



**GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025 – 9:00 A.M.
2379 BROAD STREET, BROOKSVILLE, FLORIDA 34604
(352) 796-7211**

Board Members Present

Michelle Williamson, Chair
John Mitten, Vice Chair
Jack Bispham, Secretary
Ashley Bell Barnett, Treasurer*
Ed Armstrong, Member
Kelly Rice, Member
John Hall, Member
Dustin Rowland, Member
James Holton, Member
Robert Stern, Member
Nancy H. Watkins, Member
Josh Gamblin, Member

*Attended via Electronic Media

Staff Members

Brian J. Armstrong, Executive Director
Amanda Rice, Assistant Executive Director
Chris Tumminia, General Counsel
Brian Werthmiller, Inspector General
Jennette Seachrist, Division Director
Michelle Hopkins, Division Director
Brian Starford, Division Director
Brandon Baldwin, Division Director
Michelle Weaver, Division Director

Board Administrative Support

Virginia Singer, Manager
Lori Manuel, Administrative Coordinator

1. Convene Public Meeting

The Governing Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) met for its regular meeting on April 22 at 9:00 a.m., at the Brooksville Office at 2379 Broad Street, Brooksville, Florida 34604. This meeting was available for live viewing through internet streaming. An attendance roster is archived in the District's permanent records. Approved minutes from meetings can be found on the District's website at WaterMatters.org.

1.1 Call to Order

Chair Michelle Williamson called the meeting to order. She noted that the Board meeting was being recorded for broadcast on government access channels, and public input would be provided in person. Chair Williamson stated that anyone wishing to address the Governing Board concerning any item listed on the agenda or any item that does not appear on the agenda should complete and submit a "Request to Speak" card. She stated that comments would be limited to three minutes per speaker, and when appropriate, exceptions to the three-minute limit may be granted by the Chair. Chair Williamson also requested that several individuals wishing to speak on the same topic designate a spokesperson. She introduced each member of the Governing Board and staff present at the dais (this served as roll call). A quorum was confirmed.

1.2 Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Board Member James Holton offered the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Employee Recognition

Chair Williamson recognized Mr. Joseph Quinn for his years of service.

1.4 Additions/Deletions to Agenda

Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director, stated there were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

1.5 Public Input for Issues Not Listed on the Published Agenda

Mr. David Gore spoke in opposition to data used in developing water supply plans.

Mrs. Robbyn Gore spoke in support of the use of more retention ponds.

Mr. David Ballard Geddis, Jr., spoke in opposition to water jurisdictions.

Consent Agenda

Resource Management Committee

2.1 Recommend FY2026 Springs Projects for FDEP Funding Consideration

Staff recommended the Board approve the list of four springs projects for submittal to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

2.2 Approve the Highlands Hammock Watershed Management Plan Floodplain Information for Regulatory Use and to Update Flood Insurance Rate Maps in Highlands County (Q181)

Staff recommended the Board approve use of the Highlands Hammock Watershed Management Plan floodplain information for best information available by the District ERP program and to update Flood Insurance Rate Maps in Highlands County.

2.3 North Hillsborough Aquifer Recharge Program (NHARP) Phase 2 (Q064) – Scope and Cost Revision

Staff requested the Board authorize staff to amend the Hillsborough County North Hillsborough Aquifer Recharge Program Phase 2 (Q064) cooperative funding agreement to:

1. Revise the number of exploratory wells from three to two.
2. Reduce the District's funding share from \$750,000 to \$500,000.

Operations, Lands and Resource Monitoring Committee

2.4 First Amendment to Perpetual Conservation Easement, SWF Parcel No. 10-200-1144C (Lake County)

Staff recommended the Board:

- Approve the First Amendment to Perpetual Conservation Easement for the incorporation of the Additional Property into the Conservation Easement, the relocation of Homesite #3, and the establishment of a new Homesite #4 into the Conservation Easement.
- Approve and authorize the Chairman and Secretary of the Governing Board to execute the First Amendment to Perpetual Conservation Easement on behalf of the District.
- Designate the Additional Property to be incorporated into the Conservation Easement as having been acquired for conservation purposes;
- Authorize staff to make minor changes or corrections to conform documents or correct errors; any substantive changes will be subject to Governing Board review and approval; and
- Authorize staff to execute any other documents necessary to complete the transaction in accordance with the approved terms.

