MINUTES

Board Members Present:  
Jim Doyle, Chair  
James Tripp, Vice Chair  
Bryan Foulk, Member  
Reb Guillot, Member  
Dan M. Offret, Member

District Staff:  
Mark R. Stratton, General Manager  
Christopher W. Hill, Deputy General Manager  
Michael Land, Chief Financial Officer  
Charlie Maish, District Engineer  
Warren Tenney, Clerk of the Board  
Tullie Noltin, Recorder  
Michael McNulty, Legal Counsel

Regular Session

I.  Call to Order and Roll Call

Jim Doyle, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Domestic Water Improvement District (District), called the Board Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Jim Doyle, James Tripp, Reb Bryan Foulk, Guillot and Dan M. Offret were present.

II.  General Comments from the Public

James Lewis, an employee residing at 1601 N. San Pedro River Road in Benson, Arizona, said he understands the serious budget constraints but he feels changing health insurance carriers to Health Net would be inferior to Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona (BCBSAZ). While working in the medical field, his wife has seen instances where Health Net authorized fewer visits than
BCBSAZ for the same injuries. He is concerned that benefits will be reduced by changing carriers. Mr. Foulk asked Mr. Lewis if he would be willing to pay increased deductibles or copays to stay with BCBSAZ. Mr. Lewis said he feels having a better insurance carrier in a serious illness is worth paying a little more.

Sulynda Evano, residing at 6741 N. Morning Glory Drive, noted she had spoken at the last Board meeting about her meter and high bills. She returned to ask about sewer charges. She said she understands the sewer charges are set by the County based on winter usage and then billed to the customer on the water bill. She recently learned that in cases of a leak, such as the one she had in December, sewer charges can be recalculated based on a lower three month period. She was concerned this had not been explained to her when she called nor were the sewer rates listed on the bill. In addition, she was having difficulty finding information about the Board meetings, and asked if the District notices the public. Warren Tenney, Clerk of the Board, said the District meets all statutory requirements by posting the Board meeting agendas in various public locations, which is listed on the bottom of the Agenda Notice. The District also goes a step further by posting the agenda notices on its website, and lists the upcoming meeting dates in quarterly newsletters and annual Consumer Confidence Reports. He said the regular Board meetings are held on the second Monday of every month at 6:00 p.m. Ms. Evano complained that only the meeting dates are listed in the newsletter. She said she had difficulty getting the start time information. She also said she looked for the new rate structure on her recent bill, and it was not there. Mike Land said the new rates took effect November 1, 2010 but customers will not see the change until their December bill. The new rates will be listed on the back of the bill. Ms. Evano asked for a document showing the usage at her property prior to and following the meter removal, and a document showing the testing done on her meter. She said she has not changed her habits and judging by her current read, she expects her usage for the current 30 day period to be 9,617 gallons. Ms. Evano added it is good business practice to inform people about ways to save money, and customers who can save a few dollars on sewer recalculations might be less inclined to complain about rate increases.

III. Consent Agenda.

A. Approval of Minutes – October 13, 2010 Board Meeting.
B. Approval of Minutes – October 25, 2010 Public Hearing.
C. Ratification of Billing Adjustments.

Mr. Tripp made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Foulk seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. General Business - Items for Discussion and Possible Action.
A. Monthly Status of the District.

Mark Stratton, General Manager, said water production continues to be lower than last year. Even though October has been warmer than last year, customers are still using substantially less in the Metro Main and Metro Hub areas. He noted the District has not been promoting conservation lately but people are using less water. The South Shannon media will be changed out fairly soon; staff is continuing to see the same amount of flow before breakthrough. The water supply exploration for the Hub service area is done and Hydrology is awaiting the final report from Clear Creek Associates. Staff is getting everything lined up to proceed on the Matter Well project as soon as the County acquires the property. Construction is complete on Northern Hills but a couple items are still wrapping up. Staff is working on obtaining design approval for Pima County roadway projects. The District should be advertising for the Magee Road project within the next week.


