



GOVERNING BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 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
Ashley Bell Barnett, Treasurer
Kelly Rice, Member
Joel Schleicher, Member
John Hall, Member
Dustin Rowland, Member
James Holton, Member
Robert Stern, Member
Nancy H. Watkins, Member
Josh Gamblin, Member

Board Members Absent

Ed Armstrong, 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 December 17 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

Vice Chair John Mitten offered the invocation, and the Pledge of Allegiance.

1.3 Employee Recognition

No Milestones were presented.

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 spoke regarding watersheds.

Ms. Aja Moore spoke regarding concerns related to the Weeki Wachee Channel Restoration project.

Ms. Jennette Seachrist, Resource Management Director, stated that the dredge project is scheduled to be completed within 30 days. She said the District's website is updated routinely and the District provides responses to any requests for information. Ms. Seachrist indicated that water quality sampling is being done routinely. She stated she is not aware of any communication issues between the agencies involved with the project but will confirm.

Treasurer Ashley Bell Barnett suggested a workshop be provided to clarify the different roles and responsibilities associated with governmental agencies.

Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director, provided background and explained the interagency coordination and challenges related to the dredging project.

Consent Agenda

Resource Management Committee

2.1 Citrus County Old Homosassa East Septic to Sewer (Q134) – Scope and Cost Revision

Staff recommended the Board authorize staff to amend the Citrus County Old Homosassa East Septic to Sewer Project (Q134) cooperative funding agreement to:

1. Revise the number of septic tanks defined in the Measurable Benefit from 200 to 173.
2. Reduce the District's funding from \$3,750,000 to \$2,470,800.

Operations, Lands and Resource Monitoring Committee

2.2 Perpetual Easement – Lake Lowery; SWF Parcel No. 20-020-147 (Polk County)

- 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

2.3 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 Second Amendment to the Management Agreement Between the Southwest Florida Water Management District and Camp-N-Paddle LLC.
- Authorize the Operations, Lands and Resource Monitoring Division Director to approve and execute up to five additional 1-month extensions of the Agreement.

2.4 Approval of Interagency Agreement – Designation of Regulatory Responsibility to Suwannee River Water Management District for Water Use Permit – Straughn Farm, LLC (Levy County)

Staff recommended the Board Approve the Interagency Agreement between the Suwannee River Water Management District and the Southwest Florida Water Management District for the designation of regulatory responsibility for water use permitting for Straughn Farm, LLC's above-described Project.

Executive Director's Report

2.5 Approve Governing Board Minutes – November 19, 2024

Staff recommended the Board approve the minutes as presented.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:19:05)

Discussion

Finance/Outreach and Planning Committee

Treasurer Ashley Bell Barnett called the committee to order.

3.1 Consent Item(s) Moved to Discussion – None

3.2 Discussion: Action Item: Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2026

Mr. Brandon Baldwin, Business and IT Services Director, presented the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) Preliminary Budget. He provided an overview and timeline of the budget development cycle. Mr. Baldwin presented a comparison table of budget metrics from FY22-FY25 (adopted) through FY26 (preliminary).

Mr. Baldwin stated the FY26 preliminary budget totals \$236.2 million. He explained the projected ad valorem is an increase of \$4.5 million, which is based on a rolled-back rate with an estimated 3.47 percent in new construction. Mr. Baldwin outlined the anticipated revenue and reductions in state, federal and local revenue funding, and appropriations that will be provided by FDEP (Florida Department of Environmental Protection) following the approval of the FY26 state budget. He emphasized the amounts are tentative and any adjustments will be made before the adoption of the budget. Mr. Baldwin discussed the use of funds remaining from prior years and the use of project reserves.

Mr. Baldwin provided an overview with a graphic comparison of expenditures by category, for the adopted FY25 budget and the FY26 preliminary budget. He provided an overview with a graphic comparison for expenditures by program and Areas of Responsibility (AOR), for the FY25 adopted budget and the FY26 preliminary budget.