2.5 Right of First Refusal – Perpetual Conservation Easement, SWF Parcel No. 10-200-1144C (Lake County)

Staff recommended the Board:

- Decline the right of first refusal to purchase the remainder fee simple interest for SWF Parcel No. 10-200-1144C that is subject to a District conservation easement; and

- Authorize the Executive Director to execute the necessary documents to decline the first right of refusal on SWF Parcel No. 10-200-1144C.

General Counsel's Report

2.6 Approval of Interagency Agreement – Designation of Regulatory Responsibility to Southwest Florida Water Management District for Environmental Resource Permit – City of Cape Coral (Charlotte and Lee County)

Staff recommended the Board approve the Interagency Agreement between the South Florida Water Management District and the Southwest Florida Water Management District for the designation of regulatory responsibility for an Environmental Resource Permit for the above-described Project.

2.7 Approval of Settlement Agreement – SWFWMD v. Citrus County, Case No. 2023-CA-000135, Fifth Judicial Circuit (Citrus County)

Staff recommended the Board:

- Approve the proposed Settlement Agreement.
- Authorize the General Counsel to execute all documents necessary to implement the Settlement Agreement and to make minor, non-substantive revisions as needed to correct errors or ensure consistency with the terms of the Agreement.

Executive Director's Report

2.8 Approve Governing Board Minutes – March 25, 2025

Staff recommended the Board approve minutes as presented.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:14:00)

Finance/Outreach and Planning Committee

Chair Michelle Williamson called the committee to order.

3.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

3.2 Investment Strategy Quarterly Update

Mr. Mark Creger, Public Trust Advisors, presented an economic and market update. He stated the District's investment portfolio is securely invested. He discussed the economic and market outlooks that have been impacted by the trade tensions. Mr. Creger presented information regarding consumer sentiment, inflation, labor markets and the unemployment rate. He stated that the data is indicating a slowing in growth and the potential for a possible recession. Mr. Creger discussed the actions and potential actions by the Federal Reserve. He provided an overview of the District's investment portfolio and summarized how it is insulated from market volatility. Mr. Creger responded to questions.

Mr. Brandon Baldwin, Business and IT Services Director, provided an annual update regarding an implemented 20-year large-scale projects investment plan. He stated that the plan was developed with direction provided by the Board, and he presented a brief overview. Mr. Baldwin stated the plan is working accordingly. He summarized the balances of the sources and their uses.

Staff recommended the Board accept and place on file the District's Quarterly Investment Reports for the quarter ending March 31, 2025.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:53:15)

3.3 Fiscal Year 2023-24 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report

Mr. James Halleran, CPA, James Moore & Company, provided an overview of the independent audit for the year ending September 30, 2024. He summarized the financial statements provided by the District and the audit reports prepared by James Moore & Company. He provided an overview of the report, and the requirements associated. Mr. Halleran stated that in addition to meeting its statutory requirements, the District also provided additional information that makes it eligible to receive the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association. He affirmed the District received an unmodified opinion which is the highest opinion offered. Mr. Halleran stated that an "Emphasis of matter" paragraph has been added. He explained this is done when there is a change to accounting policy. Mr. Halleran stated this was associated with a change in the calculation of sick leave. He summarized any changes that occurred in the District's General Fund, Florida Forever Capital Project Fund and Capital Projects. A general fund balance comparison table from FY2022 through FY2024 was presented. Mr. Halleran provided information concerning pensions and other post-employment benefits.

Staff recommended the Board accept and place on file the District's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report pursuant to Chapter 10.550, Rules of the Auditor General. The report also includes the Management Letter and Independent Accountants' Report for fiscal year ended September 30, 2024.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 01:06:31)

3.4 Budget Transfer Report

This item was for information only. No action was required.

3.5 Office of Inspector General Quarterly Update – January 1, 2025 to March 31, 2025

This item was for information only. No action was required.

Resource Management Committee

Board Member Dustin Rowland called the committee to order.

4.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

4.2 Fiscal Year 2026 Cooperative Funding Initiative Update

Mr. Scott Letasi, Engineering and Project Management Project Management Bureau Chief, presented an update regarding the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Cooperative Funding Initiative (CFI) projects that staff is recommending for funding. He summarized the projects recommended for funding which included Board prioritized Alternative Water Supply (AWS), 1A (multi-phase), Spring Priority funding and new funding requests.

