



AGRICULTURAL WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING

# DRAFT MINUTES

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**REGULAR MEETING**  
**MONDAY, JANUARY 5, 2026**  
**1:30 PM**

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(Paragraph numbers coincide with agenda item numbers)

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

A regular meeting of the Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water) Agricultural Water Advisory Committee (AWAC) (Committee) was called to order in the Valley Water Headquarters Building Boardroom at 5700 Almaden Expressway, San Jose, California, and by Zoom teleconference, at 1:30 p.m.

1.1 Roll Call.

Committee members in attendance were District 1 Erin Gil and Mitchell Mariani, District 2 James Provenzano, District 3 Robert Long Jr., District 4 Sheila Barry, District 6 Tim Chiala, Santa Clara County Farm Bureau Jan Garrod, District 5 and Vice Chairperson Trevor Garrod, and Loma Prieta Resource Conservative District and Chairperson presiding, Peter Van Dyke constituting a quorum of the Committee.

Committee member who was not in attendance in person was District 4 Brent Bonino.

Staff members in attendance were: Aaron Baker, Roseryn Bhudsabourg, Mark Bilski, Theresa Chinte, Enrique De Anda, Stephen Ferranti, Rachael Gibson, Vincent Gin, Joshua Golka, Walter Gonzalez, Andy Gschwind, Jason Gurdak, Wendy Ho, Cindy Kao, Candice Kwok-Smith, Marta Lugo, Ryan McCarter, Nicole Merritt, Carmen Narayanan, Kirsten Struve, Metra Ulloa, Bhavani Yerrapotu, and Beckie Zisser.

Board Representative in attendance were: Valley Water Vice Chairperson Richard P. Santos (District 3), and Valley Water Director John Varela (District 1).

Public in attendance was: Valley Water Director Rebecca Eisenberg (District 7).

**2. TIME OPEN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY ITEM NOT ON THE AGENDA:**

Chairperson Peter Van Dyke declared time open for public comment on any item not on the agenda. There was no one present who wished to speak.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

3.1. Approval of October 6, 2025, Agricultural Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes.

Recommendation: Approve the minutes.

The Committee considered the attached minutes of the October 6, 2025, Committee meeting.

Public Comments:

None.

It was moved by Vice Chairperson Trevor Garrod and seconded by James Provenzano and unanimously carried that the minutes be approved.

**4. REGULAR AGENDA:**

4.1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair.

Recommendation: Elect 2026 Chair and Vice Chair.

The Committee considered this Item without a staff presentation.

Nicole Merritt and Andy Gschwind were available to answer questions,

Public Comments:

None.

It was moved by Jan Garrod and seconded by Erin Gil and unanimously carried that Vice Chairperson Trevor Garrod would become the Chairperson.

It was moved by Mitchell Mariani and seconded by Peter Van Dyke and unanimously carried that Tim Chiala would become the Vice Chairperson.

4.2. Review and Approve 2025 Accomplishments Report for Presentation to the Board (Committee Chair).

Recommendation: A. Approve the 2025 Accomplishments Report for presentation to the Board;  
B. Provide comments to the Committee Chair to share with the Board as part of the Accomplishments Report presentation pertaining to the purpose, structure, and function of the Committee.

The Committee considered this Item without a staff presentation.

Nicole Merritt was available to answer questions.

Valley Water Vice Chairperson Santos congratulated and thanked the Committee, as well as the outgoing AWAC Chair and Vice Chair, for their work and Peter Van Dyke, the outgoing Chair, also thanked Valley Water and staff.

Public Comments:  
None.

It was moved by Erin Gil and seconded by Jan Garrod and unanimously carried that the following Recommendation was unanimously approved.

A. Approve the 2025 Accomplishments Report for presentation to the Board.

4.3. Review and Provide Comment to the Board on Staff's Preliminary Fiscal Year (FY) 2026-2027 Groundwater Production Charges.

Recommendation: Review staff's preliminary FY 2026-2027 Groundwater Production Charges and provide comment to the Board as appropriate.

Carmen Narayanan reviewed the information on this item, per the attached Committee Agenda Memo, and per the information contained in Attachment 1.

Carmen Narayanan, Aaron Baker, Cindy Kao, and Director Varela were available to answer questions.