Mike Land, Chief Financial Officer, said revenues and expenditures compared to budget are reported as of September 30, 2010. Water sales are $400,000 over what had been budgeted. Expenditures to date are running about $179,000 under budget and should catch up to projections later in the year. Compared to last year, water sales are $506,000 ahead for the first three months through September; overall running $521,000 revenues exceeding expenditures. The majority of that positive figure is due to water sales in July, August and September. The cash balance on hand is slightly under $1.4 million, just shy of the targeted $1.5 million. There have been only ten new meter applications through October and only one of those was in Metro Southwest. New meter applications for the 2010-11 budget year were projected to be 150 in Metro Main and Metro Hub and 50 in Metro Southwest, so the actual numbers are falling short.

C. Resolution 2010-4 – Authorize and Approve the Issuance and Sale of Senior Lien Water Revenue Obligations for Waterline Relocation Projects Required due to County Road Projects and Senior Lien Water Revenue Refunding Obligation Bonds.

Mr. Tripp made a motion to approve Resolution 2010-4 to authorize and approve the issuance and sale of senior lien water revenue obligations to finance the waterline relocation projects that are required as a result of the Pima County/RTA road widening projects and the possible refinancing of a portion of the District’s 2002 senior water bonds. Mr. Offret seconded the motion.

Mark Reader of Stone & Youngberg gave a brief overview of the plan. He has been working closely with District staff in connection with the development of all the financing documents and
the official statement, of which copies were provided to the Board. He encouraged the Board to review the documents and direct any comments to staff. The rating agency process will start the week of November 8, 2010 and continue the following week of November 15, 2010. The District should be in line to potentially sell bonds after the Thanksgiving weekend or shortly thereafter. The team should be on course to have the financing done towards the end of November or early December. The refinance still looks like it will work to hopefully lock in some cash flow savings relative to the 2002 senior lien bonds. Mr. Reader said that Tim Stratton, Fred Rosenfeld’s partner at Gust Rosenfeld, was also present to answer any questions the Board may have.

Motion passed unanimously.

D. Amendment to Clarify Resolution 2010-2 for Rate Structure Adjustment.

Mr. Tripp made a motion to reconsider Resolution 2010-2 for the purpose of renumbering Resolution as 2010-3 and to clarify the geographical impact of the Resolution as reflected in the corrected version distributed to the Board.

Mr. Foulk seconded the motion. Mr. Offret noted that the Resolution distributed to the Board was not a corrected version. Mr. Tenney said a redline version was handed out to show the renumbering change but the copy to be signed is correct.

Motion passed unanimously.

E. Audit for Fiscal Year 2009-2010.

Mr. Tripp made a motion to approve the District 2009-2010 audited financial statements to include any noted changes. Mr. Offret seconded the motion.

Mr. Stratton asked Mr. Land about the management letter for the Board. Mr. Land said Clifton Gunderson promised the management letter within the next week. They also informed him of another review in which a few cosmetic changes were made but the changes did not impact the financial statements.

Motion passed unanimously.

F. Employee Medical and Dental Insurance Coverage for 2011.

Mr. Stratton said a presentation was prepared for the Board of Directors by Chris Gordon of CBIZ, the District’s health insurance broker. Mr. Gordon said he and District staff worked closely together to prepare the recommendation ahead of last year’s schedule, to be able to give employees the selections before open enrollment. CBIZ recommended a carrier change because BCBSAZ, the current carrier, asked for a 13% increase to renew. CBIZ was able to negotiate
BCBSAZ down to a lesser 7% increase but looked at other market alternatives. Mr. Gordon recommended switching to Health Net, which came in at 11% less. Health Net’s fiscally responsible proposal came in about $40,000 below BCBSAZ’s 2010 costs. Health Net is a local company with local decision makers.

Mr. Offret asked if the analysis by CBIZ made it possible to ascertain how many employees would have to change their primary care physicians. Mr. Gordon said it is difficult to pinpoint without asking the employees who their providers are but CBIZ ran a disruption report which provides a simple comparison, and Health Net has 1,432 providers in Pima County compared to BCBSAZ’s 1,314. If the District had chosen to recommend a company like Aetna, a much smaller network with known issues in Pima County, the impact on employees would be greater. Health Net was recommended in part based on the similarities with BCBSAZ. Even though Health Net has more providers, there may be a few people who have to change doctors.

