

GREEN DeWITT DRAINAGE DISTRICT

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Green DeWitt Drainage District met in **REGULAR** Session on the **23rd** of **JULY 2024**, at 9:00 A.M. in the Conference Room of the District's office at 107 N. Gonzales Street, in Cuero, Texas with the following members present:

Doug Sethness, Director
Larry Coppedge, Director
John Varela, Director

Staff: David Guajardo, General Manager
Pat Trevino, Office Manager
Ignacio Granado, Crew Foreman

Public: Billy Jordan, DeWitt County Emergency Manager
Amanda Stehling, DeWitt County Foreman Precinct 1

ANNOUNCE QUORUM & CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Sethness called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

NONE

MINUTES:

The board reviewed and discussed the minutes.

MOTION:

John Varela motioned to approve the minutes for June 17, 2024. Larry Coppedge seconded the motion and the motion carried.

FACILITIES – MAINTENANCE, IMPROVEMENTS & PROJECTS:

This summarizes the progress report by Ignacio Granado, Foreman for the maintenance department. His discussion focused on various operational issues, including field maintenance.

- **Field Maintenance:** The District has been proactive in maintaining cleanliness and managing water flow. This includes cleaning up sewer culverts and manholes in the valley, which accumulate silt and leaves over time. This work is critical for preventing blockage and ensuring the smooth flow of water.

- **Recent Showers:** The recent showers have resulted in rapid grass growth. While this has kept our fields green and vibrant, it has also necessitated frequent mowing and weed eating. Our team has been working tirelessly to keep up with the increased workload.
- **Part-time Employee Recruitment:** They are in the process of hiring a new part-time employee after the previous employee quit. The job involves 20-30 hours of work per week, but finding reliable workers has been challenging.
- **Stream Gauges:** A new stream gauge was installed in the Alexander Channel off of Terrell Road. Inspections of gauges installed in the Valley Oil Mill channels were conducted. However, there were issues with debris left by tree trimming activities and fences causing blockages. Granado explained that the gauges are similar to a ruler with measurements. Similar to the type that is utilized to read water levels. These gauges measure water flow and depth, providing valuable data for water management.

GM REPORT: This summary captures the key points from the updates provided by General Manager David Guajardo.

- **Meetings and Updates:**
 - Met with Billy Jordan to discuss stream gauges.
 - Met with General Land Office (GLO), Civil Corps, and Public Management for mitigation grant; agreed to start monthly meetings.
 - Upcoming meeting with GLO, Civil Corps, and Public Management for updates and status reports.
 - Sent "metes and bounds" maps to TCEQ.
- **Projects and Authorizations:**
 - Completed Depository authorization signature update with Director Doug Sethness.
 - Civil Corp to start work on downstream section from Guadalupe River; project at 30% completion.
 - Next phase: environmental review.
- **Drone Footage:** The board reviewed drone footage for several areas. The footage was limited due to the personal circumstances of the drone operator, Officer Banda. The first area reviewed was from **Alonzo to 72**. The team discussed the heavy workload required to maintain this area, which is filled with brush and silt. The video of the district channel identified areas with silt buildup and areas that the district has not been able to maintain. **Alexander to Oil Mill** noted that the area looked relatively clear and did not see any areas of concern that would impede the flow of water.

The drone footage provided a valuable visual inspection of the areas, helping the team to identify issues and plan their work more effectively. The team discussed the importance of maintaining the areas and the challenges they face, including dealing with brush and silt and navigating around power lines. They also discussed the need for additional funding to cover the area that leads up to Hwy 72.

- **Additional Meetings:**
 - Attended North Cuero Watershed meeting to discuss budget and operational items.
 - Submitted quarterly report to Texas Water Board Development Grant.
 - Met with tax assessor Ashley Meraz regarding Truth in Taxation documents.

- **Insurance and Financials:**
 - Civil Corps submitted an invoice for the second quarter.
 - Submitted renewal info to Sedgwick an underwriter for the Texas Water Conservation Association (TWCA) for insurance coverage. There were no changes to our coverage for equipment, vehicles, property, workman's compensation etc.
 - Met with insurance agent Eddie Carter; rates to drop by 6%.

