



Santa Clara Valley Water District

File No.: 20-0219

Agenda Date: 4/28/2020

Item No.: 7.1.

BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT:

Update on Exploratory Efforts to Update and Enhance the Safe, Clean Water Program for Future Funding Measure.

RECOMMENDATION:

- A. Receive information on potential new program development, specifically input received from the Capital Improvement Program Committee, and potential capital projects; and
- B. Receive information on program development, including public education, engagement efforts, and polling information.

SUMMARY:

Overwhelmingly approved by voters in November 2012, the Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection (Safe, Clean Water) Program is a 15-year parcel tax and provides a strategy to support uninterrupted water resources services in Santa Clara County. The program was developed through community collaboration and input from residents and stakeholders that identified five top community priorities:

Priority A: Ensure a Safe, Reliable Water Supply

Priority B: Reduce Toxins, Hazards, and Contaminants from our Waterways

Priority C: Protect our Water Supply from Earthquakes and Natural Disasters

Priority D: Restore Wildlife Habitat and Provide for Open Space

Priority E: Provide Flood Protection to Homes, Business, Schools and Highways

The Safe, Clean Water Program, funds approximately one-third of the existing watershed and stewardship budgeted programs. Valley Water is faced with challenges due to: climate change; population/economic growth and future uncertainties with imported water supplies; as well as regulatory delays in permitting; aging infrastructure; ongoing operations, maintenance, and environmental mitigation costs; and securing funding for enhanced level of community-preferred projects.

The November 2020 presidential election may provide an opportunity for the Board to explore placing a measure for voters to consider whether to update and extend the existing Safe, Clean Water Program, which currently sunsets on June 30, 2028.

The potential pursuit of updating the Safe, Clean Water Program through a ballot measure may provide the opportunity to enhance the Safe, Clean Water Program's priorities to address several existing and new challenges, including the opportunity to develop more multi-benefit projects that provide enhanced environmental benefits; provide needed funding for several large new and existing infrastructure and flood protection projects, provide funding for operations and maintenance of projects, support addressing homeless encampments, and impacted water quality along our creeks and waterways, and better adapt to and meet the growing challenges that stem from climate change and extreme weather patterns, such as severe drought, flooding, and wildfires.

Potential Program Development Update

Staff has begun the process to identify Safe, Clean Water Program and other Valley Water needs and opportunities such as including current projects that could be enhanced or benefit from additional funding, along with potential new projects that could benefit the community.

Brainstorm Workshops

As part of the preliminary program development process, staff held internal brainstorming workshops over two full days on January 28-29 with project staff to gather direct input on the current program priorities to evaluate each of the existing 39 projects. The workshop process entailed discussing and documenting any changes, challenges and new opportunities for improvement.

Key take away themes considered during these discussions include exploring the following strategies further:

- addressing increasing operations and maintenance and mitigation needs
- providing improved infrastructure reliability
- integrating climate change adaptation strategies within various projects
- streamlining and improving grants program
- providing for continued public safety near creeks due to increasing homeless encampments
- public health and public safety

To address the need for enhanced public health and public safety for the community, a new potential Safe, Clean Water priority is being proposed. This priority (tentatively Priority F) may include both existing (moved from current Safe, Clean Water priorities) and new components. Below is a summary of the proposed priority that is being developed for further consideration:

Potential Priority F: Support Public Health and Public Safety for our Community

- Project F1: Vegetation Control and Sediment Removal for Capacity
 - (move the current E1 to this new F1)
- Project F2: Emergency Response Planning
 - (move the current E2 to this new F2)
- Project F3: Flood Risk Reduction Studies
 - (move the current E3 to this new F3)
- Project F4: Vegetation Management for Access and Fire Safety
 - (move the current E1.4 to this new F4 and expand)

- Project F5: Encampment Cleanups for Public Health and Safety
 - (move the current B4 to this new F5 and add in partnerships with police and park rangers)
- Project F6: Remove Graffiti and Litter
 - (move the current B6)
- Project F7: Emergency Response Upgrades
 - (move the current C2 to this F8)
- Project F8: Sustainable Solutions for Continued Public Safety
 - (NEW - this potential project would help identify future operations and maintenance and capital work in coordination with O&M, asset management, and watershed planning.)

In addition, staff has also begun initial staff analysis on which potential capital projects might be good candidates for further exploration under the Safe, Clean Water Program exploratory renewal effort.

Potential Future Capital Projects

On March 9, 2020, staff presented to the CIP Committee the following list of potential CIP candidate projects to gather input on the proposed CIP projects under the Safe, Clean Water Program. Below is the full list of projects under each priority area that was shared and presented for initial input.

Priority A: Ensure a Safe, Reliable Water Supply

- Pipeline Reliability Project - Continue and Enhance
 - *NEW* 10-Year Pipeline Program
- *NEW* Pacheco Reservoir Expansion
- *NEW* Almaden Valley Pipeline Replacement

Priority B: Reduce Toxins, Hazards, and Contaminates from our Waterways

- Impaired Water Bodies Improvement - Continue and Enhance

Priority C: Protect our Water Supply from Earthquakes and Natural Disasters

- Anderson Dam Seismic Retrofit - Continue and Enhance
- *NEW* Dam Safety Seismic Retrofit Projects

Priority D: Restore Wildlife Habitat and Provide for Open Space

- Fish Habitat and Passage Improvements
 - Almaden Creek-Lake Separation - Continue and Enhance
- Creek Restoration and Stabilization
 - Hale Creek - Continue and Enhance
- South Bay Salt Ponds Restoration Partnership - Continue
- *NEW* Calabazas - San Tomas Aquino Creek Realignment

