



Friday, January 20, 2023 at 9:00 AM
Valley Sanitary District Board Room
45500 Van Buren Street, Indio, CA 92201

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SPECIAL SESSION
AGENDA**

Valley Sanitary District is open to the public and board meetings will be conducted in person.

To address the Board of Directors during public comment, please email the Clerk of the Board at hgould@valley-sanitary.org.

The Clerk of the Board will facilitate to the extent possible any email requests to provide oral testimony that are sent during the live meeting. Members of the public may provide Oral testimony in person and are limited to three minutes each. To address the Board in person please complete speaker request card located at in the Board Room and give it to the Clerk of the Board.

If you are unable to provide comments during the meeting, written public comments on agenda or non-agenda items may be submitted by email to the Clerk of the Board at hgould@valley-sanitary.org. Written comments must be received by the Clerk of the Board no later than 11:00 a.m. on the day of the meeting.

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Please notify the Clerk of the Board in advance of the meeting if you wish to make Public Comment or speak on a Non-Hearing item.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR

Consent calendar items are expected to be routine and noncontroversial, to be acted upon by the Board of Directors at one time, without discussion. If any Board member requests that an item be removed from the consent calendar, it will be removed so that it may be acted upon separately.

6. NON-HEARING ITEMS

6.1 [Strategic Plan Workshop](#)

Recommendation: Approve

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Please notify the Clerk of the Board in advance of the meeting if you wish to speak on a Closed Session item.

8. CONVENE IN CLOSED SESSION

8.1 Public Employment Recruitment Pursuant to Government Code Section 54957 Title: General Manager

9. CONVENE IN OPEN SESSION

Report out in Closed Session items.

10. ADJOURNMENT

*POSTED January 17, 2023
Holly Gould, Clerk of the Board
Valley Sanitary District*

PUBLIC NOTICE

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, access to the Board Room and Public Restrooms has been made. If you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact Valley Sanitary District (760) 235-5400. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the District to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA TITLE II). All public records related to open session items contained on this Agenda are available upon request at the Administrative Office of Valley Sanitary District located at 45-500 Van Buren Street, Indio, CA 92201. Copies of public records are subject to fees and charges for reproduction.



Valley Sanitary District

DATE: January 20, 2023
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Beverli A. Marshall, General Manager
SUBJECT: Strategic Plan Workshop

Suggested Action

Approve

Strategic Plan Compliance

GOAL 6: Improve Planning, Administration and Governance

Fiscal Impact

The fiscal impact depends upon the changes that the Board chooses to make to the Plan, if any.

Environmental Review

This item does not qualify as a project for the purposes of CEQA.

Background

In November 2019, with the assistance of Martin Rauch from Rauch Communication Consultants, Inc., the Board of Directors hosted two workshops and had several discussions regarding the Strategic Plan (Plan). At its March 10, 2020, meeting, the Board adopted the Strategic Plan, which established the District's mission, vision, and values as well as set long-term goals and short-term objectives. These priorities and goals provided direction for the Fiscal Year 2020/21 budget process.

As part of the budget process each year, the Board reviews the Plan and provides direction regarding the goals and objectives and potential impacts on the annual budget. The Board has made no changes to the Plan since it was adopted.

Recognizing that needs and circumstances change over time, and with the onboarding of a new director, the Board has determined that it is appropriate to review the Plan and update it accordingly.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board of Directors discuss the 2020 Strategic Plan and make changes as needed.

Attachments

[Strategic Plan 2020.pdf](#)

[ValleySanitaryDistrict_BoardWorkshop_Report2021.pdf](#)



March 2020

2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Prepared by: Rauch Communication Consultants Inc.



VSD

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mike L. Duran, President
Scott A. Sear, Vice President
Debra A. Canero, Secretary
Dennis M. Coleman, Director
William R. Teague, Director

GENERAL MANAGER

Beverli A. Marshall



Valley Sanitary District 2020 Strategic Plan

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Expectations

The first question asked in the first workshop was for each of the participants to share their initial expectations for the workshop by considering their own goals for the workshop, and what they hoped the outcome would be. The expectations are organized into topic headings below.

Board

- Determine how we can best work together as a board to benefit stakeholders.

Facilities

- Continue to maintain facilities that are conducive to the public.

Alignment

- Set short- and long-range goals in alignment and foresee issues so we can align our planning and avoid rate shocks.
- Direction for board and staff goals, mission statement – all understanding and moving in the same direction.
- Hear board in one voice – unify the Board.
- Form a better idea of the direction we should go that will best benefit the community.
- Identify a clear path forward that we all agree on.

Practical Roadmap

- Roadmap: identify goals for operations, prioritizing capital projects, and financing to pay for it.