- **New FEMA Floodplains:**
 - During a meeting with GBRA show everything north of the Watershed as a floodplain area. The district did not confirm anything and has another meeting scheduled. There was a discussion about certain areas being shown as floodplains, such as the area off of Bailey and Gonzales where Gonzales crosses the Bailey and Reuss area. The district has never seen heavy floods in these areas and believes that the floodplain designations are incorrect. The district plans to collect data to prove that these areas do not flood.

MOTION: Director John Varela made a motion to accept the General Manager's report, seconded by Director Larry Coppedge. The motion was approved unanimously.

2024-2025 BUDGET PROPOSAL:

The Board reviewed and discussed the budget and expenses for the upcoming year noting an increase in the following:

Maintenance expenses: \$2,000 based on current expenses which is mostly for vehicle maintenance.

Website expenses: The budget for website expenses, including domain and hosting, has increased from \$700 to \$1,000 due to higher-than-expected costs.

Insurance: The budget for insurance is \$8,000, which is expected to cover the costs based on the previous year's expenses.

Accounting: A new budget line for accounting has been added due to expenses incurred for rectifying issues with the 941 Quarterly Report. This was not accounted for in the previous year's budget.

Engineering and Surveying: The budget for engineering and surveying has been reduced from \$107,500 to \$45,000 as these services were not used in the previous year. The team does not anticipate needing these services for the grant project but has kept some funds in case of issues with channels outside the grant.

Salary Expenses: The increase in spending is partly due to higher salary expenses, including a high payout for an employee who left. The district expects to be under budget by the end of the year once the hard numbers are plugged in.

Operational Assets: The district adds \$70,000 to operational assets to purchase a GM truck. The truck is expected to cost around \$65,000. The district does not anticipate using all the budgeted amount for this purchase.

Professional Services: The budget for professional services has been reduced by \$23,100 to move money over for the accrual of the truck. This puts the budget for professional services at \$108,850, lower from \$131,950 last year.

Historical Budget: The district discussed the historical budget and noted that they have been under budget for the past five years. They acknowledged that they have \$100,000 in the budget they have not spent and expect to be under budget by this amount. However, they also noted that they have had to move money around due to amendments.

No Action Taken

DEWITT COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGER – BILLY JORDAN:

The District has received a grant for installing six stream gauges on various creeks, but they need \$80,000 in matching funds. These gauges are important for collecting data on river flow and flood channels. Director Doug Sethness suggested sharing the matching funds with the city and county to benefit the community. He also proposed looking into setting up a weather station in Cuero for emergency data during floods or weather forecasts. General Manager David Guajardo reminded the board to consider the ongoing maintenance costs, which could range from \$8,000 to \$15,000 annually if the stream gauges malfunction.

DeWitt County Emergency Manager Billy Jordan attended the District board meeting to share input on whether the County has similar systems in place. Jordan acknowledged the value of more data but mentioned that they already have substantial information. He noted that they can issue pre-notifications based on predicted information using the existing infrastructure, including data from the USGS, the National Weather Service, hydrologists, engineers, and a GIS system to predict and assess flood risks. Jordan mentioned that Victoria is implementing similar measures but emphasized the importance of considering long-term sustainability. He shared that when the Texas State Flood Plan was conducted, projections were made for all towns for the next 50 years, and Cuero was projected to have zero growth in that period.

GENERAL LAND GRANT UPDATES: The GLO Grant was discussed in the General Managers Report. Director Doug Sethness emphasized the importance of clear communication and requested the District spell out any acronyms when they are first introduced. For example, the acronym "GLO" should be defined as "General Land Office". This practice would help ensure that the minutes are clear and understandable to all readers.

TEXAS WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD (TWDB) GRANT EXTENSION: The quarterly extension was filed with TWDB.

PERSONNEL POLICY SIGNATURE AUTHORIZATION:

The following Policy was discussed with recommended revisions as follows:

Policy Statement

Effective immediately, the Green Dewitt Drainage District will implement a payroll check signature policy designed to ensure the integrity and transparency of our financial processes.

