

North Bay Watershed Association

Draft Summary - the North Bay Watershed Association (NBWA) Board of Directors.

Date: Friday, February 7th, 2020 – 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. Location: Novato Sanitary District

Directors or Representatives Present Included:

Board Member	Agency/Organization	Board Member	Agency/Organization
Michael Boorstein	Central Marin Sanitation Agency	Megan Clark	Las Gallinas Valley
Pam Meigs	Ross Valley Sanitary District	Jack Gibson	Marin Municipal Water District
Rob Carson	MCSTOPP	Jean Mariani	Novato Sanitary District
Mary Sackett	Marin County	Rick Fraites	North Marin Water District

1. Call to Order – Jack Gibson called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.
2. Public Comment - No public comment.
3. Approval of agenda and January Summary; one correction: Megan Clark. Revise summary to clarify that the plan is not final
4. Treasure’s Report was received late yesterday so was not posted for review, but Judy advised finances in good shape and in flux as we receive conference sponsorships and paying conference bills

5. Information exchange. Jack remarked that meetings about e-bikes in the Watershed have been exciting and that MMWD has a new request for allowing boats on the watershed lakes. As no boats have been allowed since the 1940’s that seems unlikely to be granted. Megan mentioned the NBWA Conference and suggested everyone mark his or her calendar for that event. Rick mentioned the Board is reviewing their rate schedule and have a hearing. Pam noted that she had requested a tour of the pipes and pumps of the Ross Valley system and that the tour really helped her understand where the millions of dollars have gone and underscored what impressive work has been done.

6. Ben Horenstein, GM MMWD. Lessons from the 2017 Fires

Ben began his presentation by reminding us that we most often learn through our mistakes. However, emergency response is one area where sharing experience becomes a critical requirement, as mistakes are so costly. Ben was manager of Santa Rosa Water when the fires hit. He focused on water contamination, post- fire, and how this experience has changed US EPA and the state’s response. First we all remember that this was a tragic event. Ben mentioned that early on, when the Round Barn went up in flames, the truly historic sense of loss in this event was becoming clear.

All plans are necessary but Ben noted: “first remember that no plan will stand up to the first onslaught from the enemy” and that once the fire began, responses require adaptive management. There were two key considerations here are communications and resources; both internal staff, and at response centers. A big problem was that the city lost water pressure due to damaged lines at fire sites. In a major emergency we must plan for the loss of our usual modern lines of communication (digital, etc) - and noted that organized staffing and mutual aid agreements are key.

Ben said the biggest mistake he made was by not calling for mutual aid sooner. Food, care and feeding of staff working extraordinary hours are also key.

Who's in charge? Remember it's not a day-to-day operation and leadership changes over the course of a fire emergency. Everyone who takes charge has different terminology and rules etc., so it takes a huge effort to stay up to date with changing leadership. FEMA is all about tactics and lives saved; on the ground locals need to additionally think about tomorrow and post-fire issues are not well captured in the usual training. Leaders have to make major funding decisions on the fly. It's real money and FEMA reimbursement can be called into question depending on how those decisions come down.

Could we have a regional contract in place for the next emergency? It's something to consider but local firefighting is historically a local endeavor. Fatigue is a major issue. You can't sleep, then you come in to do a next shift tired, and decisions can become questionable. Possible answer? Have folks who are just observing for quality control. Communication must be coordinated so that customers are not overwhelmed by information. The role of elected officials, may not be part of the original planning work, but they will be there. Role in Santa Rosa was to support the staff, provide encouragement, organize food etc. Ben noted that often, the post emergency focus and outpouring of thanks does not include the great work done by the staff of these agencies and so agency leadership should champion this amazing work.

For Santa Rosa, they found water agency infrastructure was mostly undamaged. Cooperation with the regulators was positive and very supportive. They were able to get portable generators out and working quickly. They had however, an unexpected issue; sink holes in the fire area. The fires burned hundreds of yards of buried pipelines- nowadays plastics are common in water infrastructure – creating wholes under the surface. Debris cleaning was a major piece of work as was rebuilding infrastructure. There were unexpected costs along with a major drop in revenue so expect to update your revenue plan. There were a number of watershed concerns. Post fire, they began getting taste and odor complaints- found source to be hydrocarbons. Were able to flush it out mostly. Benzene was a major issue, and a few places had orders of magnitude contamination. "No drink" orders went out to about 300 homes. Source was loss of pressure caused by back-flow, as the home would burn, the plastic piping in the burning homes would turn soup-like, and the contaminated water flowed back into the water system. They still don't understand why this situation was limited to a small area. Private lateral lines were a also big issue here because they are often made out of plastic, and they absorb the chemicals. They also looked at sources. Fuel spills, leaching plastics, improper hook-up? They took tens of thousands of samples to determine the sources. Key was a leach test- to predict how long it would take to leach it out. Plastic service lines were the major sources. Heavy metal contamination also occurred but they were easier to flush out. Paradise is a different situation. There, post fire, the contaminated water sat too long and they will now need an entire new water system.

Three principles to remember: 1) absolute transparency 2) data driven decisions 3) adaptation.

7. Review of New Water Resilience Portfolio, Judy Kelly, Ex Director, Ben Horenstein, Steve Moore

Judy reviewed the new State Administration's Water Resilience Portfolio and began with an overview of how the plan was commissioned and the structure of the recommendations. There are over 100 specific actions organized into four main areas; maintain and diversify supply; protect and enhance natural systems; build connections; be prepared. She reviewed a number of the specific

actions that seem to have most significance for the North Bay, Ben and Steve added thoughts and feedback on the actions. The presentation on this item has been posted on the NBWA website.

8. Announcements and Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 11:25

Next Meeting: March 3rd, 2020, Napa Sanitary District

SUBMITTED BY: Judy Kelly, Executive Director NBWA