



**GOVERNING BOARD MEETING**  
**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2024 – 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  
Kelly Rice, Member  
Joel Schleicher, Member  
John Hall, Member\*  
James Holton, Member  
Robert Stern, Member  
Nancy H. Watkins, Member  
Josh Gamblin, Member

\*Attended via electronic media

**Board Members Absent**

Ashley Bell Barnett, Treasurer  
Ed Armstrong, Member  
Dustin Rowland, Member

**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 October 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](http://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 Kelly Rice offered the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

**1.3 Employee Recognition**

None were presented.

**1.4 Additions/Deletions to Agenda**

Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director, stated the following item was added to the agenda:

**Consent**

**Regulation Committee**

**2.20 Consider Rescinding Water Shortage Order No. SWF 23-041**

Board Member Joel Schleicher requested the following item be moved to Discussion:

**Resource Management Committee**

**2.3 Resource Management Committee: Sarasota Bay National Estuary Program Interlocal Agreement Amendment**

There was good cause to approve the amended agenda as allowed by Section 120.525, Florida Statutes.

**1.5 Public Input for Issues Not Listed on the Published Agenda**

Mr. David Ballard Geddis, Jr., spoke regarding the use of cloud seeding.

**Consent Agenda**

**Finance/Outreach and Planning Committee**

**2.1 Office of Inspector General Performance Measures**

Staff recommended the Board approve the OIG performance measures.

**2.2 Approval of Memorandum of Understanding Between Sarasota County Property Appraiser and Southwest Florida Water Management District**

Staff recommended the Board approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the Sarasota County Property Appraiser and the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

**Resource Management Committee**

~~**2.3 Resource Management Committee: Sarasota Bay National Estuary Program Interlocal Agreement Amendment**~~

~~Staff recommended the Board approve the Amendment to Sarasota Bay National Estuary Program Interlocal Agreement Sarasota Bay Estuary Program.~~

**2.4 Resource Management Committee: Minimum Flows and Minimum Water Levels Priority List and Schedule Update**

Staff recommended the Board approve the District's Minimum Flows and Minimum Water Levels 2024 Priority List and Schedule for submission to DEP for review and approval as required by Chapter 373, F.S.

**Operations, Lands and Resource Monitoring Committee**

**2.5 Release of Reservation of Right of Entry for the Purpose of Exploration for Phosphates, Minerals, Metals and Petroleum; SWF Parcel No. 20-708-128S (Charlotte County)**

Staff recommended the Board:

- Approve the Release of Reservation for Right of Entry for the Purpose of Exploration for Phosphates, Minerals, Metals and Petroleum and authorize the Chair to execute the document; and
- Authorize staff to execute any other documents necessary to complete the transaction in accordance with the approved terms.

**2.6 Management Agreement – Deep Creek Preserve, DeSoto County; SWF Parcel 20-695-102X (DeSoto County)**

Staff recommended the Board:

- Approve the Management Agreement Between the Southwest Florida Water Management District and DeSoto County for the Deep Creek Tract; and
- Authorize the Governing Board Chair to execute the Management Agreement on behalf of the District; and
- Authorize staff to make minor changes or corrections to conform documents or correct scrivener's 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.

**2.7 Rockridge Road Cattle Lease; SWF Parcel No. 10-200-1316X (Polk County)**

Staff recommended the Board approve the award of the Rockridge Road Cattle Lease to Erin Blair and execute the Lease on behalf of the District.

**2.8 Perpetual Easement – Peace River at Bartow; SWF Parcel No. 20-020-190 (Polk County)**

Staff recommended the Board:

- Approve the Easement and authorize the Chair and Secretary to execute on behalf of the District; and
- Authorize Staff to execute any other documents necessary to complete the transaction in accordance with the approved terms.

**2.9 Perpetual Easement and Temporary Construction Easement – Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority – Phase 2B Pipeline Project; SWF Parcel No. 21-708-139X & 21-708-140X (Sarasota County)**

Staff recommended the Board:

- Approve the Easements and Authorize the Chair and Secretary to execute on behalf of the District; and
- Authorize staff to execute any other documents necessary to complete the transaction in accordance with the approved terms.