The Committee discussed the following topics: discussed how the late spring rains may have contributed to the increase in FY 2025 agricultural water use in South County; provided feedback that South County agricultural land use is declining and the potential effect on projections; noted agricultural use is projected to remain flat and stable with data reviewed and addressed as it becomes available; confirmed how Municipal & Industrial and treated water rates are calculated; discussed how groundwater charge projections are established, including the Open Space Credit, and how the water retailer rates are correlated; discussed challenges associated with incorporating drought conditions into projections and noted drought reserve options are replenished during non-drought periods; and discussed the Metropolitan Water District's pending Colorado River agreement and the potential impact on the state's allocations during a drought market.

The Committee received and noted the information, provided feedback, and took no formal action.

4.4. Receive an Update on the Upper Llagas Flood Protection Project.

Recommendation: Receive project information on the Upper Llagas Flood Protection Project and the current construction status.

Stephen Ferranti reviewed the information on this item, per the attached Committee Agenda, and per the information contained in Attachment 1.

Handout 4.4-A, PowerPoint Drone Footage, Revised Slide 12 for Attachment 1, was distributed to the Committee and made available to the public.

Stephen Ferranti and Valley Water Vice Chairperson Santos were available to answer questions.

The Committee discussed the following topics: confirmed the location of the box culverts on West Little Llagas Creek and how they assist with flood protection during high and low flow conditions; confirmed process of flood protection work near Watsonville and Monterey Road; discussed invasive species removal process of Arundo; confirmed native plants and shrubs will be used with an associated maintenance budget, and staff may redistribute excess plants if needed; expressed support for staff's work on this project; discussed the high groundwater table at Lake Silveira as beneficial for wetland conditions; discussed project improvements for flood protection upstream north of Morgan Hill to Monterey Road and downstream through San Martin and Gilroy; noted the Capacity Restoration Project may address overgrowth in portions of the channel and the potential of Soap Lake as a resource; noted flood protection work is targeted for completion by October 2026 and construction phase 2b is targeted for completion by March 2027; and noted Valley Water Vice Chairperson Santos and Director Varela are part of the Pajaro River Watershed Flood Protection Authority.

Public Comments:  
None.

The Committee received and noted the information, provided feedback, and took no formal action.

4.5. Review and Discuss Resolution 17-75 Regarding the Agricultural Water Advisory Committee Membership and Provide the Feedback or Recommendations to the Board.

Recommendation: Review and discuss Resolution 17-75 (PROVIDING FOR AND DEFINING THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES TO THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY WATER DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND REPEALING RESOLUTION 15-28) as to its provisions regarding the membership of the Agricultural Water Advisory Committee (AWAC) and provide feedback or recommendations to the Board.

The Committee considered this Item without a staff presentation.

Nicole Merritt, Valley Water Vice Chairperson Santos, Andy Gschwind, Candice Kwok-Smith, and Vincent Gin were available to answer questions.

Public Comments:  
None.

The Committee discussed the following topics: confirmed the six current vacancies and expressed interest in receiving additional details on Committee vacancies; discussed potential for Committee members to represent the Committee at large rather than by District; confirmed the Valley Water Board of Directors may consider revising Committee member eligibility requirements; discussed the possibility of a Committee member affiliated with a land trust; noted challenges facing the agricultural community due to urbanization; and expressed support for Committee members to remain actively engaged in agriculture and to conduct outreach within their respective areas to recruit potential new members.

Public Comments:  
None.

The Committee discussed and noted the information, provided feedback, and took no formal action.

- 4.6. Review and Approve the Proposed 2026 Agricultural Water Advisory Committee (AWAC) Work Plan, the Outcomes of Board Action of Committee Requests, the Committee's Next Meeting Agenda; and Recommend the Proposed 2026 AWAC Work Plan to the Board.

Recommendation: Review and approve the Committee work plan to guide the committee's discussions regarding policy alternatives and implications for Board deliberation; and recommend the proposed 2026 AWAC Work Plan to the Board.

The Committee considered this item without a staff presentation.

Nicole Merritt, Darin Taylor, Jason Gurdak, Andy Gschwind, and Kirsten Struve, Aaron Baker, Mark Bilski, Darin Taylor, and Valley Water Vice Chairperson Santos and Director Varela were available to answer questions.

Public Comments:  
None.

The Committee discussed the following topics: expressed support for staff continuing to work with the AWAC Chair on preparing agendas; noted staff is working to streamline the well-permitting process and may report updates as they become available, noted Board Representatives are

continuing to support the agricultural community through participation on various meeting bodies; and provided feedback on the Work Plan Items.

The Committee expressed the following details regarding the AWAC Work Plan:

*Valley Water's South County Managed Aquifer Recharge Activities:*

The Committee noted if Flood-MAR is tabled, how efforts would continue and whether opportunities still exist; discussed potential for retention ponds within developments to function as percolation ponds and whether Valley Water could assist; and requested discussion of the pros/cons of direct injection with recycled water within the county.

