



WEST BASIN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
17140 S. Avalon Blvd., Suite 210
Carson, CA 90746

AGENDA NO. 20

SEPTEMBER 8, 2010 – Communications
Gray (Chair), Kwan
SEPTEMBER 27, 2010 – Board Meeting
Prepared by: Alexis Tate
Submitted by: Ron Wildermuth
Approved by: Rich Nagel

ACTION CALENDAR

WEST BASIN WATER EDUCATION CENTER PART-TIME/INTERN TOUR GUIDE

SUMMARY:

One of the primary goals of the new West Basin Water Education Center (Education Center) is to inform the public about Southern California's water issues, including the need for ocean-water desalination, future challenges, and the importance of a diversified water portfolio. For ocean-water desalination, this includes its benefits and how West Basin Municipal Water District (West Basin) will utilize the right technology to desalinate the ocean in an environmentally responsible manner.

In addition to the general public, researchers, political leaders, water agencies, engineers and consultants from around the world will want to visit the Education Center to learn from West Basin's experience. Through touring the facility and Education Center, guests will learn how the advanced treatment process creates drinking water from salt water and will better understand the technology behind ocean-water desalination. The Education Center will also be a prime vehicle for informing Southern Californians about water and the benefits of the Water Reliability 2020 program.

Staff has been diligently working to develop an informative, creative, and compelling new Education Center. The new facility, expected to open in October/November 2010, will have unique interactive exhibits that explain the importance of water, Southern California water history, future water supply options, and the ocean-water desalination process. Currently, the Education Center will not be staffed, except for VIP escorted visits, and there is no funding identified to hire tour guides to open the Education Center to the public. Staff believes that once the new facility opens, the demand for public tours will increase substantially during the first year of operation of the desalination facility.

Research has been conducted by staff to develop the best strategy for accommodating public tours of the Education Center and desalination facility. Staff met with SEA Lab to discuss the use of Los Angeles Conservation Corps members as tour guides. Staff does not believe utilizing SEA Lab employees is the best branding choice for the new facility due to the limitations on hours of availability, the maturity and experience levels of Corps members, and the members' lack of qualifications to answer questions about in-depth water issues. However, staff believes that there is a natural partnership and synergy between the tours of the Education Center and existing SEA Lab tours to leverage group/public tours for both agencies.

To fully utilize West Basin's new Education Center and the investment made to educate the public, staff recommends beginning with a part-time tour guide/intern position for public tours. Initial planning will be for 24 hours per week, four hours per day (Tuesdays through Fridays), and eight hours on Saturdays. The funding for this position will be used from the West Basin's existing intern

budget. The position will pay \$16 per hour, for a total investment of approximately \$1,536 per month and \$18,432 annually. Staff will seek existing retired educators or water industry experts to fill this position.

The position will be re-evaluated during the Fiscal Year 2011-12 Budget process.

STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:

Goal 1: Water Reliability – West Basin is committed to innovative planning and investments to provide water supply reliability and drought protection.

Goal 3: Customer Service – West Basin is committed to providing value by understanding and meeting the needs of our customers and the communities we serve.

Goal 5: Environment – West Basin is committed to sustainable and environmentally-friendly business practices.

FISCAL IMPACTS:

Funds for internships are included in the Fiscal Year 2010-11 Finance Budget.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE:

Not applicable.

COMMITTEE STATUS:

This item was reviewed by the Communications Committee on September 8, 2010 and recommended for approval at the September 27, 2010 Board meeting.

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

That the Board authorizes the General Manager to hire a part-time/intern tour guide through the intern program.

LIST OF EXHIBITS:

None.