**2.10 Management Agreement with Camp-N-Paddle for Chassahowitzka Campground and Boat Ramp; SWF Parcel No. 15-347-129X (Citrus County)**

Staff recommended the Board:

- Approve the First Amendment to the Management Agreement Between the Southwest Florida Water Management District and Camp-N-Paddle LLC; and
- Authorize the Governing Board Chair to execute the First Amendment to the Management Agreement on behalf of the District; and
- Authorize staff to make minor changes or corrections to confirm documents or correct scrivener's 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.

**Regulation Committee**

**2.11 Water Use Permit No. 20 021046.001, Hillsborough County & Tampa Bay Water/Balm Farm (Hillsborough County)**

Staff recommended the Board approve the proposed permit attached as an exhibit.

**2.12 Water Use Permit No. 20 013343.005, Manatee County BOCC/Manatee County Utilities Consolidated Permit (Manatee County)**

Staff recommended the Board approve the proposed permit attached as an exhibit.

**2.20 Consider Rescinding Water Shortage Order No. SWF 23-041**

Staff recommended the Board approve returning to year-round conservation measures of two days a week unless restricted by local ordinances.

**General Counsel's Report**

**2.13 Approval of Interagency Agreement between the South Florida Water Management District and the Southwest Florida Water Management District – Designation of Regulatory Responsibility to South Florida Water Management District for an Environmental Resource Permit – I-4 Moving Florida Forward Project (Polk and Osceola 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.

**2.14 Approval of Emergency Order No. SWF 24-028 – Emergency Measures for Hurricane Helene**

Staff recommended the Board approve Emergency Order No. SWF 24-028.

**2.15 Approval of Emergency Order No. SWF 24-029 – Emergency Measures for Tropical Storm Debby**

Staff recommended the Board approve Emergency Order No. SWF 24-029.

**2.16 Relocation of Wells at Regional Observation and Monitor-well Program (ROMP) 43 Wellsite (Hardee County)**

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Approve the Agreement Regarding the Relocation of ROMP 43 Wells and Easement.
2. Authorize the Chair to execute the Agreement, the Replacement Easement, the Existing Easement Termination Agreement, the Quit Claim Deed, and the Bill of Sale.

**2.17 Access Easement – Environmental Resource Permit Application No. 852564 – Chassahowitzka Mitigation Bank (Hernando County)**

Staff recommended the Board approve, accept, and execute the attached access easement through the Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area to provide permanent legal access to the District to the Chassahowitzka Mitigation Bank.

**2.18 Approval of Emergency Order No. SWF 24-030 – Emergency Measures for Hurricane Milton**

Staff recommended the Board approve Emergency Order No. SWF 24-030.

**Executive Director's Report**

**2.19 Approve Governing Board Minutes – September 24, 2024**

Staff recommended the Board approve minutes as presented.

**A motion was made and seconded to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:19:15)**

**Discussion**

**Finance/Outreach and Planning Committee**

Chair Michelle Williamson called the committee to order.

**3.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion** – None

**3.2 Development of Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2026**

Mr. Brandon Baldwin, Business and IT Services Division Director, presented an overview of a timeline for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 budget development cycle and outlined Governing

Board budget metrics. He presented assumptions about salaries and benefits. Mr. Baldwin presented a summary by Bureau, of requested additional Full Time Employee (FTE) positions for FY2026.

Ms. Jennette Seachrist, Resource Management Division Director, outlined two FTE positions requested for this Division and the critical needs associated with them. Chair Williamson asked if any of the FY2026 positions requested will address implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology. Ms. Seachrist responded that AI technology will play a role in the future of groundwater modeling but at this time it is not being utilized.

Mr. Brian Starford, Operations, Lands and Resource Monitoring Division Director, outlined two FTE positions requested for his Division and the critical needs associated with them. He responded to the previous question regarding the potential future use of AI in this Division. Chair Williamson asked if the recently implemented stormwater rule offers any provisions regarding the requirements of local governments to maintain the stormwater systems under their jurisdictions. Ms. Michelle Hopkins, Regulation Division Director, stated that she is not aware of any provisions.

