

WHATCOM COUNTY WATER DISTRICT NO. 13
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING AUGUST 26, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Commissioners of Whatcom County Water District 13 was called to order by Commissioner Robert Vandenhaak at 6:30 pm. Commissioners Anthony Au, Richard Whitson, Rebecca Cayen, Robert Vandenhaak and Talitha Shiroma were present in person. District employees Hannah Palm and Eli Gunn-Hirsch were present in person. Cheryl Klessig was on vacation. Gray & Osborne Engineers Roger Kuykendall and Jay Swift were present via Zoom. Two members of the public were present via Zoom.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting June 24, 2025

AA/RW a motion was made and seconded to approve the regular meeting minutes from July 22, 2025. Motion carried 5-0.

ENGINEERING BUSINESS

SCPPL Funding-Sewer Rate Study & Community Engagement

The District is still waiting for the contract amendment to remove the critical improvements project and add the AKART/Hydrogeological Study to the DOE Loan/Forgivable Loan. Jay said that G & O is getting closer to being able to run numbers for the sewer rate study. Rebecca, Cheryl, and Hannah represented the District at the Kendall Fest event which was well attended, and they felt that it was successful for the District to reach out to the public.

Engineer's Report /GSP

Chapters 1-4 are complete, and Roger emailed it out for review. The population projections for 20 years and 40 years that are included are numbers that were given to G & O from Whatcom County Planning & Development Services. G & O will design the new WWTP with the 20-year population projections, while keeping the 40-year population projections in mind.

AKART & Hydrogeologic Study

The draft of the 5 chapters of the AKART Study and a summary of the hydrogeologic study in Chapter 3 were emailed to the District on August 22, 2025. The AKART study provides a history of flows and loadings and discusses regulations in the permit. The hydrogeological study conducted by Aspect Consulting provided accurate data about the aquifer. The AKART study discusses treatment options, and in G & O's opinion, they believe that there should not be a chloride or sulfate limit in the SWD permit at all. They think that there is no justification for it, they are secondary pollutants, there is no reasonable way to remove them, the cost to remove them is very expensive, and removing them provides very little benefit. Should DOE continue to have chloride and sulfate limits in the SWD permit, G & O will argue that the limits should be achievable by the District, since this is something that the District cannot control. Chapter 4 provides the different technologies and rough estimates of the expected costs. The final chapter will be a short summary of recommended effluent limits and recommend the leading candidates for the upgrades be one of the following: an Aero-Mod; an oxidation ditch; or a sequencing batch reactor. An upgraded lagoon treatment facility will not provide the needed nitrate removal and will not be considered. Further discussion of the treatment options will be incorporated into the General Sewer Plan. DOE will be reviewing the AKART study and give final approval. Once the final approval is given, G & O can begin to pick the final treatment technology, site layout, hydraulics, and the optional items, such as sludge management. The AKART study needs to be submitted to the DOE portal by August 29, 2025. Eli will work with Cheryl to get the AKART submitted to DOE.

Critical Improvements Update and Start Date

Summit Construction Group anticipated a start time around August 14, 2025, but the flow meter is scheduled to arrive at the end of September. Summit now anticipates starting the second week in September. G & O have approved their submittals. Pumps will arrive in late August or early September.

Pond Liner Leak Detection Plan Update

The Pond Liner Leak Detection Plan was revised a couple of months ago, since the original plan wasn't feasible. Now the valves at the headworks are frozen and the revised plan will not work. Attempts to replace those valves would be very expensive and quite risky. Dave Mathews, DOE Permit Manager, is in the loop and understands the issues. The new plan is to use influent and effluent data, along with an evaporation pan, and measuring rainfall. That revised plan was rejected by DOE as it didn't meet the requirements of the SWD permit. The language in the permit states that the pond liner leak detection survey can be done with electronic leak detection or visual inspection. Jay spoke with Dave about visual inspection of the pond liners and that is the route that the District will take. G & O has pictures of the pond liners and Dave is aware that the District is planning for a new treatment plant. To replace them or repair the liners will be incredibly expensive. DOE may require downgradient monitoring well to be installed, but that will be cheaper than replacing or repairing the pond liners. Another revised plan will need to be turned into DOE, explaining why the previous methods will not work and the District will provide a visual inspection report. The survey must be completed by September 30, 2025, and the final report is due December 31, 2025.

Richard asserted that, in his mind, building a new WWTP plant is not a done deal, especially if the cost of building a new WWTP causes rates to increase significantly. Roger said that going through the planning and design of the WWTP will reveal what the cost of an upgraded WWTP will be and the sewer rate study will show what the sewer rates need to be to pay for the upgraded WWTP. There are several funding agencies that could assist with grants or offer lower interest loans. G & O acknowledged the difficulty of moving from a lagoon WWTP to a mechanical WWTP, but that they are willing to assist with finding the funding sources to make the new WWTP as affordable as possible.

GVLS And SVLS Issues to be addressed

Joseph Butcher from Whitney Equipment Company attended the meeting via Zoom. Getting a new PLC main brain for the GVLS will fix two issues: programming the lift station and knowing what is programmed and fixing the dialer so emergency call outs can be made. The current auto-dialer is old technology, and the cost is unknown to replace it. Additionally, extra diagnostics will be needed to determine why the auto dialer isn't functioning. Replacing the PLC may fix the problem, but it may not. The High Tide system to replace the auto dialer system could be installed later if the auto dialer isn't fixed by the new PLC. There will just be an additional charge for travel time. Joe explained that the operators will be able to adjust the programming themselves and not have to rely on an outside firm to do that work. Whitney Equipment is currently out for around 3-4 weeks for service calls, but the PLC is in stock. *RC/AA a motion was made and seconded to approve the purchase and installation of a new PLC from Whitney Equipment Company for \$9,949.81. Motion carried 5-0.*

General Facilities Charges Recalculation

Roger is gathering information regarding purchases that can be used for the GFC charge calculations. He will reach out to Cheryl when she returns from vacation.

