



**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
SALTON SEA AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
March 21, 2024**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Salton Sea Authority (“Authority”) Board of Directors (“Board”) was called to order by Madam Chair Santillanes, at 10:09 a.m., March 21, 2024, at Imperial County BOS Chamber, and via Zoom Webinar.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Led by Director Aguilar

ROLL CALL

DIRECTORS PRESENT ON SITE

Altrena Santillanes, President
Ryan E. Kelley, Director
Gina Dockstader, Secretary
John Aguilar, Director
Alex Cárdenas, Director

AGENCY

Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
Imperial County
Imperial Irrigation District
Coachella Valley Water District
Imperial Irrigation District

DIRECTORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM

Ex-Officio Samantha Arthur
Yxstian Gutierrez, Treasurer

AGENCY

California Natural Resources Agency
Riverside County

DIRECTORS ABSENT

V. Manuel Perez, Director
Cástulo R. Estrada, Vice-President
Thomas Torte, Director
Luis A. Plancarte, Director

AGENCY

Riverside County
Coachella Valley Water District
Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
Imperial County

SALTON SEA AUTHORITY STAFF PRESENT

G. Patrick O’Dowd, Executive Director/GM (in person)
Carlos Campos, Best Best & Krieger, Legal Counsel (in person)
Bob Hargreaves, Best Best & Krieger, Legal Counsel (Via Zoom)

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT

On Site: Trina Hamby, Imperial County Public Health, Guillermo Hernandez, Senator Padillas Office, Miguel Hernandez, CVRA and Paul Najjar, Gafcon

Via Zoom: Evon Willhoff, DWR, Jamie Asbury, IID, plus 23 others

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No Comments

III. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

No Comments

IV. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE BOARD ACTION

A. CONSENT CALENDAR – Approve, Receive, and File

1. Minutes of Salton Sea Authority Board Meeting February 15, 2024
2. Salton Sea Authority Warrant Register Ratification for February 29, 2024
3. Salton Sea Authority Internal Financial Report for January 31, 2024

*Motion made by Cardenas, second by Dockstader, the Board **approved** the Consent Calendar to be received and filed.*

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: President Santillanes, Secretary Dockstader, Director’s Cardenas, Kelley and Aguilar.

NOES: 0

ABSENT: Vice-President Estrada, Treasurer Gutierrez, Director Plancarte, Director Tortez and Director Perez.

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: 5-0

- ### **B. USACE Update on funding restrictions, 3x3x3, hydrology workshop and implementation.**
- Lisa Moore and Lowry Crook provided a brief update on the feasibility study. Ms. Moore and GM O’Dowd met recently with delegates in D.C. to address a challenge to the scope the study. Originally authorized as a 3 year, 3 million effort, the scoping effort between USACE and the local Sponsors (the Authority and DWR) identified an essential scope that will cost approximately \$16 million and take 6 to 8 years to complete. Based on earlier guidance, the Corp has not had the authority to exceed the original terms (3 years, \$3 million) due to language in the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA). Working with our delegation in DC we have been pursuing an exception from this interpretation, which was accomplished in March through legislative language in the 2024 Energy and Water bill, allowing the use both IIJA *and other* funds for the project. We continue to pursue final sign off on the “Course of Action” (COA) recommended by the project

team (known as COA2) which is at the highest level of the vertical command for consideration.

Ex Officio Arthur informed the Board that the 2024-25 budget currently under negotiation includes \$3MM in funding for the local sponsor contribution to the feasibility study.

Atty Crook mentioned that the Authority continues to seek additional federal funds for FY24 and FY25 to fully fund work scheduled to occur in that timeframe.

- C. Review and Approve Office Lease – 82500 Highway 111, Suite 4, Indio, CA.
Executive Director O’Dowd gave a brief update and requested approval of the new office lease. The lease is for two years at \$1,200/month (modified gross) with an additional month free rent.

Motion made by Aguilar and second by Cardenas to approve the Office Lease at 82500 Hwy 111, Indio, CA.

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: President Santillanes, Secretary Dockstader, Director’s Cardenas, Kelley and Aguilar.

NOES: 0

ABSENT: Vice-President Estrada, Treasurer Gutierrez, Director Plancarte, Director TorteZ and Director Perez.

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: 5-0

- D. Allied/Cal Mutual JPRIMA Insurance Renewal
Executive Director O’Dowd requested authorization to renew insurance with JPRIMA, noting significant increases.

Motion made by Cardenas, second by Dockstader.

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: President Santillanes, Secretary Dockstader, Director’s Cardenas, Kelley and Aguilar.

NOES: 0

ABSENT: Vice-President Estrada, Treasurer Gutierrez, Director Plancarte, Director TorteZ and Director Perez.

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: 5-0

- E. Update on Outreach, Engagement, and Education

1. Expiring Agreement / Extension Request. Executive Director O’Dowd gave a brief update of the agreement, noting that a two-year extension requested from the state as provided for in the agreements terms had not yet been approved by the state.

2. SSMP Annual Report workshops. GM O’Dowd gave a brief review. The SSMP workshop is being held in Sacramento, Michael Cohen suggested that we need a local forum.

Ex Officio Arthur stated that the State Water Board is being held in Sacramento due to Budget restraints, but that 2 additional presentations will be held locally, one each in Imperial and Riverside County the 1st week in May. She also mentioned that the outreach agreement remains in place and available for use, but provided no guidance on the requested extension.

