

Action Summary Minutes

San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District

GOVERNING BOARD STUDY SESSION

Meeting Held at Wonder Valley Resort & Conference Center
6450 Elwood Road
Sanger, CA 93657

November 9th & 10th, 2022

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER – Vice Chair Buddy Mendes called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m.
2. ROLL CALL – was taken and a quorum was present.

Present:

Drew M. Bessinger, Councilmember	City of Clovis
David Couch, Supervisor*	Kern County
Christina Fugazi, Vice Mayor	City of Stockton
Deborah Lewis, Councilmember	City of Los Banos
Buddy Mendes, Supervisor, Vice Chair	Fresno County
Tania Pacheco-Werner, Ph.D.	Appointed by Governor
Craig Pedersen, Supervisor	Kings County
Alvaro Preciado, Mayor**	City of Avenal
Robert Rickman, Supervisor	San Joaquin County
Alexander Sherriffs, M.D.	Appointed by Governor
Amy Shuklian, Supervisor	Tulare County

Absent:

Vito Chiesa, Supervisor, Chair	Stanislaus County
Lloyd Pareira, Supervisor	Merced County
Tom Wheeler, Supervisor	Madera County

**arrived at 4:17 p.m. on November 9th*

***arrived at 8:00 a.m. on November 10th*

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
4. HOUSEKEEPING AND LOGISTICS
5. WELCOMING REMARKS – Buddy Mendes, Fresno County Supervisor, and Dr. Pacheco-Werner, welcomed everyone to Fresno County and the City of Sanger.
6. HEALTHY AIR LIVING SCHOOLS PROGRAM – Heather Heinks, Program Manager in the District’s Outreach & Communications department presented this item, which updated the Board on the progress of the District’s ongoing engagement with schools and discussed upcoming opportunities.

Samir Sheikh, Executive Director/ACPO, pointed out that there is no other District in the country that partners with schools like the Valley Air District. He reminded the Board that post-wildfire season the State Dept. of Education sent our program state-wide to serve as a model for other air districts working with their local schools.

Mr. Mendes suggested adding information depicting air quality from years prior so kids can see the hard work and the progress that has been made and the pollution that has been reduced.

Ms. Fugazi is excited for all the aspects of this program and highlighted the STEM aspect the program focuses on. She recommended partnering with local Office of Educations, providing air quality training to students and partnering with students so they can become “air ambassadors.”

Dr. Pacheco-Werner suggested contacting and working with coaches valley-wide as well as teachers.

Public Comment: *The following person commented on this item:*

- Christine Zimmerman, Western States Petroleum Association (WSPA)

The Governing Board recessed for lunch at 11:45 a.m. and reconvened at 12:30 p.m.

7. DISCUSS CLEAN AIR ACT IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITES – Jessi Fierro, Director of Air Quality Planning, provided an update on critical Clean Air Act (CAA) policy areas impacting the Valley and discussed strategies for addressing these regulatory and policy needs for the District’s State Implementation Plans (SIPs).

Mr. Sheikh acknowledged the complexity of these issues and added that the District will continue to ensure that it is best positioned not only for the current standards, but also thinking ahead to future standards.

Mr. Pedersen was curious as to the federal mobile source requirements and where the responsibility lies. He voiced some frustration with the ambiguity and lack of quantifiable commitments from the EPA to address the federal sources that are necessary to meet the standards.

Dr. Pacheco-Werner commented and asked how we can look ahead and be proactive with the stronger standards. She suggested having a stronger work group that can be thinking ahead of the policy challenges and how to accomplish these goals.

Dr. Sherriffs appreciated the presentation that highlighted the progress the District has made and the outline of what we will continue to accomplish. He provided his perspective as a doctor and that healthier air will have a direct impact on the health of Valley citizens. Dr. Sherriffs asked what percent of the total PM2.5 that comes from residential wood burning has been eliminated so far. Mr. Sheikh responded that it varies by county but on average it is in the 60-75% range. In Fresno, Madera, and Kern counties, we are approaching closer to 90%.

Public Comment: *The following individuals commented on this item:*

- Manuel Cunha, Nisei Farmers League (NFL)
- Kevin Abernathy, Milk Producers Council and Dairy Cares

8. UPDATES FROM CALIFORNIA AIR RESOURCES BOARD AND FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY – Martha Guzman, Regional Administrator for EPA Region 9, presented an update on recent EPA progress. Ms. Guzman also recognized the District for the progress it has made especially in light of the topography and the recent fires. She also complimented the District on the progress of the 18 measures the District has taken. Liane Randolph, Chair for California Air Resources Board presented an update on recent action and strategies of CARB.