Mr. Foulk noted BCBSAZ cost to the District is about $180,000 and Health Net is about $149,000. He asked how employee’s deductibles and copays would compare if the total costs were equal, dropping BCBSAZ costs down to the same level as Health Net. Mr. Gordon said in order to trim BCBSAZ costs, the deductible would have to be doubled or tripled under the PPO. The copays would have to be shifted along with the plan design because typically higher deductibles include higher copays.

Mr. Gordon added that it is really important to note there is a dual choice plan, allowing employees a choice between two different styles of plans that fit their needs. One of the attractive pieces of the PPO plan is the low deductible, and people choose that plan for purposes of having a richer benefit when they have higher utilization. Generally, people choose the low-deductible PPO if they expect to have a child or a surgery in the next year and the HSA does not make sense for them that particular year.

Steve Glowacka, an employee residing at 1220 N. Arbor Circle, requested that the Board allow employees to keep BCBSAZ. He questioned the reasons why Health Net costs less than BCBSAZ. He believes doctors choose not to work with Health Net because their slower reimbursement rate. Mr. Glowacka said he understands the District has a tight budget but would like the Board to consider the peace of mind in keeping BCBSAZ. He would be willing to pay more for BCBSAZ.

Randy Collyer, an employee residing at 4045 Skyline Drive, distributed printouts of the Consumer Reports to the Board. He said he is very happy with BCBSAZ and does not want to change. He expressed concern that the employees were told about this change last Thursday and were not given any choice in the matter. He would have preferred to receive the information sooner so that he could ask questions. He would pay more to stay with BCBSAZ.
Mr. Stratton said that in the past couple of years, more staff meetings were held because of the addition of the HSA option and restructuring of the plans themselves. Prior to that staff did not have input on benefits decisions. Mr. Stratton continued that there are no changes to the plan itself only to the carrier. Under the economic circumstances, the recommendation for Health Net makes the most sense, as it is roughly 18% lower than BCBSAZ.

Mr. Offret said he has had three different carriers in four years at his workplace. When he had Health Net, he was not satisfied with it; however, the $43,000 potential savings are great. He said the District needs to look at every line item in budget. While he feels strongly that Health Net is not the best option overall, it is the best economically. He would like employees to know that when the District is in a better financial position, he will make it a priority to restore current benefits.

Mr. Gordon said he was impressed by staff’s willingness to step up and make their opinions known, as well as their knowledge and involvement in meetings. He said the old “you get what you pay for” adage does not hold water with insurance carriers. Carriers underwrite for a multitude of different reasons and numbers come out differently under varying circumstances. He confirmed Health Net does have lower reimbursement rates and that is one reason the District is getting a discounted rate; however, in the most extreme cases, lower reimbursement rates typically lead to lower employee out of pocket costs as well. Mr. Gordon also stated there is a benefit improvement to those employees choosing the HSA health plan. The HSA deductible will decrease from $2,600 to $2,500 under Health Net. Mr. Gordon said he has been in the insurance business for 12 years, and his company has changed several times. He is very confident that CBIZ staff can resolve benefit-related issues if they arise for District employees.

Mr. Gordon pointed out that in the most recent 2010 Consumer Reports, Health Net rates more favorably than in the 2009 report the Board received from Mr. Collyer. Carriers suffer low ratings from time to time. He recalled that in 2008-2009, Health Net had some public relations issues in part because provider payments took longer than other carriers. Mr. Doyle asked about the 2010 Consumer Reports ratings. Mr. Gordon said Consumer Reports ranks all the companies but BCBSAZ is not rated because it is a public company. Health Net was ranked right alongside United Healthcare with 3 out of 5. All other providers in Arizona are ranked 2 or below. The ranking system varies from year to year but with a maximum of 100, this year Health Net’s score is 80, near the level of United Healthcare and BCBSAZ.

Mr. Guillot asked how CBIZ would handle a rash of employee complaints, if they occurred. Mr. Gordon said employees could work with CBIZ if they have an issue and CBIZ would work directly with the provider. Mr. Guillot asked about the comment regarding different levels of authorized care. Mr. Gordon said that if employees encounter any type of violation, CBIZ would
assist. Mr. Gordon said sometimes the situation is unclear and any time an employee feels as if they have been wronged, CBIZ should be their first call.