Board Member Joel Schleicher asked if the anticipated revenue increase is affected by the 2024 hurricane season, how would those funds be comprised. Mr. Baldwin explained that the roll-back rate would be adjusted, and a line-by-line review would be completed and modifications made. Mr. Armstrong explained that budgetary adjustments would be made to statutorily obligated versus non-statutorily obligated expenditures.

Staff recommended the Board authorize staff to prepare the Preliminary Budget Submission for FY2026 based on the preliminary budget as presented, adjusted for any modifications made by the Governing Board on December 17, for submission to the Florida Legislature on or before January 15, 2025.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:46:25)

3.3 Budget Transfer Report

This item was for information. 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 Process

Mr. Kevin Wills, Cooperative Funding Initiative Lead, presented information regarding the FY26 Cooperative Funding Initiative (CFI) review process. He provided a schedule for reviewing, scoring, and approving funding requests.

Mr. Wills provided a summary of the applications received for FY26. This included the number of applications received, the staff ranking, and the proposed funding amounts requested. He presented a comparison of funding requests for FY22 through FY26. Mr. Wills provided a proposed agenda for the CFI presentation at the February 2026 Board meeting.

Staff recommended the Board approve eliminating the Regional Subcommittee meetings for the FY2026 CFI review process.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:52:38)

4.3 Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority – Regional Integrated Loop System Phase 3C Project – Storage and Pumping Improvements Third-Party Review (Q313)

Mr. Jay Hoecker, Water Resources Bureau Chief, provided an overview of the Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority (Authority) Regional Integrated Loop System Phase 3C Project. He outlined the benefits associated, an estimate of costs and budgeting of funds, and summarized the third-party review.

Secretary Jack Bispham asked how the funds will be generated by the Authority. Mr. Mike Knowles, Authority, stated that funding will come from an approved interlocal agreement with Sarasota County. Discussion ensued.

Staff recommended the Board:

1. Authorize continuation of the project to proceed with final design, permitting and construction of the storage and pumping improvements at the Carlton facility.
2. Update the overall project cost to \$70,801,836 with District's share not to exceed \$26,550,000 for the Regional Integrated Loop System Phase 3C Project (Q313).

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 01:00:42)

4.4 Annual Status of the Southern Water Use Caution Area Recovery Strategy

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.

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 that conditions since hurricane Milton to present have been dry. The 12-month rainfall total was above average. The Climate Prediction Center is indicating that a transition to La Niña is still anticipated but slower and weaker than originally predicted.

Ms. McBride provided information regarding rainfall, streamflow, groundwater levels, lake levels, public supply reservoirs and climate forecasts. She provided provisional data for rainfall for December 1-12. She stated that although some stored water supply is in use, storage amounts are robust. Ms. McBride stated the near-term climate forecast indicates above-normal temperatures and below-normal precipitation. Ms. McBride responded to questions.

This item was for information. No action was required.

5.3 Oilwell Road Timber Harvest Agreement

Mr. Chris Reed, Land Management Manager, presented information regarding the Oilwell Road Timber Harvest agreement. He provided an overview of the District's Timber Management Program, the District policy, procedures and objectives regarding land use and management. Mr. Reed responded to questions.

Staff recommended the Board Approve and execute the Oilwell Road Timber Harvest Agreement #2025LMREV001.

A motion was made and seconded to approve staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 01:21:09)

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 – 01:22:10)

Committee/Liaison Reports

8.1 Industrial Advisory Committee

A written summary of the November 5 meeting was provided.

8.2 Public Supply Advisory Committee

A written summary of the November 5 meeting was provided.

Executive Director's Report

9.1 Executive Director's Report

Mr. Brian Armstrong, Executive Director, wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

Chair's Report

10.1 Chair's Report

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

Chair Williamson reminded the Board of the workshop following this meeting.

Chair Williamson stated the next scheduled Board meeting is on Tuesday, January 28 at 9:00 a.m., in the Tampa office.

10.2 Employee Milestones

A written summary was provided.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:23 a.m.