Dr. Pacheco-Werner appreciated the update from Administrator Guzman and Chair Randolph and commended Mr. Sheikh for organizing the update and the continued dialogue with EPA and CARB so we can work together to improve air quality in the Valley.

Ms. Fugazi appreciated both presenting as well and noted that we need to work together in order to help the communities in the Central Valley. If we don't partner together, we will not be able to meet the difficult goals that are before us.

Dr. Sherriffs highlighted the leadership from this District, Mr. Sheikh, and the Board.

Mr. Pedersen stated his concern for the agricultural industry due to the heavy burden of overlapping regulations. He hoped there can be consideration for the industries that are carrying the regulatory burdens.

Ms. Lewis expressed concerns she hears from her community in regards to the regulatory burden faced by Valley farmers. She recommended more of an incremental request for changes so it's more manageable for the regulated.

Mr. Rickman echoed Mr. Pedersen's concern of the local family farm and has also experienced seeing family farms having to close or move out of the state due to the heavy burden of regulations.

Mr. Bessinger addressed the unintended consequences that some regulations bring and asked that those unintended consequences be considered.

Public Comment: *The following person commented on this item:*

- Manuel Cunha, NFL

9. DISCUSS CLIMATE INITIATIVES AND POTENTIAL CO-BENEFICIAL OPPORTUNITIES –Tom Jordan, the District's Senior Policy Advisor, presented an update on current climate initiatives, and discussed potential opportunities to reduce both greenhouse gases and criteria air pollutants. Mr. Jordan also welcomed the following individuals who participated in the discussion of this item:

- David Edwards, Ph.D., Chief Deputy Director State OEHHA
- Carlos Suarez, USDA-NRCS State Conservationist
- Don Cameron, Terranova Ranch
- Lynn Jacquez, Principle, CJ Lake

Mr. Pedersen expressed concern in regards to the lack of acknowledgment from the federal government of the positive benefits derived by carbon sequestration from farms.

Mr. Mendes expressed concern of the billions of dollars this funding is costing the United States.

10. DISCUSS POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADDRESSING DROUGHT IMPACTS AND AIR QUALITY – Jon Klassen, Director of Air Quality Science, presented this item to discuss the ongoing impacts from the historic drought affecting the San Joaquin Valley and the need to consider implications from the implementation of California's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). This item consisted of multiple presenters that provided different perspectives from researchers and agricultural stakeholders, and provided feedback on actions the District takes to address these challenges. Mr. Klassen also welcomed the following individuals participated in the discussion of this item:

- Mark Hudson, farmer
- Dr. Andrew Ayers, Researcher, Public Policy Institute of California Water Policy Center
- Carlos Suarez, USDA-NRCS State Conservationist
- Ryan Jacobsen, CEO, Fresno County Farm Bureau

Mr. Mendes echoed some of the same concern brought by Mr. Hudson and Mr. Jacobsen and hopes all agencies can work together to find solutions to the water shortage. He also thanked the panel for the educational presentations that help us understand the challenges we face.

Public Comment: None

The Governing Board recessed for the evening at 5:10 p.m.

The Governing Board reconvened on November 10th at 8:07 a.m.

The next two items were taken out of order:

15. DISTRICT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS – Jessica Olsen, Director of Community Strategies & Resources, reported on District’s community engagement efforts and discussed potential opportunities for enhancements moving forward.

Ms. Fugazi echoed the importance of these programs and was interested to know if everyone who brought a lawnmower was able to receive one. Ms. Olsen said all who were present wanting to take advantage of the program were able to receive a new lawnmower.

Mr. Bessinger asked about our Zoom process in regards to the AB617 communities. Mr. Sheikh responded that while the District has come a long way in the relationship building and have seen the fruit of this when it comes to face-to-face engagement, the District also uses a third-party service as well to ensure all basis are covered. Mr. Sheikh mentioned the importance to him of on-going engagement with the 617 communities and face-to-face has been and will continue to be a major benefit of the relationship growth.

Dr. Pacheco-Werner acknowledged the accomplishments and echoed Mr. Sheikh’s compliments of the District’s program as serving as a state-wide model. She asked a question about the positions that were discussed as a part of this item. She was wondering if the positions being added encompassed the community air monitoring as well. Mr. Sheikh confirmed that the new positions will work closely with our scientists and air monitoring team, especially ensuring communication across the teams.

Mr. Pedersen encouraged the District to highlight the folks in the community and residents within our counties as it might help get the correct message across.

Ms. Lewis asked about the possibility of hosting these types of events in the smaller communities, particularly the lawnmower program. Mr. Sheikh responded with that definitely being a possibility and that the District can follow that lead if there is a contact person or business we are informed of.

Mr. Mendes asked about the source of the state funding being used to support these programs. Mr. Sheikh responded the funding is provided through ongoing grant funding, including state grant funding from CARB for AB 617 and other community air protection program funds.

