

October 10, 2023

2023 CSDA Annual Conference Staff and Board Reports

Nancy:

As has been the case at each of these conferences, the time spent was well with it. The connections and shared experiences with people from other districts are simply invaluable! A few of the seminars I attended were on cyber security, board protocols, and one from a district in Natomas. Probably the most meaningful for me, as board president, was the seminar that discussed some interesting scenarios that have/could come up in a contentious meeting, providing excellent advice on how to (legally) deal with them.

As always, I appreciate the opportunity to attend these conferences.

Nancy Mora, Board President

Janice:

I loved the fact that the entire Board was planning to go this year. There were new accomplishments made this year and we all wanted to celebrate together. We received the renewal of the District Transparency Certificate, the District of Distinction Award, the GM of the Year Award and accepted the CSDA Tuolumne County Chapter Award. We have such a great group of directors with the GM and staff, we have made it an ideal trip for team building. Prior to us attending the conference we discussed the courses we were each going to take, some doubling up, others separately, to get the best education we could for our community. Everything that we learned we were able to bring back to the boardroom and share it through our discussions at each meeting.

I am very thankful for this conference and the group effort it took to accomplish what we had not been able to until now.

Thank you all,

Janice Kwiatkowski, Vice President

John:

The conference was very nice. I did not go to any of the pre-conference activities, but they looked like they were a lot of fun. All the keynote speakers were fantastic, and the breakout sessions were all very good.

I attended the Role of the Board Parliamentary Procedure, Brown Act and Conflicts of Interest. I've taken those courses before but could always use the refresher. I then went to The Brown Act in a Modern World, and it was very good. After lunch it was on to Avoiding Conflicts of Interest and Maintaining Public Trust which I could

always learn more about. On Wednesday I went to Difficult Conversations, Ethics, Complaints Against a Board Member and then the Legislative Update Luncheon. After the luncheon, I attended Surplus Land Act and Special Districts-Know the Impact, then Building an Effective Board Management Team.

All in All, it was a great time and very informative. I was very glad to see Pete get the Manager of the Year award. I always thought that the conferences were a waste of time but now I realize they are very important.

Thank you,

John Armstrong, Director

Bob:

I attended the 2023 CSDA Annual Conference both as a Board member from GCSD, and as a Board member of the Special District Risk Management Authority (SDRMA). As in previous years, the organization and amenities of the event were excellent, and thoroughly enjoyable. The core of the activities, however, is always the educational breakout sessions. This year, I tried to focus on financially related topics -- Capital Improvement Projects, debt security pricing, the Federal Reserve, and reserve management. I also attended a quite good review of cybersecurity best practices, and the ever-popular Legislative update, as well as others. I was also lucky enough to be sitting next to Pete Kampa when the General Manager of the Year award was announced. I wish I had thought to have my camera ready. I was also happy to join the rest of the team to accept the District of Distinction certificate.

Robert Swan, Director

Rachel:

Attending the California Special Districts Conference was an enlightening and rewarding experience. The conference was a vibrant hub of knowledge-sharing and networking, where professionals from various special districts across the state came together to exchange insights, best practices, and innovative solutions.

One of the six breakout sessions that I attended was “Hearings, Protests and Elections, Oh My!” I attended this session to get familiar with the Prop 218 process. When I first started working at the District in 2017 we were in the middle of a water and sewer rate increase; I hardly knew what a special District was and I had never been part of implementing property-related fees. As we all know the increasing costs of service are common problems for many local agencies and the procedural challenges presented by Prop. 218 for property-related fees can be daunting. I left this session with a much better understanding of rate increases, tax measures and new ideas to keep our constituents informed about the costs of district infrastructure, funding for projects, and services rates. Overall, my experience at the CSDA Conference was both informative and inspiring, reaffirming the importance of special districts in supporting and serving our communities.

Like the Keynote Speaker Matthew Luhn says, “Storytelling is the #1 business skill necessary to connect, motivate, and lead people in today's world.