Mr. Land pointed out the difference between the 2010 BCBSAZ and the proposed 2011 Health Net is $43,000 and the difference between the 2010 BCBSAZ and the proposed 2011 BCBSAZ is $70,000. Mr. Land asked Mr. Offret why he was unhappy with Health Net when he was a member. Mr. Offret said he was unhappy with the doctor selection and the reimbursements for certain procedures. Mr. Land added that as an employee, he wanted to say thank you for the $5,900 the District would pay on his behalf to Health Net for insurance coverage.

Mr. Foulk said for those employees unhappy with the idea of switching carriers, he would like to compare the two companies to see how much each alternative would cost. Mr. Foulk would like employees to see how much it would cost them to keep BCBSAZ using Health Net’s cost as the maximum employer portion to the District. Mr. Foulk said he understood the personal choice of selecting a doctor.

Mr. Foulk noted his own employees’ rates went up 16% this year and he asked them to help make tough decisions about their own benefits since they could not negotiate a lower rate. Mr. Gordon said he thinks it is admirable for small business owners to sit down with their staff and allow them to take part in these decisions but he does not think it can be done with a larger staff because it is impossible to make everyone happy. Mr. Foulk noted that even his staff of 12 was not unanimously happy with the outcome.

Mr. Gordon thought Mr. Foulk’s request was a good idea for keeping the District’s dollars flat and seeing the changes for employees in order to stay with BCBSAZ. The District’s benefits are very rich and they could also be reduced to achieve net-net. Mr. Gordon also mentioned that CBIZ makes its services available to individuals, as well. During open enrollment, employees interested in buying another type of insurance can buy outside of Metro Water plans if they so choose.

Mr. Stratton expressed concern about the ability to prepare an analysis in the allotted time frame before open enrollment in December. Mr. Gordon said he would work to meet the deadline.

Mr. Guillot asked if there is a minimum number of enrolled employees required to get these rates. Mr. Gordon said that typically health insurance markets are aligned into three groups: the small market is typically under 26 enrolled lives, the middle market is 26-99 lives, and the large market is 99 and above. The larger the market, the more negotiation is possible. Mr. Guillot asked Mr. Gordon if he sees businesses the size of Metro Water offer employees a lump sum if they do not take the offered benefits and opt for their own personal plan. Mr. Gordon said there are employers who provide compensation to employees who enroll in the HSA but normally it is
a one-time contribution rather than a recurring one, and that is one reason the District’s benefits are considered to be very rich. Mr. Gordon added that in groups this size, Metro Water is among the top ten in richest benefits value as far as what employees have to pay for what they receive.

Mr. Glowacka said he understands that 18% is a truly significant difference and the District must look at Health Net. He said the information given to employees show the employee cost is the same with either carrier. Billie Sue Morelli, Human Resource Specialist, said that employees would pay the same as they currently are if the Board approves the recommendation but if the Board decides to pass those costs along, then employees will pay more. Mr. Foulk explained the costs would only stay the same if the District paid for the increase. If the District was to remain with BCBSAZ, the fiscally responsible thing has to be done for the District, which means the extra cost would be transferred to the employees in the form of more money taken out of paychecks and higher copays and deductibles. Mr. Foulk continued that one could make the District’s payment for BCBSAZ the same as Health Net but the employees would pay that difference. That is a lot of money for the employees to pay so that is why the recommendation was the lesser amount. Mr. Glowacka thanked Mr. Foulk for the explanation.

Mr. Doyle suggested the Board should hold a special meeting in a week or so, if possible, in the interest of clearing up some of the questions for employees. Mr. Gordon said it is possible to delay open enrollment one week but not preferable in order to give employees the month of December to enroll.

There was a discussion about what the Board would like to be presented to staff. Mr. Foulk said the Board does not want to increase costs to the District, so he would like employees to see the difference between carriers as it affects their finances. Mr. Gordon asked what results the Board would like the meeting with staff to produce. Mr. Doyle said staff is complaining about the lack of communication and he would like to see more facts provided so staff can make comparisons.