Ms. Hopkins outlined seven FTE positions requested for the Regulation Division and the critical needs associated with them. She referenced the impact from recently implemented stormwater rule previously discussed. Board Member James Holton asked for clarification regarding the current stormwater rule requirements versus the new requirements. Ms. Hopkins provided a summary and examples of the existing and new requirements. Secretary Jack Bispham asked if there would be any changes in fees associated with the stormwater rule. Ms. Hopkins responded that changes to fees associated with each District would be a statewide discussion involving the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and other Water Management Districts. She added that each District has its own fee schedule, and this District has not increased fees for some time. Ms. Hopkins stated that proposed incremental fee schedule changes will be considered to offset costs. Chair Williamson asked if there is a statute that outlines limitations associated with fees. Mr. Chris Tumminia, General Counsel responded in the affirmative. Staff responded to other questions.

Mr. Chris Tumminia outlined one FTE position requested, and the critical needs associated with it. He addressed the current and future use of AI in this Division. Mr. Tumminia responded to questions.

Mr. Brandon Baldwin outlined four FTE positions requested, and the critical needs associated with them. He stated that two positions are requested for the Information Technology Bureau, one position is requested for the Budget and Financial Reporting and one position is for the Procurement Services Office. He addressed the current and future use of AI in this Division as well as across the District. Staff responded to questions.

Mr. Baldwin presented the operating and revenue budget assumptions, Ad Valorem growth assumptions, and a forecasted growth model used to develop the budget. Mr. Baldwin responded to questions.

Staff recommended the Board approve the general budget assumptions as outlined in the October 22, 2024 budget presentation for the development of the Preliminary Budget for FY2026.

**A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously.** (Audio – 01:18:52)

### **3.3 Investment Strategy Quarterly Update**

Mr. John Grady, Public Trust Advisors, presented an economic update that included Information regarding Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Consumer Price Index (CPI), job growth, and interest rates.

Mr. Grady presented an overview of the District's portfolio strategy for the last quarter (July 1, 2024 through September 30, 2024).

Staff recommended the Board accept and place on file the District's Quarterly Investment Reports for the quarter ended September 30, 2024.

**A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously.** (Audio – 01:50:06)

### **3.4 Knowledge Management: Annual Review of Governing Board Policy, Investments**

Mr. Brandon Baldwin, Business and IT Services Division Director, presented an overview of the Governing Board policy regarding Investments. He summarized the proposed changes. This policy will be presented at the November meeting for final approval.

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

### **3.5 Budget Transfer Report**

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

### **3.6 Office of Inspector General Quarterly Update – July 1, 2024 to September 30, 2024**

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

## **Resource Management Committee**

Chair Michelle Williamson called the committee to order.

### **4.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion**

### **2.3 Resource Management Committee: Sarasota Bay National Estuary Program Interlocal Agreement Amendment**

Board Member Joel Schleicher requested this item be moved to Discussion.

Board Member Schleicher expressed concerns that no checks and balance system is in place to ensure the municipalities, within the counties that receive funding in support of their estuary programs, also provide the necessary steps to protect estuaries. He specifically addressed untreated stormwater that leached into Sarasota Bay as a result of the recent hurricanes.

Mr. Randy Smith provided an overview of the interlocal agreement. He stated that the recently implemented stormwater rule should address some of the concerns presented by Board Member Schleicher. Mr. Smith stated the District has been committed to funding retrofits in that region. He added that the rainfall received from recent storms was unprecedented. Staff responded to questions.

Staff recommended the Board approve the Amendment to Sarasota Bay National Estuary Program Interlocal Agreement Sarasota Bay Estuary Program.