Public Comment: *The following individuals commented on this item:*

- Christine Zimmerman, WSPA
- Manuel Cunha, NFL

Moved: Fugazi

Seconded: Bessinger

Ayes: Bessinger, Couch, Fugazi, Lewis, Mendes, Pacheco-Werner, Pedersen, Preciado, Rickman, Sherriffs, Shuklian

Nays: None

Motion unanimously carried to (1) amend the District's Position Control List effective November 9, 2022, by adding one (1) Senior Air Quality Specialist and one (1) Air Quality Specialist; and (2) adopt Budget Resolution to amend the 2022/23 District Budget to appropriate additional resources to support the AB 617 program.

16. UPDATE ON AB 617 IMPLEMENTATION AND APPROVE NEW INCENTIVE PROGRAMS BENEFITTING VALLEY COMMUNITIES – Stephanie Ng, Senior Air Quality Specialist in the District's Community Strategies & Resources Department, and Todd DeYoung, Director of Grants & Incentives, provided a progress report on implementation of Community Emissions Reduction Programs (CERPs) for South Central Fresno, Shafter, and Stockton AB 617 communities.

Mr. Bessinger encouraged the District to build relationships with the faith-based organizations in regards to the District's incentive programs. He explained that in his experience, partnering with some of the faith-based organizations will help disseminate the District's information regarding its incentive programs.

Dr. Pacheco-Werner asked about the opportunities available in the AB617 communities and what the role of technical assistance plays in these types of communities so how do we fill that gap and help these communities. Mr. DeYoung responded that within each CERP there are infrastructure measures and extensive engagement within those communities regarding those measures and the benefits to the AB617 communities. Regarding the question about technical assistance, Mr. DeYoung said there are organizations that provide that specific service and consult with businesses to help them navigate the process and proposals.

Dr. Sherriffs inquired about the dollar per ton of emission reductions. Mr. DeYoung said that the District is always looking for the cost-effective programs, and the locomotive projects are very cost-effective.

Public Comment: None

Moved: Pedersen

Seconded: Shuklian

Ayes: Couch, Fugazi, Lewis, Mendes, Pacheco-Werner, Pedersen,
Preciado, Rickman, Sherriffs, Shuklian

Nays: None

Motion unanimously carried to (1) approve up to \$15,000,000 in State Community Air Protection (CAP) funding for the replacement of old, high-polluting locomotives with zero and near zero-emission technology that benefit Valley disadvantaged and low-income communities; (2) approve up to \$20,000,000 in State CAP funding to construct necessary heavy-duty electric charging and fueling infrastructure to support the deployment of zero and near-zero emission heavy duty vehicles and equipment that benefit Valley disadvantaged and low-income communities; and (3) authorize the Executive Director/APCO to make administrative changes to the programs as necessary to ensure successful program implementation.

Mr. Pedersen left the meeting at 10:34 a.m.

11. UPDATE ON WILDFIRE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE STRATEGY– Jon Klassen, Director of Air Quality Science, presented this item to discuss ongoing work to promote resources for reducing exposure to harmful wood smoke and enhancing fuel reduction efforts. Mr. Klassen also welcomed the following individuals who participated in the discussion of this item:
- Dr. Ricardo Cisneros, Professor, UC Merced
 - Angel Prieto, Sequoia National Forest
 - Brian Garabedian, Captain, Cal Fire

Dr. Sherriffs appreciated the value of the information provided. He asked for more data from Dr. Cisneros and the health impacts associated with wildfires. He wondered what the correct health measures are in understanding wildfires and health impacts.

Mr. Couch asked what the largest impediment was in regards to prescribed burning and maintenance of the forests. Ryan Michaels from the Sequoia National Forest answered that due to the partnerships that are formed, they have not had issues is getting permits approved and hopes that will continue in the future so that they are able to maintain the forests for the health and safety of the community and the environment. Jerry Sharp from CAL Fire said on the state level the environmental regulation burden is quite heavy and the time it takes for a response is lengthy.

Ms. Lewis asked about the environmental and archaeological review and what is typically expected from that review. Mr. Sharp responded that it typically means

Native American sites and historical sites, referring to mostly sawmills and homesteads and making sure when those types of things are found, they ensure it is not disturbed when doing the project since they are fully protected under the law.

Public comment: None

12. PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY TO INFORM AIR QUALITY OUTREACH AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES – Jaime Holt, Chief Communication Officer, discussed the upcoming public opinion survey to inform air quality outreach and management strategies.

Mr. Bessinger shared his experience and provided a suggestion to use text messaging for survey purposes.