Ms. Morelli said the Health Net and BCBSAZ plans are an apples-to-apples comparison of the benefits. The lower cost to the District is the only change if the District goes to Health Net. If the District stays with BCBSAZ the employees with families would have $190 or more taken out of their paychecks per pay period in premiums to stay with BCBSAZ. Ms. Morelli said that as an employee, her budget may not be able to sustain the increase.

Mr. Glowacka said that he would like to have the peace of mind that comes with BCBSAZ and he feels the employees deserve to know what to expect.

Mr. Land said if the District goes with BCBSAZ, the employees will pay the entire difference. Single employee plan deductions will go up by $26 per pay period, employee/spouse plans will go up by $55, employee/children plans will go up by $49 up, and employee/family plans will
increase by $78 per pay period. Employees with families would pay over $2000 more per year. Mr. Land said that he is not interested in staying with BCBSAZ because of the $55 increase in his cost per pay period. Mr. Doyle said it appeared those numbers were not presented to staff but he felt it was important to do so. Mr. Stratton commented that the initial numbers were not presented to staff because the additional costs were considered to be so significant that they were out of the question. Mr. Foulk asked for confirmation that employees with families would be paying an additional $2000 per year for the same exact plan, and Mr. Gordon confirmed.

Mr. Land asked if BCBSAZ could be expected to solicit our business next year. Mr. Gordon said it is possible that BCBSAZ could propose an even better rate next year. Mr. Foulk agreed.

Mr. Guillot summarized that the Board should decide on how much it will pay for health insurance, and then provide information to employees showing the alternatives based on that bottom line. Mr. Gordon said he sees companies take that approach to fit health care costs into a tight budget. Mr. Foulk said he would agree for the District to pay no more than $305,917. Mr. Doyle asked the employees in attendance if they had any comments.

Tom Caito, an employee residing at 2909 E. Manchester Street, asked Mr. Gordon if, considering the limit the Board is willing to approve, BCBSAZ could offer several different options to employees with varying deductibles and copays. Mr. Gordon said the most options BCBSAZ can offer a group this size is two. Employees who require that type of personalization sometimes opt for purchasing individual coverage; however, Mr. Gordon would find it very hard to believe someone could take these dollars and find a like or similar plan on the market as an individual buyer.

Mr. Tenney said the health benefits the District offers are considered to be the gold standard. Mr. Gordon agreed. Mr. Tenney said the previous broker said the same thing, and his family and friends are extremely envious of his health insurance. He wanted the Board to know he is appreciative of the benefits the Board offers.

Mr. Land asked if employees would have a ballot vote on whether they preferred BCBSAZ or Health Net. Mr. Doyle suggested the employees, HR and management have a discussion.

Mr. Tripp said he is probably biased because he has been with BCBSAZ for 54 years. There have been ups and downs but he has never had a problem getting good care. He is also partial to this District. We have to have the money to pay for things. In recent years the District has had to cut cost of living increases, merit increases, and we are scraping the bottom of the barrel. He would like to see more information provided to employees to make them understand this.
Mr. Foulk made a motion to meet in one week, and to have information distributed about the District’s maximum payment and how much it would affect the employees. Employees are welcome to that meeting when the Board will make a decision. We will see what kind of input we have from the Board and from the employees at that time. Mr. Tenney confirmed the special meeting can be posted in a week.

Mr. Tripp seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

G. Approval of District Lobbyist for 2011 Legislative Session.

Mr. Tripp made a motion to approve Gallagher & Kennedy as the District’s lobbyist for the 2011 Arizona Legislative Session. Mr. Foulk seconded the motion.

Mr. Offret said the District is paying a flat monthly fee of $3,000 for lobbyists. He wanted to know how long the legislative session runs. Mr. Stratton said that typically the legislative session goes to April or early May but the length is dependent on the budget. Mr. Offret asked if the $3,000 covers special sessions. Mr. Stratton said only regular sessions are covered. Special sessions are only included if they are related to water, and he does not see that as an issue. Mr. Offret asked for the total amount being voted for, and if that is hard to ascertain, what were the yearly costs in the past. Mr. McNulty said the latest the session has run is August 20th, and it is generally over by June 1st. Mr. Tenney noted the monthly fee amount has not increased in five years. Mr. Offret said the District has received very good service from this group but while the District is deferring things like well maintenance, there comes a time when we must assign a risk factor on certain things. For the sake of the budget and the economy, we are going to have to set some things aside for a year or two. Mr. Offret said he has no problems with the representation so far but he feels this Board must look at every single line item in the District’s budget to see where we can squeeze every last penny out. He would like to start that process with this line item. He does not want to go to public again next year and tell them the District is raising their rates another 8%. He does not think the District needs a lobbyist this year because water issues should be minimal this year. He would like to reassess the lobbyist next year. Mr. Foulk asked how much the total bill was last year, and Mr. Land said it was slightly over $36,000.

