Minutes of the Regular Meeting and Annual Public Budget Hearing of the South Indian River Water Control District Held on August 15, 2024

The regular meeting and annual public budget hearing of the South Indian River Water Control District was held on August 15, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. at the District Work Center, 15600 Jupiter Farms Road, Jupiter, Florida, and via Zoom video conferencing. Present in person were Supervisors Michael Howard, John Jones, John Meyer and Susan Kennedy. Also present were Chad Kennedy, Executive Director; Dustin Fazio, Supervisor of Operations; Charles Haas, treasurer; Seth Behn, attorney; Donna DeNinno, public information; and Jane Woodard, secretary. Ten landowners were present in person. Ms. Karen Brandon, engineer, and three landowners were present via Zoom video conferencing.

Mr. Howard called the meeting to order and the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag was given. He opened the meeting for the annual public budget hearing.

Mr. Haas presented the proposed 2024-25 budget and a slide presentation explaining the special assessment process. South Indian River Water Control District has a centralized operations and maintenance budget, referred to as the internal service fund. Other funds are geographically located in the District, such as east side water, west side water, etc., as well as the Jupiter Commerce Park and Egret Landing areas. There is a $195,000 increase overall in this year's budget. Jupiter Farms will have an increase in acreage assessments of $15 and a decrease in parcel assessments of $12. Palm Beach Country Estates will have an increase in maintenance acreage assessments of $5 and an increase in debt parcel assessments of $32. Egret Landing and Jupiter Commerce Park will have an increase in maintenance acreage assessments of $5. The debt service funds will have minor changes in assessments. Mr. Haas further explained that water control assessments are on an acreage basis and road maintenance assessments are on a per parcel basis. He also noted that Palm Beach Country Estates has a bond issue for a water distribution system. The rate being charged for that has been subsidized by some surplus funds which are running out, so this assessment is increasing this year. Mr. Haas presented slides showing the actual numbers, resulting in an increase of approximately $55,000 to Palm Beach Country Estates mainly for the bond, and an increase of approximately $55,000 to Jupiter Farms mainly for water control. Egret Landing and Jupiter Park of Commerce have very small parcels and so there is little change in those assessments. Mr. Haas also presented a table showing the net change percentages and the percentage rates of increase and decrease. He noted there are a number of landowner-initiated projects and those assessments only apply to the landowners who requested each project. The total proposed budget for 2024-25 is $5,701,685.

Mr. Haas asked for landowner questions or comments. Ms. Stephanie Duncan asked for clarification of the water distribution bond assessment, noting that a large increase in the assessment was expected in 2027 when the credits would run out. She asked if the bond could have been paid off sooner if the credits had not been used. Mr. Haas stated there was not an option to prepay the bond. The bond was refinanced in 2015 to take advantage of low interest rates. That resulted in a savings of over $1,000,000. Ms. Duncan asked what the assessment will be in the next few years, but Mr. Haas did not have that information at this time. He did note that the assessment will not go up more than $30-40 per year.
Ms. Duncan noted that landowners are commenting that Palm Beach Country Estates is paying more for

water than Jupiter Farms. She wanted the landowners to understand this was because of the water distribution system that Jupiter Farms does not have. Mr. Haas confirmed that the difference in assessments is for the water distribution system, not water control, and that system was a project voted for by the landowners in Palm Beach Country Estates.

Mr. Arie Raz asked the Board to consider a cost-of-living adjustment for the employees, citing the increase in the cost of home insurance.

Mr. Matt Gitkin complimented Mr. Haas on his budget presentation.

There were no other questions or comments from the landowners and Mr. Howard adjourned the public hearing.

Mr. Howard then opened the monthly Board meeting.

Mr. Meyer made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Mr. Jones seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Mr. Howard opened the floor to landowner discussion. Mr. Matt Gitkin complimented Mr. Kennedy and Ms. Brandon for their Loxahatchee River Preservation Initiative presentation regarding the Busch Wildlife Sanctuary. Mr. Arie Raz thanked the Board for hiring Mr. Kennedy, which has resulted in a huge difference in the way things are working in the District.

At this time, Mr. Powell presented Ms. Holly Rigsby, office administrator, with flowers and a Certificate of Appreciation plaque for her hard work and dedication. Ms. Rigsby joined the office staff as a part-time employee in 2008.

Ms. DeNinno presented the public information report. The newsletter was sent out regarding the election of supervisors and the annual meeting. She worked with Mr. Haas on the budget presentation. Plans are being made for this year's Family Day. She asked the Board to let her know if there are any issues with dates in February.