Ms. Fugazi provided a reminder to maximize our potential on events with ensuring we advertise all our programs at all District community events. She also suggested a coupon or some form of incentive for the completion of a survey. Possibly looking at using Instagram as well.

Ms. Lewis suggested another avenue could be using Roku or Amazon since you can't turn-off those type of advertisements.

Dr. Sherriffs echoed Ms. Fugazi's suggestion of maximizing our programs at all District events and all avenues along the way.

Dr. Pacheco-Werner suggested we find out what people find as barriers to protecting their health when air quality is at unhealthy levels. She added that it would also be interesting to know what barriers are there for those not utilizing our grants available to them.

Mr. Preciado suggested using those in the community as opposed to a random survey because sometimes people do not trust those conducting the survey so it's not effective.

Mr. Couch said Kern County does quite an extensive survey every couple years and suggested adding a couple questions to the survey if possible, piggy-backing on the original survey.

Mr. Sheikh closed with being open to suggestions along the way and committed to bringing the results of the survey back to the Board.

Public comment: *The following person commented on this item:*

- Manuel Cunha, NFL

13. UPDATE FROM SJVAPCD EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION – Michael Hamaguchi, President of the SJVAPCD Employees' Association, gave a brief

update to the Board on the Association's very positive and proactive relationship with the District.

Dr. Sherriffs commended the District for keeping staff morale high and a sense of cohesion during the pandemic.

14. THE DISTRICT S.T.A.R. (SERVICE, TEAMWORK, ATTITUDE AND RESPECT) WORK CULTURE – Chenecua Dixon, Director of Personnel, provided an overview of the District's STAR work culture and the success the District has experienced when implementing this culture at all levels of the organization and fostering, cultivating and preserving a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Mr. Sheikh described how important this culture is and explained how committed the District is to employee welfare and wellbeing. The following District staff members each provided testimony on how the District's STAR work culture has enriched their work experience and positively impacted their lives: Emily Kneeland, Senior Air Quality Specialist, Josue Gonzalez, Senior Air Quality Inspector, and Roshelle Lee, Senior Personnel Analyst.

Mr. Bessinger commented on how our STAR culture is at all levels and how important that it. He said that it has to start from the top, how an employee treats others, and their attitude is sometimes indicative of how they are being treated by their supervisor. He shared his experience in dealing with other agencies and the horror stories that he has witnessed when staff are not valued or treated with respect. He said it's clear that the value and respect are present at the District or employees wouldn't provide the exceptional service or positive attitude they possess.

Ms. Fugazi shared her positive experience when she was on-boarded to the Governing Board. She said every encounter was so incredibly positive. She suggested talking to other agencies about this type of culture.

Mr. Preciado thanked staff for the support he has been shown. He sees all the hard work and not only sees the friendly service he has been shown but also how we respect and provide great service to the communities we service.

Ms. Shuklian commented that she is very happy to see the high morale and appreciates it.

Mr. Mendes said this is the happiest place on earth when it comes to employees and their positive attitudes.

Mr. Couch thanked those who presented and said they did a great job. He said that most places don't have this type of culture so encouraged the District to keep this type of culture going.

Ms. Lewis commented on the positive energy she has seen at the District. She

said it is so cohesive and you can tell people genuinely care about each other. As a Board Member she feels so comfortable and has also experienced the highest customer service. She said she wished all government employees could spend time under this culture as it would also help them serve the public and make for better government.

Mr. Sheikh thanked staff for sharing their thoughts and experiences working at this agency and voiced appreciation for their touching words, saying the work culture is central to what we do as an agency.

Public Comment: *The following individuals commented on this item:*

- Christine Zimmerman, WSPA
- Manuel Cunha, NFL

17. PUBLIC COMMENT – *The following individuals commented:*

- Christine Zimmerman, WSPA
- Manuel Cunha, NFL

18. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/APCO COMMENTS – Mr. Sheikh thanked the Board and staff for once again making the Study Session a success and to all those who attended and presented.

19. GOVERNING BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – Chairman Mendes thanked the Board for staying on task and getting the work done. Dr. Pacheco-Werner verbalized her support of the District and the work that is produced in spite of what media comments have been mentioned. She said there are a lot of people out there who know all the hard work that is being done. Ms. Fugazi thanked Mr. Sheikh and the Board Members and staff for her time on the Board and what an amazing experience it has been. She said she was so impressed with what a phenomenal agency this is and what an honor and privilege it was to serve on this Board. Mr. Mendes thanked Ms. Fugazi for her great service she brought to the Board. Dr. Sherriffs also thanked Ms. Fugazi for her service, he thanked the District for the Study Session and all the positivity and education it brings. He said it highlighted many different aspects of the challenges before us and the strategies to consider to address those challenges.

ADJOURN

Chair Mendes adjourned the meeting at 12:52 p.m.