The motion failed 0-5.

H. Amendment No. 4 to Miscellaneous Water Resources Consulting Services Contract.
Mr. Tripp made a motion to approve Amendment #1 to increase the not-to-exceed amount to $100,720 to Clear Creek Associates, LLC for Miscellaneous Water Resources Consulting Services. Mr. Offret seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

V. General Manager’s Report

Mr. Stratton said staff does have Diablo Village No. 2 up and running. It was turned on late last week and is producing water in Metro Southwest. As a result there will be a substantial reduction in Tucson Water purchases.

There is a new waterline relocation required on Lucero Road related to an Oro Valley drainage project. District resources will be utilized to move lines as large as 8” before the first of the year. Oro Valley is easy to work with, so there should not be any issues.

A set of three intergovernmental agreements (IGA) are in the works Pima County; the Lattimore North well use by the Parks Department; the Matter Well reimbursement; and the County’s portion of the reclaimed water line. The IGAs will be brought before the Board for approval in the next couple of months.

The Regional Water Assessment Task Force (RWATF) rescheduled its first meeting and added another date in December to accommodate all participants. There will be four sessions with 20 participants apiece. Mr. Tenney, Mr. Offret, and Mr. Block are all invited participants; Mr. Tenney is representing Central Arizona Project (CAP), Mr. Offret is representing Groundwater Users Advisory Council (GUAC), and Mr. Block is representing the District. The results of the think tank process will be compiled into a report, hopefully assisted by a University of Arizona intern, and posted on the Pima Association of Government’s (PAG) website for public presentation by late February or early March.

The District’s potluck-style Thanksgiving luncheon will be Tuesday, November 23, 2010. Board members are encouraged to attend.

Mr. Foulk asked when the reclaimed water lines are expected to be put in along the CDO Wash in the Cortaro/Magee area. Mr. Stratton said they will be done ahead of the Magee Road Phase II project. Charlie Maish said the project is scheduled to start in the summer of 2011.

Mr. Offret asked if there had been any changes to the website to help customers access information more easily. He had previously requested the budget be posted on the website. Mr. Stratton said that Mrs. Noltin and Mr. Tenney have interviewed consultants to do enhancements to the website and the project may take 2-3 months. Mr. Offret asked if anything can be done in the interim to post part of the budget online. Mr. Stratton agreed and said he will let the Board know when it has been posted online.
Chris Hill added the Diablo Village No. 2 job was done in-house to save money. He commended staff, some of which were present at the meeting, Brian Smith and Frank Gallego, for a job well done. There had been a problem with approval to construct and the process had to be redone, so Mr. Hill was pleased about the completion.

VI. Legal Counsel’s Report

Mr. McNulty said legal matters had been pretty quiet, although there had been some input in dealing with contracts for the recharge project the District will be acquiring shortly.

Mr. Stratton did get an update from the Lewis & Roca Phoenix office about the case with Sunwestern regarding the Northeast Reservoir Booster Station (NERBS) pump failures. Discovery of documents will occur over the next couple of weeks and the court date is scheduled sometime in October 2011.

VII. Future Meeting Dates; Future Agenda Items.

Mr. Tenney said a special meeting will be held on November 15, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. and the next regular scheduled session of the Board of Directors will be on Monday, December 13, 2010.

VIII. General Comments From the Public.

Mr. Stratton congratulated Helen Ireland, who was in attendance, on being elected to the Board of Directors. The new Board Members will take their seats in January 2011.

IX. Adjournment.

Mr. Tripp made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Offret seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

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Jim Doyle, Chair of the Board

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Warren Tenney, Clerk of the Board