



BOARD MEETING AGENDA SUBMITTAL

TO: GCSB Board of Directors

FROM: Peter Kampa, General Manager

DATE: October 8, 2024

SUBJECT: Agenda Item 6D: Consideration of Amending the District Organizational Chart to Add Three Positions in Operations and Maintenance, and Directing the Evaluation of Separating the Water from the Wastewater Department

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

I Move to Direct Staff to Amend the District Organizational Chart to Add Three Positions in Operations and Maintenance and Directing the Evaluation of Separating the Water from the Wastewater Department.

BACKGROUND:

The district operates an extremely complex water treatment, water distribution wastewater collection, wastewater treatment, and wastewater recycling system. Every aspect of operating our water and wastewater systems is regulated by the California state water resources Control Board and its Regional Water Quality Control Board. California State water quality standards are by far the most stringent in the Nation and are even set up to increase in their quality standards each time the District Permits are updated.

Within the Districts Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants are numerous pumps, chemical feed pumps, control valves, supervisory control systems, programmable logic controllers, electrical control systems, complicated plumbing, chemical storage and other related infrastructure. District treatment operators must be certified at a high level by the State of California which involves testing and experience on the job. Every one of these mechanical components required daily, weekly, monthly and in many cases continuous monitoring, maintenance, calibration and replacement. Our staff operating these systems must be extremely qualified, and these positions are in extremely high demand throughout the State, and there is a shortage of Certified Operators. Water and Wastewater Quality Samples must be taken continuously by our Operators and Certified Laboratories and these District Employees are bound by their Certifications to understand and comply with the States Water Quality parameters.

Our Water Distribution and Wastewater Collection Systems are made-up of nearly 42 miles of Sewer Collection and Force Mains, 812 Manholes, 16 Lift Stations, 70 Miles of Water Distribution Mains, 3,273 Water Service Lines and Meters, 1,072 Water Mainline Valves, 29 Pressure Regulating Valves, 538 Fire Hydrants, Seven Water Storage Tanks, Booster Pumps, Hydro-pneumatics Systems, Control Valves, SCADA, Electrical

Systems and many other critical components, all requiring regular inspection and routine maintenance for reliable operation. If the Wastewater Collection System is not diligently inspected and maintained, sanitary sewer overflows will occur causing property and environmental damage as well as expensive regulatory violations. If our Water Distribution System is not routinely inspected and maintained, inappropriate water pressure, water main breaks, pump failures, leaks, property damage and water outages will occur.

The District has spent the last six years completing significant Infrastructure Improvements, all of which, just like your vehicle, require regular maintenance for proper operation. During that time frame we also experienced the COVID-19 Pandemic that strained our staffing levels to the maximum. Management has determined that it is not possible to configure the current staffing to maintain our Water and Wastewater Systems to industry standards. For example, we have been down two employees in Water and Wastewater Operations for many months, leaving us with only two employees in that Department and requiring that those personnel were on call nearly continuously and could only take time off in emergencies. This type of operation is extremely risky, wears employees out and results in employees working while sick in addition to the disruption in their personal lives.

When it comes to Water and Wastewater System Maintenance, due to the low staffing level we currently have, there have been numerous occasions where only two System Operators were working, which results and the inability to perform multiple tasks simultaneously, respond to emergencies, or even work safely. Fire Hydrants, Water Valves, Control Valves, and Pressure Regulating Stations that are supposed to be inspected, operated and maintained annually, have gone relatively untouched for many years as we have been operating in emergency, reactive mode.

Lastly, we are having much difficulty in recruiting System Operators that are Certified in both Water and Wastewater, the manner in which we currently operate. Very few System Operators in the State are Dual Certified, which has made it almost impossible to recruit fully qualified and certified staff. Staff wishes to evaluate separating Operators into two Classifications, Water Treatment Certification and Wastewater Treatment Certification. We would propose to use our Human Resources Consultant to conduct an analysis and document job responsibilities, staffing levels and compensation. We want to assure our current Dual Certified employees, that there would be no loss in compensation for only being required to maintain one of their Certifications. These employees are very valuable to the District, because they can work in either or both the Water and Wastewater Treatment Systems.

We must increase staffing to ensure System reliability, regulatory compliance, efficiency in Operation and Maintenance in accordance with industry standards and the unique needs of our 50-year-old system. Staff is proposing to add 1 position in Water and Wastewater Treatment, and two positions in Maintenance. Unfortunately, the funding is not currently available to fill these positions, but the plan is to make adjustments in both revenue and expense to make this happen. Until the Budgetary adjustments are made, the positions will be added to the organizational chart as “unfilled”.