



**GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2025– 9:00 A.M.
2379 BROAD STREET, BROOKSVILLE, FLORIDA 34604
(352) 796-7211**

Board Members Present

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

*Attended via Electronic Media

Board Members Absent

John Mitten, Chair

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 28 at 9:00 a.m., in 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

Vice Chair Jack Bispham called the meeting to order. He noted that the Board meeting was being recorded for broadcast on government access channels, and public input would be provided in person. Vice Chair Bispham 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. He 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. Vice Chair Bispham also requested that several individuals requesting to speak on the same topic designate a spokesperson. He 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 Robert Stern offered the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Employee Recognition

Vice Chair Bispham recognized Ms. Tamera McBride for her milestone service with the District.

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 Ballard Geddis, Jr., spoke regarding Florida Supreme Case 96-332 related to reclaimed water.

Mr. David Gore spoke regarding hydrologic concerns.

Consent Agenda

Finance/Outreach & Planning Committee

2.1 Office of Inspector General Performance Measures

Staff recommended the Board approve the OIG performance measures.

2.2 Resolution to Request Disbursement of Funds from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund for Land Management

Staff recommended the Board approve Resolution 25-13, Request to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for Disbursement of Funds from the Land Acquisition Trust Fund for Land Management.

Resource Management Committee

2.3 FARMS – Bethel Farms, LLLP – Lily Grove – H836 (DeSoto County)

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Approve the Bethel Farms, LLLP – Lily Grove project for a not-to-exceed project reimbursement of \$274,067 provided by the Governing Board;
2. Authorize the transfer of \$274,067 from fund 010 H017 Governing Board FARMS Fund to the H836 Bethel Farms, LLLP – Lily Grove project fund;
3. Authorize the Assistant Executive Director to sign the agreement.

2.4 FARMS – Noble Ag, LLC – Lasso Citrus – H837 (Manatee County)

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Approve the Noble Ag, LLC – Lasso Citrus project for a not-to-exceed project reimbursement of \$97,151 provided by the Governing Board;
2. Authorize the transfer of \$97,151 from fund 010 H017 Governing Board FARMS Fund to the H837 Noble Ag, LLC – Lasso Citrus project fund;
3. Authorize the Division Director to sign the agreement.

2.5 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 2025 Priority List and Schedule for submission to DEP for review and approval as required by Chapter 373, F.S.

2.6 Knowledge Management: Springs Coast Steering Committee Governing Board Policy

Staff recommended the Board approve the changes to the Springs Coast Steering Committee Governing Board Policy.

Operations, Lands & Resource Monitoring Committee

2.7 Permanent Easement – ROMP TR5-3 Knights Trail Well Site – SWF Parcel No. 21-020-045 (Sarasota 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.

General Counsel's Report

2.8 Approval of Initiation of Dispute Resolution with Citrus County–Southwest Florida Water Management District v. Citrus County, et al. – Case No. 2025-CA-565 (Citrus County)

Staff recommended the Board authorize District staff to initiate the dispute resolution procedures prescribed by Chapter 164 of the Florida Statutes, by executing the attached Resolution.

2.9 Approval of Rulemaking to Amend Rules 40D-2.321 and 40D-2.331, Florida Administrative Code, to Promote the Use of Reclaimed Water and Encourage Quantifiable Potable Water Offsets, in Accordance with Section 373.250(9), Florida Statutes

Staff recommended the Board approve the proposed rule language to amend Rules 40D-2.321 and 40D-2.331, F.A.C., to add the proposed language shown in Exhibit A, in accordance with s. 373.250(9), F.S.

2.10 Interagency Agreement between South Florida Water Management District and Southwest Florida Water Management District – Designation of Regulatory Responsibility to Southwest Florida Water Management District for Grenelefe Residential Development (Polk County)

Staff recommended the Board approve the Interagency Agreement designating regulatory responsibility for the Project to the SWFWMD.

2.11 Approval of Settlement Agreement – Westchester Fire Insurance Company v. Southwest Florida Water Management District – Case No. 2025-CA-360 (Citrus County)

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Approve the proposed Settlement Agreement.
2. 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

2.12 Approve Fiscal Year 2026 Final Budget Hearing Minutes

Staff recommended the Board approve minutes as presented.

2.13 Approve Governing Board Minutes – September 23, 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 – 00:14:41)

Finance/Outreach & Planning Committee

Vice Chair Bispham called the committee to order.

3.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

3.2 Knowledge Management: Annual Review of Governing Board Policy, Investments

Mr. Brandon Baldwin, Business and Information Technology Services Division Director, presented the required annual overview of the District investment policy. He outlined historical information, statutory requirements, credit rating information, authorized investments, and performance measurements. Mr. Baldwin summarized modifications of the policy that have occurred since 2022. He stated there were no current changes proposed. Mr. Baldwin outlined future actions. He requested any comments from the Board be sent to him by November 7.