Mr. Letasi provided an overview of project Q431 a Phase 1 study for the Pinellas County Real Time Flooding Forecast (RTFF). He explained the RTFF is a predictive tool that provides a simulation using present water levels and hydrologic and hydraulic modeling to forecast future water levels. The RTFF uses data from three sources: District watershed models, District and United States Geological Survey (USGS) Water Level/Data Collection sites, and Rainfall and Surge Forecast Data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA). Mr. Letasi outlined the benefits associated with RTFF and provided examples of how it can be used by the District and local governments. Mr. Letasi responded to questions.

Board Member James Holton asked if consideration be given to extend to other parts of Pinellas County. Ms. Lisa Foster, Pinellas County Government, responded in the affirmative and expanded on the benefits related to this project.

Mr. Letasi provided a funding summary of the Recommended Annual Service Budget for CFI projects.

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Approve budget transfer from H094 – Polk Partnership of \$1,728,097 to Q216– Interconnects – Polk Regional Water Cooperative Regional Transmission Southeast Phase 1 to partially fund the FY2026 recommended amount of \$27,811,312.
2. Approve staff recommendation to include the FY2026 funding for the six AWS projects in the amount of \$92,487,121 in the District's FY2026 RASB.
3. Approve staff recommendation to include the FY2026 funding for the three 1A projects in the amount of \$1,519,867 in the District's FY2026 RASB.
4. Approve staff recommendation to include the FY2026 funding for the one Springs project in the amount of \$75,000 in the District's FY2026 RASB.
5. Approve staff recommendation to include FY2026 and future funding of five new CFI projects (Q414, Q413, Q421, W024, and Q431) in the amount of \$3,746,000 in the District's FY2026 RASB.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 01:38:26)

Operations, Lands and Resource Monitoring Committee

Board Member Robert Stern called the committee to order.

5.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion – None

5.2 Hydrologic Conditions Report

A request to speak card was received.

Mr. David Gore spoke about groundwater flow and the importance of understanding how it works.

Ms. Tamera McBride, P.G., Hydrologic Data Manager, presented the hydrologic conditions report. She stated that the monthly rainfall since Hurricane Milton has been below average. However, due to the effects from Hurricane Milton, the 12-month rainfall total remains above average. Ms. McBride expressed concern that if the summer months are drier than normal, this could result in a decline in the 12-month rainfall totals. She provided information regarding rainfall, streamflow, groundwater levels, lake levels, public supply reservoirs and climate forecasts. She stated that water supply storage systems are in use due to the drier conditions, but stored amounts are still ample. Ms. McBride stated the near-term climate forecast indicates above-normal temperatures and above-normal precipitation. However, the Climate Prediction Center indicates uncertainty for future predictions as a result of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation neutral conditions.

This item was presented for information only. No action was required.

Regulation Committee

Board Member James Holton called the committee to order.

6.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

6.2 Denials Referred to the Governing Board

No denials were presented.

General Counsel's Report

7.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

7.2 Affirm Governing Board Committee Actions

Staff recommended the Board affirm the actions taken by the Governing Board Committees.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 01:53:15)

Committee/Liaison Reports

8.1 Agricultural and Green Industry Advisory Committee

A written summary of the March 7 field trip was provided.

Executive Director's Report

9.1 Executive Director's Report

Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director, stated the District was recognized by the social media platform Nextdoor as a "Top Performer" for Special Districts due to our outreach efforts during hurricanes. In addition, Ms. Michelle Sager, Lead Communications Strategist, was selected by Nextdoor to join the National Public Agency Advisory Council. The District will be one of 12 members.

Mr. Armstrong stated that Ms. Robyn Felix, Communications and Board Services Bureau Chief, will be speaking at the Florida Public Relations Association event, "Weathering the Storm: Lessons from the 2024 Hurricane Season." She will be providing insight how the District combated misinformation during Hurricane Milton.

Mr. Armstrong commended the Board on the decisions they have made in support of the District's investment strategies. He stated today's Quarterly Investment presentation reinforced the Board's commitment.

Mr. Armstrong commended the watershed management staff for piloting the RTFF model. He stated it is a result of their efforts in developing the watershed maps that have allowed the initiation of this project. Mr. Armstrong mentioned that when the Resiliency Florida program was being developed the District was asked to provide their expertise.

Mr. Armstrong commended the Finance staff for their efforts that have allowed the District to receive another clean audit report.

Chair's Report

10.1 Chair's Report

Chair Williamson asked if the Board had any items to be discussed at the next meeting. No items were presented.

Chair Williamson stated the next scheduled Board meeting is on Tuesday, May 20 at 9:00 a.m., in the Tampa office.

10.2 Employee Milestones

A written summary was provided.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.