**A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously.** (Audio – 02:01:26)

## **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**

Ms. Tamera McBride, P.G., Hydrologic Data Manager, presented the hydrologic conditions report. She stated the wet season ended in September with a surplus of approximately five inches. In addition, as a result of Hurricane Milton, rainfall records were broken. The 12-month rainfall total was above average with a surplus of 2.4 inches. Ms. McBride presented provisional rainfall data that indicated that portions of Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas and Polk counties received greater than 12 inches attributed to two days of Hurricane Milton. Provisional data for October rainfall indicated a surplus of 5.9 inches. The Climate Prediction Center is still indicating that a transition to La Niña is predicted.

Ms. McBride provided information regarding rainfall, streamflow, groundwater levels, lake levels, public supply reservoirs and climate forecasts. She stated that water supply storage quantity concerns have diminished due to above average rainfall. Ms. McBride stated the near-term climate forecast indicates above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

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

### **5.3 Purchase and Sale Agreement for Perpetual Easement – Coley Deep Replacement; SWF Parcel No. 20-020-110 (Polk County)**

Mr. Mike Singer, Real Estate Services Manager, recapped information that was presented at the September meeting that outlined the acquisition of sites for installation of monitoring wells. He summarized property information and explained the benefits of acquiring this easement and the data that will be collected. Mr. Singer responded to questions.

Staff recommended the Board:

- Accept the appraisal; and Approve the Purchase and Sale Agreement and authorize the Executive Director or designee to sign on the behalf of the District; and
- Approve the Easement; and authorize the Chair and Secretary to sign on behalf of the District; and
- 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; and
- Approval to encumber and roll the funds for payment in the following year, in the event the closing does not occur before the end of the current fiscal year.

**A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.** (Audio – 02:08:57)

## **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 – 02:10:08)

Mr. Tumminia, General Counsel, provided an update on the request for a legal opinion from the Attorney General's Office regarding quorum requirements, which was discussed during the August meeting. He stated the Attorney General's office requested legal information that outlined the source of the Board's authority to set policy. The Office of General Counsel is preparing a response for submittal in November. If no other information is requested by the Attorney General's office, it is anticipated that a decision will be provided within three to six months. Mr. Tumminia stated he will keep the Board apprised.

## **Committee/Liaison Reports**

### **8.1 Agricultural and Green Industry Advisory Committee**

A written summary of the September 10 meeting was provided.

## **Executive Director's Report**

### **9.1 Executive Director's Report**

Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director, commended staff for their efforts during the hurricanes.

Mr. Armstrong provided a written summary of his goals for FY2025.

## **Chair's Report**

### **10.1 Chair's Report**

Chair Williamson asked if any Board Member has any matters which should be considered for discussion or action at future Board meetings, please provide advance notice of the requested topic to ensure that everyone is well prepared for a productive discussion. No items were presented for the November meeting.

### **10.2 Employee Milestones**

A written summary was provided.

### **10.3 2024 Employee Evaluation and 2025 Performance Goals for the Executive Director and Inspector General**

Chair Williamson thanked the Board for their individual feedback regarding both performance evaluations.

Chair Williamson relayed information provided by Treasurer Ashley Bell Barnett regarding the performance evaluation for Mr. Brian Werthmiller, Inspector General. Treasurer Barnett provided a score of 4.8 and recommended a 4.24 percent merit increase for Mr. Werthmiller. Staff recommended the Board:

- Adopt and approve the 2024 employee evaluation of the Inspector General Brian R. Werthmiller that was completed by the Governing Board Treasurer.

**A motion was made and seconded to accept the Treasurer's recommendation. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** (Audio – 02:16:20)

Chair Williamson stated that based on the feedback received from the Board Members for Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director's performance evaluation, she provided a score of 5.0 and recommended a 3 percent merit increase for Mr. Brian Armstrong.



Staff recommended the Board:

- Adopt and approve the 2024 employee evaluation of Executive Director Brian J. Armstrong that was completed by the Governing Board Chair.
- Adopt and approve the 2025 Executive Director goals.

**A motion was made and seconded to accept the Chair's recommendation. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.** (Audio – 02:17:46)

Chair Williamson stated the next regularly scheduled Board meeting is on Tuesday, November 19 at 9:00 a.m., in the Tampa office.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.