Reservoirs Inspection

Baker Silo presented a paper bid for \$1,500 for inspection and \$1,900 for cleaning and disinfection, if needed. *AA/RC a motion was made and seconded to approve Baker Silo inspecting the reservoirs for \$1,500.00. Motion carried 5-0.*

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

WASWD Monthly update

WASWD's Fall Conference is September 16-18, 2025, in Spokane. Richard and Robert will attend.

Red Mountain

No updates. Jack Hovenier represented Red Mountain at the meeting. Jack will not be able to attend the next two meetings in person but may attend via Zoom.

Balfour Village

No updates. No representative from Balfour Village attended the meeting.

Water Valve Repairs

Julie Robinson, the Circuit Rider from Evergreen Rural Water of Washington came out to the District to provide technical assistance to Hannah and Eli for water leak detection. Together they discovered that 3 or the 4 valves that the operators thought were leaking are not leaking. The gate valve on Flair Valley is leaking, and the Pass Valley gate valve is seized. 3 bids were received ranging from \$4,090.30 to \$9,922.50 per location. ***TS/RC a motion was made and seconded to approve Valley Plumbing & Electric to repair the gate valve on Flair Valley Court at a cost not to exceed \$5,000.00. Motion carried 5-0.***

The District has had a couple of water leaks repaired this year and had the asphalt repaved with each repair. Robert suggested that it might be more cost effective to do all repaving at one time instead of each time a repair is made. The District will send a letter to the Peace Valley HOA asking them if repaving repairs in the road once per year by October 1st would be acceptable to them. Cheryl can draft a letter to the Peaceful Valley HOA for the commissioners to review.

Fencing adjacent to Drain Field & Balfour Village Phase 3

Anthony proposes fencing the drainfield with 6-foot chain link fencing one side at a time over a 4-year period, with the first side being the one between the drainfield and Balfour Village. Next steps would be getting the drainfield surveyed to determine the property boundaries or locate the property pins, and what they price per foot cost of the fencing. The price per foot will determine how many feet per year could be built over time. Eli will work on getting bids for the fencing.

NEW BUSINESS

Department of Enterprise Services (DES)

Hannah would like the District to join DES, a centralized business service for government agencies to purchase goods and services at no cost to the agencies. The advantage is increased purchasing power based on economy of scale and pricing is more cost effective. Columbia Valley Water District recommended that the District investigate being a part of it. Rebecca uses them at the Department of Natural Resources and is happy with their customer support. ***RC/RW a motion was made and seconded to approve joining the Department of Enterprise Services. Motion carried 5-0.***

BILLS PAYABLE

Claims Payment Request form dated 8/4/25 in the amount of \$8,059.20 General Cash

Payroll dated 8/18/25 in the amount of \$19,238.15 (5 week pay period)

Claims Payment form dated 8/26/25 in the amount of \$13,703.36 General Cash

Claims Payment Request Form for 8/26/25 in the amount of \$24031.06 GFC Cash Account

Investment Transfer Form for 8/29/25: Move \$10,000.00 from General Cash Investment Account to General Cash Account to help cover payroll

Excise Tax Request Form 8/25/25 in the amount of \$2,410.30

RW/TS a motion was made and seconded to approve the above Bills Payable. Motion carried 5-0.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

YTD Expenses – Review

July 2025 expenses were presented to the Board for review.

Treasurer's Reports

July 2025 Treasurer's reports were presented to the Board for review.

RW/AA a motion was made and seconded to approve July 2025 Treasurer's Reports. Motion carried 5-0.

Cash Position, Collection Report, Aged Receivables, and the Delinquent Account Report

July 2025 Cash position reports were presented to the Board for review.

July 2025 Collections Report was presented to the Board for review.

July 2025 Aged Receivables and Delinquent Account Reports were provided for review.

Petty Cash

This item was overlooked on the agenda and will be moved for approval in September 2025's meeting.

Payment Plan Arrangements

No payment arrangements presented.

WATER & WASTEWATER REPORT

District Operations Report

The July 2025 operations report was provided to the Board.

- Dissolved Oxygen Probe
Amazon discontinued the dissolved oxygen probe that commissioners approved at June's meeting for \$1,096.57 plus sales tax. The same DO probe is available from Cole Parmer for \$1,766 plus sales tax and shipping. ***RC/AA a motion was made and seconded to approve the purchase of a dissolved oxygen probe not to exceed \$2,000.00 plus sales tax and shipping. Motion carried 5-0.***
- Lawnmower Maintenance and Wheel Repair
Hannah fixed the lawnmower and just maintenance is needed after the mowing season is done. A new trailer hitch and wiring harness was purchased, and Robert will help install it so that the District can bring the lawnmower in for servicing and not have to pay for it to be picked up and dropped off.

Consumption Report

July 2025 consumption report was provided to the Board.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT REPORT

Meeting Log

The meeting log was presented to the Board.

EXECUTIVE SESSION RCW 42.30.110(1)(g)

Robert called an executive session at 8:15 pm to discuss employee compensation. The session will end at 8:20 pm.

The executive session ended at 8:20 pm.

RW/RC a motion was made and seconded to approve \$3.00/hour raises for Eli Gunn-Hirsch and Hannah Palm effective September 1, 2025. Motion carried 5-0.

CONCLUDE

There being no further business, Robert Vandenhaak concluded the meeting at 8:25 pm. These Minutes were presented and approved at a regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners on 9/23/25.

APPROVED: 

DATE: 9-23-25



Rebecca Cayen