Priority E: Provide Flood Protection to Homes, Business, Schools and Highways

- Upper Penitencia Creek Flood Project - Additional funding
- San Francisquito Creek Flood Protection - Additional funding

- Upper Llagas Creek Flood Protection - Additional funding
- San Francisco Bay Shoreline Protection - Additional funding
- Upper Guadalupe River Flood Protection - Additional funding
- Sunnyvale East and Sunnyvale West Channels Flood Protection - Continue
- Coyote Creek Flood Protection - Additional funding
- *NEW* Palo Alto Flood Basin Tide Gate Improvements
- *NEW* Ross Creek Flood Protection
- *NEW* Upper Berryessa (680 to Old Piedmont + bridges)

Public Engagement Efforts and Public Opinion Results Update

Since the last update to the Board on January 28, 2020, staff has launched an extensive effort to gather public input as part of a public participation and engagement efforts.

Public Opinion Polling

Staff has engaged FM3 Research, who conducted a second poll between February 5-13, 2020. The poll included a sample size of 839 county voters, with a margin error of +/-3.5%. After further refinements to the proposed draft ballot language, the poll results showed two thirds support initially, with expanded support after a plain language explanation.

Staff will continue to further refine the draft ballot language and plans to conduct additional polls and a focus group later this spring to gather additional information on which priorities the community would like Valley Water to focus most on and will report this information gathering back to the Board in the coming months.

Community Input Surveys

Staff released the Safe, Clean Water Program Community Input Survey in early February in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese, both electronically and in paper form to gather direct input into the development of a potential renewed program. In addition, a student version targeted to college student has also been released.

Staff has begun efforts to actively distribute the Community Input Survey through various channels, which include a wide variety of social media outlets, sending to a wide email-distribution lists across External Affairs, which includes past/ current Safe, Clean Water Program Grantees, Creek Stewardship Volunteers, Water Ambassadors, Youth Commissioners, Water Commissioners, community leaders, and members of the Board Advisory Committees, among others.

Surveys have also been made available to include in Valley Water's tour programs, as well as our Community Booth/ Water Truck Events. Furthermore, a contractor has been secured to assist with door-to-door interviews and telephone banking to gather at least 10,958 completed surveys, with an overall goal of reaching approximately 15,000 touches through all various outreach strategies.

Digital and Social Media

As part of the public communication and outreach efforts to encourage the broader community to provide their input into program development, staff has developed a suite of digital and social media

assets and strategies to inform the public, stakeholders and employees to encourage broad public participation, with a call to action to complete the Community Input Survey. The tools that have been developed include:

Survey Input Videos

- Multi-cultural/ bi-lingual 30-second and 15-second videos
- Multi-lingual Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese 15-second videos
- Text captioned 6-second infographic videos

Survey Input Social Media Posts/ Ads

- Social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and NextDoor
- Digital Ads in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese languages
- Valley Water's Newsletter, with a blog under development for March for another push.

Program Microsite

- Staff also launched a new microsite at www.safecleanwater.org as a landing page to get basic information, resources and fill out the Community Input survey in multiple languages.

Community and Stakeholder Outreach

To date, presentations to several various Board Advisory Committees and Board Committees, Commissions and other key stakeholder groups have been made or are scheduled, which include, but are not limited to:

- Agricultural Water Advisory Committee - January 6
- Water Commission - January 22
- Environmental Water Resources Committee - January 27
- Safe Clean Water Program IMC - February 12
- Youth Commission - February 19
- CIP Committee - March 9
- Water Ambassadors - March 18
- Water Retailers Meeting - March 18
- Blue Ribbon Stakeholder's Forum - Scheduled for April 9

Staff is finalizing a Speaker's Bureau Community Presentation to conduct targeted outreach to a comprehensive list of community-based organizations and will be scheduling these community presentations between March-June.

In addition to the Blue Ribbon Forum in April to solicit direct stakeholder feedback, staff is organizing up to two (2) virtual town hall meetings scheduled tentatively for late April/ early May to gather broader public input on the draft program priorities and projects.

Employee Outreach

Staff has developed tailored strategies to inform and engage Valley Water employees. To date, these

efforts include the following:

- Distribution of CEO All-User Email in January
- Management Leadership Team (MLT) presentation to staff -- February 12
- Employee Brown Bags scheduled for March and April, as well as Unit Staff meetings
- Employee material distribution such as poster boards, display materials, tent cards, resource guides, and information on Aqua.gov pages
- Employee Community Input Survey Drive
- All-Employee Meeting information - Scheduled May 21

NEXT STEPS

Staff will continue its exploration into the feasibility of this effort, including how to enhance and update the Safe Clean Water Program and develop a draft Community-Preferred Program Plan based on broad community and stakeholder input. Program development will continue occurring on two fronts: internally with the establishment of an agency-wide internal Steering Committee with functional task groups, project team meetings, and brown bag sessions, and externally through stakeholder engagement, including the Blue Ribbon Forum, Speaker's Bureau, virtual town halls, and the gathering of Community Input Survey data, which will be compiled, analyzed and presented back to the Board.

These efforts, along with creating financial analysis models to further refine program funding estimates, will be carried out between March and May 2020; after which a draft community-preferred program plan will be presented with the Board for its consideration to ultimately make a decision on whether or not to place a measure on the November 2020 ballot.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with this item.

CEQA:

The recommended action does not constitute a project under CEQA because it does not have the potential for resulting in direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: PowerPoint

Attachment 2: FM3 Research Memo

UNCLASSIFIED MANAGER:

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