Mr. Haas presented the treasurer's report. He recommended Board approval of the proposed 2024-25 budget and the resolution of election and use of the uniform method of collection. He read the proposed Resolution as prepared by Mr. Behn. **Ms. Kennedy made a motion to approve the proposed 2024-25 budget and also to approve the Resolution regarding the uniform method of collection. Mr. Jones seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.**

Mr. Haas reported on negotiations with Wireless Propco regarding the purchase of the lease of Verizon's cell tower. They are now ready to close the transaction. Verizon's lease has four or five years left. Propco has proposed they take over the lease and negotiate with Verizon to extend the lease. They also asked that South Indian River Water Control District give them 250 square feet of additional easement and 50% of any additional revenue from any future lease of the additional space. In consideration, they will pay South Indian River Water Control District $766,521. Mr. Behn presented a Resolution for Board approval which reflected these terms, noting the easement will be given after the exact location is determined. **Ms. Kennedy made a motion to adopt the Resolution approving the transaction with Wireless Propco. Mr. Meyer seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.**

Mr. Meyer asked if the budget reflects this transaction. Mr. Haas stated the transaction will close next week, the funds will be put in the bank, and the Board will decide what to do with the funds at a later date.

Mr. Kennedy presented the Executive Director's report. He stated many of the landowners have questions regarding easements. He has told them that all of Jupiter Farms will be affected as every canal will be surveyed. Landowners can then look at their parcel and know where the easements are located for purposes of planting, etc. This is first step in getting the District's system ready to handle storms and have an inventory of what structures failed or performed. Funding will be sought from the Loxahatchee River group. The mapping is expected to cost the District $150,000 over three years. Mr. Howard also commented on how much this project will help the District. Mr. Kennedy stated his priority is to get funding for projects. He will also be looking for parallel funding.

Mr. Kennedy discussed the vegetation management contract. Vegetation has been slowing down the flow in the canals. He put together a vendor package and has received several sealed bids. He noted the cost may go up because it will take an initial treatment to get the vegetation under control in the canals. Mr. Kennedy will have a recommendation for a vendor to present to the Board at the next meeting.

Mr. Fazio presented the Supervisor of Operations' report. He has been swapping out equipment and has sold six items. There are still two wing mowers to sell. Mr. Fazio then presented photos of holes in the roads where landowners have left items for the Solid Waste Authority pickup and road washouts have occurred. Fourteen roads in Palm Beach Country Estates had to be repaired, prompting an inquiry with Solid Waste Authority. Landowners will again be advised. Lastly, Mr. Fazio reported that the Rocky Pines overlay is still scheduled for the end of September.

Ms. Brandon presented the engineer's report. Seven road paving petitions have been verified, the preliminary cost estimates have been completed, and the referendums have been drafted. Mr. Haas is working on the financing. The package will be sent to Mr. Kennedy for review. The no-pave petition in Palm Beach Country Estates has been verified. It does not have to go out for a referendum since 50% of the landowners were on the petition. Ms. Brandon sent a memo to Mr. Kennedy with her recommendation to approve the petition so it can be filed. Mr. Kennedy noted that, conceptually, everything seems to be in order. If approved, those parcels will not be eligible for paving for five years. A formal referendum will be presented at the next meeting.

Ms. Brandon reported that the Canal C documents have been executed by Rio-Bak and returned to the District for execution. The deadline for a grant, which was extended until June or December 2025, will be met.

Ms. Brandon reported on the asphalt paving overlay. The contractor completed the work, and an inspection was conducted by Mr. Fazio and staff. A follow-up inspection will be scheduled because some issues were found.

The hydraulic modeling is progressing, working toward completion in September.

Regarding the Busch Wildlife Sanctuary, their engineer submitted calculations and a sketch from the wetlands to the east into the Rocky Pines swale. However, the engineer did not submit calculations to show what the discharge was and showed something on the west side of the property where there was overflow into the road swale. Ms. Brandon sent them an email with questions and the engineer has stated he will resubmit his plans this week. The Board discussed the problem and possible solutions. They suggested that if a berm is required, water would not be coming off the road. Mr. Fazio and Ms. Brandon noted there is a problem of possibly draining the entire wetlands, and a berm could force an overflow to the west. They are holding too much water in the wetlands and the on-site system doesn't allow gravity flow. Mr. Gitkin (landowner) noted that every time there is communication from South Florida Water Management District or South Indian River Water Control District, it costs them money to have a specialist on hand to answer questions. He also noted there is another issue of land to the south that is being developed, and property across from Rocky Pines that is in negotiations to be sold. There is an urgency in getting this resolved. Ms. Kennedy wants the staff to look at this problem and address the water that is collecting and flowing north. Mr. Meyer believes they did not follow the permit. After further discussion, Mr. Howard stated the staff has been given all the necessary information and directions to look into it. Ms. Brandon stated that at the last site meeting, they agreed to come up with a solution, but she has not heard from them in three weeks.

Ms. Brandon then presented an update on the District's water quality. SW-10 had a significant hit on E.Coli this past month, which is believed to be related to the dog boarding location. Mr. Kennedy is looking into fencing the area. Mr. Meyer asked if there is an acceptable standard for sucralose. Ms. Brandon stated there has been no recent research, but she will look into that before the next meeting.

Mr. Behn presented the attorney's report. He stated the ballots for the annual landowners meeting have been sent out. He has also discussed the election with the Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections. Mr. Capko will be attending the annual meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, Mr. Meyer made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.

ADJOURNED.