

Ratepayer Gathering Notes

Wed., May 29, 2019

The Library – Joint BWD/Ratepayer meeting

In attendance: Lee Scharf, Joanne Sims, Jack Sims, Will Bonnell

Our four main concerns, beliefs, objectives:

- We believe that BWD/Ratepayers should be allocated an initial **minimum** of 1700 AFY; this allocation should be excluded from any reductions.
- We believe that the 20-year implementation period set out under SGMA should be shortened; by doing so:
 - we will halt the depletion of the aquifer;
 - we will greatly increase the probability of reasonably priced water of better quality –systematic monitoring for water quality is essential for our population;
 - we will minimize the ongoing decimation of our groundwater dependent ecosystems, which consist of flora and fauna whose success must be considered in the overall water allocation calculus.

Future scheduled meetings:

None

So, this was a surprise, but maybe given what we've all been told (and what I've not wanted to believe,) it was to be expected.

As you all know, and as the Ratepayer Notes will attest, BWD had agreed by the time I sent out the notes for the May 8 gathering. Originally, it was scheduled for Wed, May 15, a date BWD changed because purportedly the finance person was not prepared with all the papers he needed.

I got a call on Tuesday, May 28, from Geoff Poole; we spoke mid afternoon on the day before this already scheduled meeting. Geoff informed me that the Board had decided that this kind of meeting would not be appropriate. He did offer to share a slide show of some sort, but I decided to cancel: the purpose of this joint meeting was to share openly, a gesture on the part of BWD towards openness and transparency, which we (ratepayers) have talked about a lot. In fact, Kathy Dice, President of the BWD Board, but attending as a ratepayer, has been present at a few of our gatherings and has agreed that more open communication was desirable.

After cancelling with Geoff, I decided to go ahead and hold the meeting anyway, but by then the damage was done. BWD had not advertised, had not provided me with an agenda even though I'd asked a number of times for an idea of what their plans might be so I could prepare all of us for this important event. Our turnout, therefore, was miniscule; the five of us did spend the better part of an hour discussing the issue and thinking of how to move forward from here.

My conclusions.

As you can imagine, I was pretty distraught. All of us, in good faith, believed the BWD Board was making efforts to become more open and responsive, perhaps acknowledging that BWD and the ratepayers were one and the same entity.

To wait until the day before the meeting before cancelling, giving us no warning whatsoever that what we thought we had agreed on was not the case, is dismissive, feckless and irresponsible for one.

It also tells us that the work we have accomplished since our first gathering on January 15 (we've held 21 gatherings, exchanged countless e-mails, shared and discussed ideas, read and researched) is pointless, or at least of no consequence, in their view.

In addition, when I concluded the conversation with Geoff, I stated that the least the Board could do would be to tell us what they think of our Objectives and also share the status of the stipulated agreement they are negotiating.

For the first time, Geoff informed me that the BWD Board has taken the position that proportional reductions is the reasonable path to follow. Regarding the stipulated agreement, I was told that the Board felt it was premature to share any information with the ratepayers.

In other words, the objectives we have so carefully developed over these last five months are of no importance; our ideas have been summarily rejected without comment or discussion.

The BWD Board sees itself as an exclusive board of elected officials solely responsible for whatever decisions are to be made. Clearly, they have chosen to completely ignore any function the GSP Advisory Committee might have had.

Do all members of the Board feel this way? Lyle B and Dave D are the two board members representing both the GSA and the BWD Board; what is their true opinion of the AC and its function in crafting the GSP? If the Board valued our input, as they publicly have stated, they would have held a meeting to discuss their concerns and to listen to our input. They did not.

It is not possible to conclude that the Board does value our work if it does not even give us the courtesy of holding a meeting where our issues might be discussed openly. This Board is not interested in our thoughts, ideas, objectives or collective expertise. They have 20 sets of detailed notes outlining what we believe and want, and who we are; we have yet to receive one single formal comment or thought from one single board member.

Where do the other members of the BWD Board stand? They are ratepayers. What is their position? Have they been coopted? By whom?

What should be happening.

BWD and the ratepayers are one single entity.

- Before deciding to accept the Dudek study to follow the proportional reductions path, the BWD Board should:

- Openly discuss the matter with those of us who have put so much time, effort, study and heart into the matter (this also includes the Sponsor Group, which supports an initial BWD allocation even higher than ours;)
- Sit down with their attorney and ask him (Mr. Anderson) to outline the various possible scenarios that could unfold, including the minimum initial allocation; the attorney should also have to account for his altering his opinion about Tom Bunn's assessment; then these should be shared with the ratepayers;
- Ongoing negotiations with the other pumpers in the subbasin should be shared, even if only in general terms, on a regular basis with the ratepayers. (Again, if the ratepayers' opinion is of some value, we would be included in the discussion.)
- All practicable scenarios outlining implementation of the GSP should be available to the ratepayer in a simple, easily accessible format.

What should the BWD Board's primary objectives be:

1. The number one goal is to implement the GSP quickly; further depletion of the aquifer is irreversible and unacceptable.
2. Concurrently, BWD should make every effort possible to find the funds to resolve the overdraft.
3. BWD should stipulate that it will not reduce from its current 1700 AFY
4. All reductions in water consumption by subbasin pumpers in order to attain sustainability must be borne by agriculture and recreation.
5. BWD/ratepayers and all pumpers must remain fully cognizant that agriculture, as it currently exists in this subbasin, can only further deplete the aquifer and, in no viable scenario, can it ever survive; we all must move quickly to achieve sustainability with this irrefutable certainty clearly in mind.
6. BWD must act now, with no regard for any perceived immediate legal or financial reprisals; in the long term, the sole objective is to put an immediate end to any further depletion of the aquifer.