Image and Branding

- Establish a strong image for the district and reflect that in all we do.

Rating the District Today (from Workshop #1)

Before considering where the District wants to go in the future, it is important to understand where it is today. In this exercise, each participant in the workshop was asked to rate various aspects of the District based on its current performance. Each participant selected aspects of the District to rate and graded them on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being excellent). The average scores, along with the total number of votes in each category, are included to the left of each category.

BELOW ARE THE CATEGORIES AND RATINGS PROVIDED BY THE PARTICIPANTS	
Avg. 8.4 9, 9, 9, 9, 9, 8, 8, 8, 7 9 votes	Staffing. Always working together, eager to learn and take the initiative. This is a family style organization and people love to come to work here. The District has good leadership and provides the tools staff needs. Overall it is a great staff, both the older staff and new staff. Regarding challenges, the District is short in staffing in a few areas, like lab operations, electricians, and maintenance. The District hasn't planned well for succession and increasing workloads from regulations. Some staff are over-taxed.
Avg. 7.8 9, 8, 8, 6 4 votes	Board. Good Board. New directors are working hard, getting up to-speed and contributing. Board is committed to staff and supports staff. Both experienced and new directors are enthusiastic
Avg. 7.7 9, 9, 5 3 votes	Facilities. We are proactive in facilities maintenance. Management, CIP planning, and reporting are all good or excellent. We have good equipment and the field staff represents the District well. Emergency preparedness is lacking; we need more robust emergency preparedness and training.
Avg. 7.5 9, 8, 8, 7.5, 5 5 votes	Finance. Finances are strong in near term and there are plans to address the long-term. The District has strong reserves, but cash flow is not strong enough and will be depleted within eight or nine years. The budget is transparent and easy to read. The District can do better in terms of policies, financial awards, and financial education. The Board could use more information in workshops.
Avg. 7 7.5, 7 2 vote	Regulatory. Regarding regulations, the District is ok for now, but needs to keep learning and adding resources to meet new regulations. Regarding legislative engagement, the District is strong in federal, but needs more focus at the state level. The District does follow the CASA monitoring on legislation to help determine what to support or oppose.
Avg. 6.5 8, 5 2 votes	Planning. We are dedicated, thinking and not complacent. However, lean staffing and limited resources limits planning for the future.
Avg. 4 6, 5, 3, 2 4 votes	Outreach. People don't know and haven't even heard of the District. It will be hard to ask people for increased rates over time if they don't know us. While outreach is improving, we need to improve branding and to show what a great board, staff, and District we have. We need to tell our story and be out at schools, public events, and businesses.
Avg. 4 4 votes	Reclamation. This is a critical, big, and costly task.

Challenges and Opportunities Facing the District

Below is a list of key issues and challenges identified in the process that are expected to face the District in the future. Each participant was asked to predict what challenges and opportunities the District would confront in the future. The feedback is as follows:

Facilities

Need more emergency preparation and training. \$100 million+ cost of facility upgrades over ten years.

Finance

Need to develop a new rate structure next year. Are we moving in the right direction and making good decisions? Acting in the right order and efficiently?

Planning

Need to be prepared to meet the needs of the City General Plan, population growth, and tribal requirements.

Staff

Need to evolve as new generations join the workforce by developing new recruitment and retention approaches and management styles. Must manage retirements, succession, and institutional knowledge; need to promote diversity.

Outreach

Need to get people to know us, to understand and support us by reaching out to ratepayers, city council, tribal, and regional water management groups. Need rebranding. Need more collaboration. Can't operate in a vacuum. Must partner.

Reclamation

This is critical to support community sustainability; we must be part of it.

Operations

Must stay up to date with technology.

Regulatory and Legislative

Current permitting is good. There will be future tribal and state regulatory challenges, including around human resources, finance, transparency, tertiary, nitrogen removal, etc.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission

Valley Sanitary District serves and benefits Indio and the surrounding communities by collecting, treating, and recycling wastewater to ensure a healthy environment and sustainable water supply.

Vision

As a result of the changes outlined in this five-year Strategic Plan, Valley Sanitary District will support the Coachella Valley as an environmental steward, a model employer, and a leader in the wastewater industry that is known for its excellence. We will:

- Prioritize the needs of our customers and do it cost-effectively and transparently.
- Provide a healthy work environment, cutting-edge equipment, and exceptional training opportunities for staff, our most important asset.
- Provide leadership in protecting our shared environment and safely reuse or recycle wastewater, energy, biosolids, and other useful byproducts.
- Serve as a trusted participant in the community through our collaboration, open communication, and educational programs.

Values

Transparent – We provide information to the public in a complete, understandable, and timely form that is readily available.