*One Water Plan Upper Pajaro Watershed Plan Priority Actions:*

The Committee discussed the potential of future increases in recycled water use for recharge and other purposes to help offset the potable drinking water demands.

*Valley Water's Water Supply Master Plan Monitoring and Assessment Program:*

The Committee expressed interest in increased focus on developing local water sources, particularly given current rainfall conditions.

Continue on Work Plan:

*Climate Change and the Benefits of Ecosystems on Agriculture in Santa Clara County/County of Santa Clara's Agricultural Outreach and Awareness Campaign:* The Committee expressed support for having the two above items separated on the Work Plan and updates to be received in the springtime.

*Valley Water Activities of the Unhoused and Information on How Enforcement of Violations of Companies are Handled Within the County:*

The Committee expressed support for receiving occasional updates on this item.

Add to Work Plan:

*Drought Preparedness Update:*

The Committee expressed support for adding this item to the Work Plan; evaluating agriculture's role; identify opportunities for farmer collaboration with Valley Water; and discuss the potential of forming a subcommittee.

Removed from Work Plan:

*Annual Report Regarding the Flood Control Benefit Assessments for Fiscal Year* – confirmed there are no plans for another benefit assessment at this time.

*Impact to Agricultural Groundwater Production Charge Projection From the Suspension of the Pacheco Reservoir Expansion Project.* – noted as completed at this time.

It was moved by Peter Van Dyke and seconded by Erin Gil and unanimously approved to recommend the proposed 2026 AWAC Work Plan to the Board as amended to incorporate the Committee's feedback.

**5. INFORMATION ITEM:**

5.1. Standing Items Report.

Recommendation: This item allows the Agricultural Water Advisory Committee to receive verbal or written updates and discuss the Board's Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Work Plan Strategies. These items are generally informational; however, the Committee may request additional information and/or provide collective input to the assigned Board Committee.

The Committee considered this item without a staff presentation.

Public Comments:  
None.

Nicole Merritt was available to answer questions.

The Committee received the information, took no formal action, noted the attached Board Work Plan standing items report.

**6. CLERK REVIEW AND CLARIFICATION OF COMMITTEE REQUESTS:**

*This is an opportunity for the Clerk to review and obtain clarification on any formally moved, seconded, and approved requests and recommendations made by the Committee during the meeting.*

Nicole Merritt confirmed Brent Bonino was not present at the meeting; no requests from the public to speak; Committee approved to elect Trevor Garrod as Chairperson and Tim Chiala as Vice Chairperson under Item 4.1; approved 2025 Annual Accomplishments Report for presentation to the Board under Item 4.2; reviewed and provided feedback on the preliminary FY 2026-2027 Groundwater Production Charges under Item 4.3; received and noted Upper Llagas Flood Protection Project Update under Item 4.4; discussed the Resolution 17-75 and noted support for Committee members remaining actively engaged in agriculture and conducting member outreach under Item 4.5; reviewed, provided feedback and approved the 2026 AWAC Work Plan to Recommend to the Board as amended under Item 4.6.

**7. REPORTS:**

7.1. Government Affairs Report  
Beckie Zisser provided a federal verbal update,

Joshua Golka provided a state verbal update and noted staff are monitoring Proposition 1 and Proposition 4 for project funding.

Roseryn Bhudsabourg provided a verbal update on local government relations and noted Valley Water has not taken a position on the Santa

Clara County's rural zoning amendments.

7.2. Director's Report

Valley Water Vice Chairperson Santos acknowledged challenges related to water rates, funding, sea level rise, and the unhoused population, and expressed support for continued outreach related to committee members recruitment and meeting with the elected officials.

Valley Water Director Varela highlighted the water career education pathway program created by Valley Water to support statewide water education and water management workforce development.

7.3. Manager's Report

Aaron Baker thanked the Committee and expressed support for the Committee's enthusiasm and encouraged continued progress on the Work Plan.

7.4. Committee Member Report

Peter Van Dyke, as outgoing Chairperson, thanked the Committee and staff for their assistance.

7.5. Information Link:

Links noted on agenda.

**8. ADJOURN:**

8.1. Adjourn. The Next Regular Meeting is Scheduled at 1:30 p.m. on April 6, 2026.

Chairperson Trevor Garrod adjourned the meeting at 3:32 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled to occur at 1:30 p.m. on April 6, 2026.

Date approved:

Nicole Merritt  
Deputy Clerk  
(Committee Meetings)