Tell your story with love,

Rachel Pearlman, Board Secretary

Pete:

Will provide his report at the board meeting.

Luis:

This year's CSDA Annual conference was one for the record books. While there were multiple things that stood out, I would like to highlight a few. The first was learning about alternative delivery models for capital improvement projects. This breakout session broke down the pros/cons between different procurement methods. The first one being Design-build (DB) projects, which bundles designers and contractors under the same contract. The second was Design-bid-build projects which contract designers and builders independently. The District could benefit by using either one of these model depending on the type of project, and each model is approved by State and Federal funding.

The second is conference networking. These conferences provide opportunities to build professional connections, share ideas, get new ideas, and learn about the latest technologies. Networking teamed us up with Gov-Deals, which is an asset management organization through an online auction platform. They managed the District current auction/surplus which brought in over \$100,000 in sold equipment. Gov-Deals managed the complete auction/surplus except for scheduling pickup. I don't know the complete history of District surplus, but this must be one of the best.

The last and probably favorite part was watching the District take multiple awards and Pete receiving the General Manager of the year award. It just shows how far the District has come and the commitment each employee has for the District.

Jennifer:

While there were numerous things learned and taken away from this year's CSDA Annual conference, there are two specific takeaway items I would like to highlight. The first is the information received regarding the changes that occurred to the Surplus Lands Act that specifically impact the District. Among the changes include the requirement that the District must first offer the sale of its land to affordable housing developers before pursuing other options. Interested parties have 60 days to express interest and 90 days to negotiate in good faith. There are two exemptions to this new requirement: 1) If the land is not suitable for public housing and 2) the land is dedicated for other public uses. The state has also activated an enforcement agency to oversee public agency compliance.

The second item I'd like to highlight is the "Public Events to Build Community Equity" breakout session attended. This class emphasized how important events and public gatherings are to the District's communication and public engagement plan. These can create an interactive experience and allows the District to engage the community on a positive footing, building the District's image beyond the services it provides. We put this guidance and information received into action at the 49er Festival, with parade entry of the vac com truck and handing out candy, balloons, and fire department goodie bags for the kids, and an interactive GCSO trivia game with \$10 gift cards to local community businesses at the booth. This both built equity with the community as well as the businesses in the community we serve. I am happy to report that the trivia game at the booth and the information provided by the slide show was overwhelmingly successful and extremely well received by the community. The businesses made multiple comments commending this effort and support by the District, and community members engaged in a much more fun and interactive way both getting to know their community services district staff on a much more personal level while learning so much more about the

District, its history and the services it provides that they benefit from. There were many laughs, hoots and hollering from our booth, and people leaving with smiles on their faces.

Jennifer Donabedian, Administrative Services Manager

Meghan:

As a first-time attendee at this year's CSDA Annual Conference, I had a valuable opportunity to gain knowledge and connect with other California Special District professionals.

I participated in the breakout session of "Learn How to Make Your Website Accessible Before a Costly Lawsuit Forces You." This session focused on ADA compliance, State laws for website accessibility, and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). In today's digital age, websites serve as a primary gateway for information and services, making them essential for individuals of all abilities. My biggest takeaways were learning how to properly add external links, adding closed captioning for videos, and how to create a process to verify all documents on the website are compliant. I had an engaging conversation with Streamline, the company behind our website platform, and learned new skills for using their portal to monitor the District's digital accessibility.

I also attended "The California Public Records Act: Don't Get Caught Unaware!" I learned further information on what documents classify as a "disclosable document", deadlines for responding to requests, and what information must be redacted in a document before public copies are provided. The knowledge I took away from this session helped me find clarification in how districts must maintain responsiveness to the demands of public records requests while upholding transparency and accountability in their operations.

Attending the CSDA Conference was a rewarding experience, leaving me with a deeper appreciation of the crucial role special districts play in delivering essential services to communities across California.

Meghan Atkins, Administrative Services Technician