach activities related to implementation of its capital improvement program (CIP).

DETAILED REPORT: At its December 20, 2023 meeting, the Public Affairs Committee discussed the need to engage a public relations firm to assist the District with its communications related to implementation of its CIP. Staff has prepared a draft scope of work (to include in the request for proposal) that primarily focuses on public outreach activities related to implementation of its CIP; however, it is structured to provide flexibility in the type of work to be performed, allowing the District to use the selected firm services for other outreach activities as needed. Staff would like the Committee to review the draft scope of work and provide feedback.

ATTACHMENT: Draft Scope of Work



**PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
STAFF REPORT**

**Meeting Date: October 22, 2024**  
**Prepared By: Brent Reyes**  
**Reviewed By: Shallako Goodrick**  
**Approved By: Brett Hodgkiss**

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION: Consider creating a community grant program.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION: None.

FISCAL IMPACT: \$2,500.

SUMMARY: At the September 4, 2024 Board meeting, Director Kuchinsky requested that the Board consider creating a community grant program to support non-profit organization's water education projects/programs. Director Kuchinsky suggested utilizing some of the funds (\$2,500) budgeted for the District's scholarship program to support the new program; as proposed, the scholarship program budget would be reduced from \$10,000 to \$7,500. Director Sanchez suggested that this item be referred to the Public Affairs Committee for review and recommendation to the Board; the Board concurred.

DETAILED REPORT: Requests for community program or project funding are considered under District Rules and Regulations section 1.15, Charitable Contributions Policy (Policy). The Policy provides guidelines, including qualifying criteria, for evaluating financial contributions to support various organizations. Charitable contributions must have a District-related purpose or provide an identifiable direct benefit to the District and must be made in the best interests of the District's ratepayers.

Local non-profit organizations are eligible to receive funding from two existing local water related grant programs, the Hans and Margaret Doe Charitable Trust and Metropolitan Water District of Southern California's (Metropolitan) Community Partnering Program. The Hans and Margaret Doe Charitable Trust is administrated by the San Diego Foundation; grants of various amounts are awarded to support water education related projects. Metropolitan's Community Partnering Program (CPP) offers grants of up to \$2,000 to support projects in its service territory that teach the importance of water.

The Public Affairs Committee is being asked to consider the merits and feasibility of the community grant program proposed and make a recommendation to the Board.

ATTACHMENT: Rules and Regulations Section 1.15, Charitable Contributions Policy



**PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
STAFF REPORT**

**Meeting Date: October 22, 2024**  
**Prepared By: Brent Reyes**  
**Reviewed By: Shallako Goodrick**  
**Approved By: Brett Hodgkiss**

SUBJECT: SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST

RECOMMENDATION: Review and provide feedback on draft application materials, including the essay question and timeline for the Vista Irrigation District Scholarship Contest.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION: On May 1, 2024, the Board awarded three \$2,000 scholarships (totaling \$6,000).

FISCAL IMPACT: \$10,000 for the scholarship contest is included in the budget.

SUMMARY: Each year, the District invites high school seniors who live or go to school within its service area to compete for a scholarship. The purpose of the scholarship program is to increase student knowledge and awareness of water related issues affecting the District and its customers. Students who compete for a scholarship must complete an essay and provide a personal statement related to their background and/or goals; selection criteria also include community involvement or volunteer service, and letters of recommendation.

DETAILED REPORT: Staff has prepared a draft application package (including an updated essay question) and brochure for the Committee's review and feedback. The scholarship contest requirements, as presented in the draft application package, are the same as last year. Application packages and brochures will be distributed to high school counselors within the District's jurisdictional boundaries in December, and follow-up e-mails will be made to counselors to ensure the application materials were received. Additional scholarship promotional efforts will include issuing a news release and announcing the program on the District's website; application materials will also be made available on the District website.

As proposed, application packages will be due to the District by 4:00 p.m. on Friday February 21, 2025. The Committee, which serves as the competition judges, could meet in the following weeks (based on Committee members' availability) to review the applications and recommend a winner(s). The Committee's recommendation for the winner could then be submitted to the Board for consideration at a meeting in April with a certificate being presented to the winner(s) at the next scheduled Board meeting. As in the past, once the student has enrolled at a university, college or vocational school District staff will forward a check to the school on behalf of the student(s).

ATTACHMENTS: Draft scholarship application package and brochure



**PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
STAFF REPORT**

**Meeting Date: October 22, 2024**  
**Prepared By: Brent Reyes**  
**Reviewed By: Shallako Goodrick**  
**Approved By: Brett Hodgkiss**

SUBJECT: 2024 ANNUAL REPORT AND 2025 NEWSLETTER

RECOMMENDATION: Discuss information to be contained in the 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Newsletter.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION: None.

FISCAL IMPACT: Printing costs for a four-page newsletter are estimated at \$3,000. Based on information received from InfoSend, the District's bill printing and mailing service provider, staff does not anticipate any additional postage costs associated with inserting the newsletter in with the water bills. Design and layout of the annual report and newsletter are performed in-house by District staff. There is no cost associated with posting an electronic version of each document to the District's website.

SUMMARY: Each year the District prepares an annual report that includes summary financial statements, demographic data and articles about various water related topics, such as infrastructure improvements and water supply conditions. Prior to beginning the layout and design process, staff meets with the Committee to receive input regarding the contents of annual report. Staff is working on the 2024 Annual Report and would like to get the Committee's ideas for content.

Staff is also formulating ideas for the 2025 newsletter and would like to get the Committee's thoughts on the content for the newsletter.

DETAILED REPORT: Since the first edition, the annual report has been primarily used to convey information about the financial condition of the District. Over the years, the emphasis has shifted to providing informational articles, demographics and other statistical data shown in graphs. Only summary financial statements are now included in the annual report since detailed financial information is available in the District's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, which may be accessed on the District's website.

In recent years, the annual report has only been produced in an electronic format. In lieu of printing the annual report, which had very limited distribution, the decision was made to develop an expanded newsletter and mail to all customers with their water bills. The newsletter has included some articles and demographic information from the annual report as well as other relevant/timely information.