



## COUNTY WATER DISTRICT OF BILLINGS HEIGHTS

### Special Meeting Minutes

January 29, 2026, 9 AM

Location :1540 Popelka Drive, Billings MT & Zoom

The Special meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance and called to order by President Essmann at 9 a.m.

#### **Roll Call of Board Members and Introduction of Guests and Visitors**

- **Board members present:** Directors Ellis, Ewalt, Erpenbach, Kary (via Zoom), Graves and President Essmann.
- **Other Present:** General Manager Bo Andersson, Assistant Manager Josh Simpson, Board Secretary Carolyn Bakker, Evelyn Pyburn (Yellowstone Co News)
- **Guest Present Via Zoom:** Brandon Fleury

#### **President's Remarks on Conduct of Meeting**

There are two opportunities for members of the public, our customers, and employees, to make their voice heard on issues with the Water District. The first is the next agenda item. Any member of the public may be heard on any subject that is NOT on the agenda. You will have one opportunity to speak which is limited to 3 minutes. Please come to the lectern so your comments may be recorded by the microphone and may be heard. Please identify yourself by name and address and spell your last name for the Secretary. This is a good time to request items for consideration at future Board meetings. The Board will not engage in debate but will attempt to provide brief answers to relevant questions.

There is also an opportunity for you to be heard on the Agenda items before a vote. The Board President will acknowledge the Public after a motion has been made and discussed by the Board for their input. The President will recognize speakers who raise their hand. You may comment for up to three minutes. Each speaker will have only one opportunity to speak on an agenda item.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT and Questions to the Board on Non-Agenda Items:**

President asked for public comment from the public. None were offered.

**Approval of Agenda :** Director Graves made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Ewalt. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Managers' Report:** President Essmann had requested that GM Andersson give the Board a verbal report on several items.

**1: Conflict Resolution Training:** The training is scheduled for February 9, 2026. The date was selected to work around an employee's pre-scheduled vacation.

**2: Update on the installation of the GPS units in the District trucks:** The installation on the two Freightliner dump truck has not been completed. They require special wiring and since they are rarely used, they have not been a priority.

Director Ellis requested a specific date for completion of the installation on those trucks. Director Ewalt mentioned that we have several unused units and ask for clarification of what would be done with them. President Essmann offered to check on options. He also stated that he would be contacting the vendor to learn about the types of reports that will be available from the GPS program.

**3: Implementation of Employee Policy Manual:** GH Andersson reported that the Employee manual has been printed and distributed to the employees for signature. The employees have made several comments and recommendations that they would like the Board to consider for updates to the manual. He pointed out that the employees weren't included in the manual review process.

The major issue that was identified was on the policy of how on-call and stand-by employees are assigned for after hours and weekends and trucks. He will send the board members his recommendation.

Director Ellis reminded the group since this had not been included in the agenda and hadn't been posted in the time frame required, that this discussion should be added to a future meeting. President Essmann agreed that it should be added to a future agenda.

Essmann asked about how many servicemen are required for a call. GM Anderson replied that it depends on the call. Typically, one employee should be able to take care of the call. In the event of a bigger event, such as a fire hydrant, a second employee would be needed. GM Andersson requested clarification on how calls should be made. Director Ellis replied that it is the managers part of their duties to make the assignments for service.

GM Andersson expressed concern that the Manual doesn't clearly describe how the on-call works. Director Ewalt stated that the manager should have a plan on making on the system. President Essmann recommended that the discussion be added to next month's meeting. GM Andersson has been requested to submit a recommendation on how emergency policy to be considered to add to the manual.

## **Old Business:**

### **Resolution Concerning Rate Negotiation with Water Provider**

- Reports and Correspondence
- Rafetilis Report
- Nexius Report

Director Ellis made a motion to approve the Resolution Concerning Rate Negotiation with Water Provider. Director Erpenbach seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Resolution concerning Posting of Preliminary Feasibility Study on Consolidation of Water Delivery Service:**

Director Ewalt made the motion to approve the Resolution to Post the Preliminary Feasibility Study on Consolidation of Water Delivery Service. The motion was seconded by Director Kary.

Director Ellis stated that the Technical Report 4 & 5 should also be posted at this time and hadn't seen Technical reports 1-3 either. President Essmann said that those reports could be taken up at the next meeting. He will contact Deb Meling at the city to request those reports.

President Essmann requested that the "Preliminary Feasibility Study Just the First Step" document be included in the posting of the report. The document discusses the multi-step process of evaluating a potential consolidation with the city.

Director Ellis questioned whether the document should include a reference for a new Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). President Essmann explained that a CIP plan is important to have if the consolidation doesn't come to happen. The District will need to have a plan in place to continue forward. The CIP plan also lays the groundwork for future rate negotiations in that the report would have a more accurate projection of population and needs.

Director Ewalt asked how many miles of AC pipe are under gravel streets? The city is working on eliminating gravel streets. Replacing pipes under paved streets is more expensive. AM Simpson replied that he didn't have that information at this time.

GM Andersson sent the Board a report yesterday that the Board hadn't had a chance to review. The report will show what has been done and what remains to be done.

President Essmann will contact Morrison-Maierle to see if they are interested in preparing a report. Director Ellis expressed her object to included reference to a CIP in the document.

The Board voted on the Resolution concerning Posting of Preliminary Feasibility Study on Consolidation of Water Delivery Service. The resolution was approved unanimously.

President Essmann made the motion to include the preface to the feasibility study. Director Graves seconded the motion. The motion was approved 5-1,

Director Ellis voted no.

## **New Business**

### **Resolution to Appoint Search Committee for New General Manager:**

Director Ellis made the motion, and it was seconded the motion. There was a discussion that a job description be posted immediately to begin the search. The motion passed unanimously. President Essmann requested that any board members that are interested in serving on the search committee and he will name a committee chair. The motion was passed unanimously.

### **Items for future Board Meetings**

- Specifics for on-call policy from Bo with cost
- Audit Contract
- Replies to questions posed by Director Ellis regarding last month's financial statements.
- Inclusion of Technical Reports 1-5 in the Feasibility Study posting.

### **Announcements:**

**Next Board Meeting: February 18, 2026, 6-9 pm**

Meeting was adjourned at 9:55 am.

  
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Carolyn B. Bakker, Board Secretary