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

3.3 Investment Strategy Quarterly Update

Mr. John Grady, PTMA Financial Solutions, summarized the current economic forecast, which included Gross Domestic Product, inflation, consumer confidence, Federal Open Market Committee Dot Plot, jobs/unemployment rates, interest and rate expectations. Mr. Grady provided an overview of the District's investment portfolios.

Staff recommended the Board accept and place on file the District's Quarterly Investment Reports for the quarter ended September 30, 2025.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:39:30)

3.4 Development of Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027

Mr. Brandon Baldwin, Business and Information Technology Services Division Director, presented information regarding the development of the preliminary budget for Fiscal Year 2027. This included a timeline of the development process and required deadlines, Mr. Baldwin outlined budget assumptions for funding related to operating, projects, revenue, and fund balance. A growth forecast for Ad Valorem revenue was presented.

Staff recommended the Board approve the general budget assumptions as outlined on October 28, 2025, for development of the Preliminary Budget for FY2027.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:50:48)

3.5 Office of Inspector General Quarterly Update – July 1, 2025 to September 30, 2025

A Request to Speak card was received for this item.

Mr. David Gore spoke regarding communications with the Inspector General.

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

3.6 Budget Transfer Report

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

Operations, Lands and Resource Monitoring Committee

Board Member Robert Stern called the committee to order.

4.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

4.2 Hydrologic Conditions Report

A Request to Speak card was received for this item.

Mr. David Gore spoke regarding science related to hydrology.

Ms. Tamera McBride, P.G., Hydrologic Data Manager, presented the Hydrologic Conditions report. Districtwide monthly rainfall has generally been below average. Hydrologic indicators are showing in the normal to below normal range and declining. Tampa Bay area water supply storage systems are initiating use of reserves. Ms. McBride provided information regarding rainfall, streamflow, groundwater levels, lake levels, public supply reservoirs and climate forecasts. She stated the near-term climate forecast indicates chances of above-normal temperatures and below-normal precipitation. The extended climate forecasts indicate the continuation of La Niña. A Phase 1 Water Shortage Order is under consideration. Ms. McBride responded to questions.

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

4.3 Bull Barn Road Timber Harvest Agreement

Mr. Allen Milligan, presented information regarding the proposed timber harvest agreement. This included District policy, procedures, and the land management plan for the Green Swamp Wilderness Preserve. He explained the land management programs supported by the District and the District timber management program and objectives. Mr. Milligan responded to questions.

Staff recommended the Board approve and execute the Bull Barn Road Timber Harvest Agreement No. 2026LMREV001.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 01:23:31)

Resource Management Committee

No items were presented for discussion.

5.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

Regulation Committee

No items were presented for discussion.

6.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion - None

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 – 01:24:35)

Mr. Chris Tumminia, General Counsel, informed the Board of an administrative challenge that has been filed by the Polk Regional Water Cooperative for Water Use Permit No. 20011794.003 that was approved at the July meeting. He explained that this permit authorized water withdrawal from the Alafia River Withdrawal Facility by Tampa Bay Water. Mr. Tumminia explained the process and approximate timeline associated with this challenge. He stated he would keep the Board apprised.

Committee/Liaison Reports

8.1 Agricultural and Green Industry Advisory Committee

A written summary of the September 9 meeting was provided.

Executive Director's Report

9.1 Executive Director's Report

Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director, outlined his FY2026 goals. A more detailed written summary was provided to the Board.

Board Member Kelly Rice asked about the status of the challenges to Florida's Section 404 permitting authority. Mr. Armstrong stated that litigation is still on-going.

Chair's Report

10.1 Chair's Report

Vice Chair Bispham asked if there were any items the Board would like to address at the November meeting. None were presented.

10.2 Employee Milestones

A written summary was provided.

10.3 2025 Employee Evaluation and 2026 Performance Goals for the Executive Director and Inspector General

Vice Chair Bispham thanked the Board members for their feedback regarding both performance evaluations.

Vice Chair Bispham affirmed that Chair Mitten received individual scores from the Board Members for the executive director's performance evaluation. He stated that based on the feedback received, Chair Mitten has recommended a final score of 5.0.

Vice Chair Bispham stated that in accordance with District policy, the inspector general's performance score is recommended by the Treasurer.

Treasurer John Hall stated that based on feedback from the Board Members, a recommended final score of 4.83 for the inspector general.

Staff recommended the Board:

- Adopt and approve the 2025 employee evaluations of Executive Director Brian J. Armstrong and Inspector General Brian R. Werthmiller that were completed by the Governing Board Chair and the Governing Board Treasurer, respectively.
- Approve a 3% merit increase for both the Executive Director and Inspector General.
- Adopt and approve the 2026 Executive Director goals.

A motion was made to accept the recommended performance scores for both the executive director and the inspector general. A three percent merit increase was recommended for both the executive director and the inspector general. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously (Audio – 01:32:38)

Vice Chair Bispham stated the next meeting is scheduled for November 18 at 9:00 a.m. in the Tampa Service Office.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.