Policy Details

1. Dual Signature Requirement:

- Checks issued by the Green Dewitt Drainage District will require the signatures of at least one of the board members and the General Manager.
- This requirement is in place to promote accountability and oversight in our financial transactions.

2. General Manager's Signature:

- In situations where obtaining a board member's signature is not possible for payroll purposes, the signature of the General Manager will suffice.
- This exception ensures that the District's payroll can continue smoothly without unnecessary delays.

Implementation

- The General Manager will maintain a log of instances where only their signature was used, including the reason for the exception.
- Board members and the General Manager will be informed and reminded regularly about this policy to ensure compliance.

Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually to assess its effectiveness and make any necessary adjustments.

ENGINEERING: All engineering updates were covered during the General Manager's report.

PERSONNEL POLICY VEHICLE USE:

Use of District Property:

Employees are provided by the district with the facilities, furniture, equipment, and, in some instances, allowed use of or assigned motor vehicles necessary for the proper conduct of district jobs. Employees are responsible for the items provided to them by the district. If any item issued to the employee needs maintenance or repair, the employee should notify his or her immediate supervisor. Improper, careless, negligent, destructive, or unsafe use of district-owned property, equipment, or motor vehicles will result in discipline up to and including termination of employment. Personal use of district-owned property, equipment, or motor vehicles is prohibited. Green DeWitt Drainage District will adhere to IRS regulations regarding employer-provided vehicles. District vehicles are not to be used for personal use or gain. Personal use includes the transportation of family members, friends or any other person not involved in a district function. The utmost care should be exercised in using Green DeWitt Drainage District property to minimize damage to equipment or waste of supplies. Intentional or negligent damage to district-owned equipment may be grounds for disciplinary action or dismissal, depending on the severity of the incident.

In accordance with IRS regulations regarding employer-provided vehicles, the Green DeWitt Drainage District establishes the following policy concerning the use and assignments of district vehicles:

1. Field Operations Use and Parking:

Operations vehicles are designated for field operations during working hours and should be parked at the district yard at the conclusion of each workday.

2. Vehicle Assignments:

Vehicles may be assigned for management and director use and may be designated to a specific individual. This individual will have access to the vehicle at all times in the event of an active incident or emergency.

3. Prohibited Use:

District vehicles are not to be used for personal use or personal gain. Any use beyond official district business is prohibited and can result in disciplinary action.

4. Passenger Policy:

It is at the discretion of the General Manager and Board Members to allow other parties to ride in a district vehicle for the purpose of conducting district business.

5. Compliance with Regulations:

All employees are expected to adhere to the guidelines outlined in this policy and comply with IRS regulations regarding employer-provided vehicles.

Any violations of this policy may result in dismissal of employment with GDDD. Please review and familiarize yourself with this policy.

PERSONNEL MATTERS: The hiring of a part-time staff is needed in the maintenance department.

DIRECTORS ACTIVITY LOG: The Director's activity log was reviewed and approved.

MOTION: Director John Varela made a motion to approve the Director's Activity log, and Director Larry Coppedge seconded the motion.

FINANCIAL MATTER: A letter from the IRS confirming a 60-day review regarding 941 quarterly Reports from years 2022 and 2023 taxes.

The Directors reviewed the following reports:

- Transaction Detail by Account
- Balance Sheet
- Profit & Loss
- Profit & Loss Budget Vs Actual

Directors expressed concerns that some of the financial reports were confusing, and some figures needed clarification. They emphasized the importance of understanding these figures for the budget. The General Manager answered questions about the report and explained that he followed the same report format used by his predecessor but agreed to have the Office Manager make any necessary changes.

SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING(S): Special Meetings will be scheduled for July 29, 2024, and August 2, 2024. The Regular Monthly meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 26, 2024, at 11:00 am.

ADJOURN: Director John Varela made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Director Larry Coppedge. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting ended at noon.

Director

David Guajardo, General Manager