GM O’Dowd, Directors Kelley and Cardenas stressed that we need to work collaboratively to ensure every effort to educate the public, either by follow-up workshops or a larger workshop. Director Aguilar asked what the possibility was of pulling a local engagement together before May 22. GM O’Dowd acknowledged the very short notice to assist, but stated the Authority would do all that we can (or are asked to do so), hoping to make it a more broadly participated event and ensure its success. Director Cardenas asked that this item be tabled until the April 18 meeting so that we can respond and participate in a robust manner especially when it comes to the annual report. Director Kelley agreed and stated that he will be attending the State Waterboard hearing on the SSMP on May 22 in Sacramento and the Authority should do the same. GM O’Dowd advised the he plans to attend in person as well as he will be a presenter on two separate panels at the Water Board hearing.

3. North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project outreach. Executive Director, O’Dowd shared that there was a desire to broaden the outreach for the NLPDP to demonstrate its connectivity to the SSMP, and recommended using funds from the Outreach contract. This request was advanced to the state for consideration, but given the pending expiry of that contract it may not be achievable.
4. Public Relations Director status. GM O’Dowd stated that there is still great need for local coordination of outreach and engagement, but that it would be imprudent for the Authority to move forward to refill the Public Relations Director position without knowing whether the state intends to extend the existing contract.

F. Preliminary Review of Salton Sea Authority 2024/2025 Operating Budget. Executive Director O’Dowd gave a brief update on the budget. Member contributions remained unchanged and all other costs were based on historicals. A slight increase in travel was budgeted in light of anticipated work on the feasibility study. Will be brought back for final approval at the April 18 board meeting.

G. Modified Meeting Dates and Locations 2024/2025. GM O’Dowd recommended that beginning with the July meeting of the board, the meeting calendar be adjusted to facilitate the Authority meeting every other month plus the month of May, allowing the Authority during the off months to host, sponsor, or collaborate in public,

community centric events where the Board members can participate. For the remainder of the year, meetings will be held in April, May, June, July, September, and November. Going forward it is anticipated that 2025 will continue this pattern, with meetings in January, March, May, June, July, September, and November.

H. Bill Packet Review

1. AB 2610 (Garcia) – Environmental Protection
2. AB 1834 (Garcia) – Air Quality
3. SB 967 (Padilla) - Monitoring
4. AB 2757 (Garcia) – Economic Development
5. SB 974 (Grove) – Salton Sea Lithium Fund
6. Budget
7. Bonds
8. Other

Motion made by Cardenas, second by Dockstader, to issue a Letter of Support of AB 2610

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: President Santillanes, Secretary Dockstader, Director's Cardenas, Gutierrez, Kelley, TorteZ and Aguilar.

NOES: 0

ABSENT: Vice-President Estrada, Director Plancarte and Director Perez.

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: 7-0

Directors Kelley and Cardenas are both in support of AB 2757. Board agreed and a vote was taken. Director Kelley also discussed SB 974, Director Cardenas abstained and said he didn't feel that he had enough context and asked that it be tabled until the April board meeting.

Motion to issue a letter of support for AB 2757 made by Kelley, second by Cardenas,

Approved by the following vote:

AYES: President Santillanes, Secretary Dockstader, Director's Cardenas, Kelley and Aguilar.

NOES: 0

ABSENT: Vice-President Estrada, Treasurer Gutierrez, Director Plancarte, Director TorteZ and Director Perez.

ABSTAINED: 0

MOTION PASSED: 5-0

Director Aguilar asked what the process was for getting the bond materialized, Oracio responded that the legislator needs to formally adopt them.

I. Project Updates

1. North Lake Pilot Demonstration Project. GM O’Dowd gave a brief update, they continue to process the Geotechnical work. Will have more to report at our next meeting.
2. Desert Shores – GMO’Dowd introduced Paul Najar of Gafcon. Mr. Najar, gave an update on the 1st of 3 Community Meetings that was held at Desert Shores. The meeting was quite successful, and was focused on design and sustainability, with a lot of community interaction. The next meeting will be held on April 2nd and the third meeting at the end of April. He also updated the board on some of the work they have been working on, which has been focused on sustainability, receiving valuable input from one of the most successful lake contractors in the state, having built well over 100 lakes, including Imperial Lakes in Seeley, CA and Shadow Lakes in Indio. The result of those meetings focused on what is going to be required to “repair” the channels.
3. Bombay Beach - No updates to share at this time.

V. REPORTS

A. Federal

1. Federal Activities – Lisa Moore Lehman, Partner, Cultivating Conservation, gave her update on item IV.B.
2. US Bureau of Reclamation – Jeremy Brooks – No Report

B. State

1. State Advocacy Report – Oracio Gonzalez, Principal, Ollin Strategies, gave his update on the current bill packets, in item IV.H 1-8.
2. State of California – Mr. Miguel Hernandez, Public Affairs Officer, California Natural Resources Agency gave a brief update on the series of meetings they held in Mecca and Salton City, the SSMP project tracker that is available on the CNRA website, the SSMP Community needs report and Salton Sea recommended actions report and the finalization of the Salton Sea Long Range Plan.
3. Salton Sea State Recreation Area Update on Activities – Enrique Arroyo, District Superintendent, California State Parks provided a brief update.

C. Local

1. Salton Sea Action Committee – Alan Pace, SSAC President, they are planning a bus tour on April 25 with community members.

D. Executive Director’s Report and Comments - G. Patrick O’Dowd, Executive Director/GM, Salton Sea Authority, gave an update on the Dr Lo presentation on Asthma being held on March 26 from 6-7pm.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting Adjourned 12:08 p.m.

NEXT MEETING TIME & LOCATION:

The Salton Sea Authority board is scheduled to meet on:

Thursday, April 18, 2024, at 10:00a.m.
North Shore Fire Station 41
Mecca, CA 92254

Any public record, relating to an open session agenda item, that is distributed within 72 hours prior to the meeting is available for public inspection in the lobby at the front desk of the County Law Building located at 82995 Highway 111, Indio, CA 92201.