Responsible – We take into account our environment, community, customers, and ratepayers in everything we do.

Respectful – We value diverse viewpoints, teamwork, and active listening to our community and staff.

Integrity – We maintain high standards of conduct in all our actions and all circumstances.

Areas of Current Emphasis

The participants were asked to identify and vote on the most important issues that the District must resolve in the coming years. The results of that vote are shown below, along with a summary of the responses by category. *This exercise was designed to advance the discussion and indicate areas of current emphasis as described below rather than to generate actionable, quantitative priorities. Everything on this list is important, as are many items that don't appear in this list. In the context of current areas of emphasis, funding is lower than the items above it, but still a high priority.*

8 Votes	Highly Trained Staff. Everything depends on having a good staff, with adequate people to meet regulatory needs, and resilient to meet future requirements.
8 Votes	Recycled Water. We must get recycled water completed and online.
8 Votes	CIP Planning. Short and long-range CIP planning and feasibility evaluation. Plant, collection, recycled and how to implement.
8 Votes	Establish a Brand. Have a concrete plan to build a brand for the District and ensure the public knows it.
4 Votes	Safety. Plant and staff safety protocol, training, and equipment.
3 Votes	Complete and Up-to-Date Policies. Complete written policies and make sure they are up to date and approved.
3 Votes	Strategic Plan. Mission statement and strategic plan are a true reflection of direction.
1 Vote	Funding. Need enough funding for CIP plans.

Goals, Objectives, and Implementation Plan

Introductory Notes

Key Areas of Change. This Strategic Plan focuses only on key areas where there is change or a desire for additional clarity of direction. Numerous existing and ongoing initiatives, programs, and actions are not incorporated into this plan.

Priorities. The notation “(High)” after an action indicates a high-priority action. A high priority is defined as a “must do” that is not receiving adequate attention from staff due to inadequate resources or a new or additional effort for staff to undertake to fulfill a critical goal or objective. Some actions are urgent in terms of timing but are not necessarily a high priority. For example, it is urgent to get out payroll in the next few weeks but not a high strategic priority, just a workaday task.

Timing. Goals and objectives marked “annually” or “ongoing” will be reported on at least once each year during the budget planning season. This will allow the General Manager to use the feedback received from the Board when preparing the new fiscal year budget.

Implementation. Staff developed a complete set of initiatives to implement the goals and objectives. The implementation actions are summarized on the following pages, indicated by third-level numbering (such as 1.1.1) with non-bold type.

Summary of the Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1: Fully Staffed with a Highly Trained and Motivated Team

OBJECTIVE 1.1: Enough staff to fulfill goals and objectives safely and efficiently

OBJECTIVE 1.2: Improve preparation for both unexpected events and planned succession of all key positions

OBJECTIVE 1.3: Improve training and professional development

OBJECTIVE 1.4: Maintain and build upon strong staff culture

GOAL 2: Increase Recycling, Reuse, and Sustainability

OBJECTIVE 2.1: Increase recycling and reuse of resources and byproducts

OBJECTIVE 2.2: Improve sustainability of the overall operations (e.g., lower carbon footprint)

OBJECTIVE 2.3: Become an environmental leader in the community and industry

GOAL 3: Excellent Facilities

OBJECTIVE 3.1: Facilities are managed using comprehensive long-range plans that are integrated with the financial plan

OBJECTIVE 3.2: Increase use of technology to lower costs and improve reliability

GOAL 4: Increase Community Understanding and Support

OBJECTIVE 4.1: Increase community understanding and support for the District and its program

OBJECTIVE 4.2: Increase the District's understanding of community wants, needs, and interests

OBJECTIVE 4.2: Rebrand Valley Sanitary District to increase public recognition of the District's move toward reuse and recycling

GOAL 5: Long-Term Financial Strength

OBJECTIVE 5.1: Align long-term financial planning with strategic priorities

OBJECTIVE 5.2: Extend financial planning to meet long-term needs while maintaining affordability for customers

OBJECTIVE 5.3: Update rate structure to ensure it is up-to-date and fair to all classes of customers

GOAL 6: Improve Planning, Administration and Governance

OBJECTIVE 6.1: Meet evolving operational and customer demands

OBJECTIVE 6.2: Increase regional collaboration

OBJECTIVE 6.3: Improve administration and management

OBJECTIVE 6.4: Increase emergency preparedness

OBJECTIVE 6.5: Improve State Level Legislative Advocacy

OBJECTIVE 6.6: Improve Governance

OBJECTIVE 6.7: Maintain compliance with all regulatory, legislative, and permit requirements

Detailed Goals, Objectives, and Implementation Plan

GOAL 1: Fully Staffed with a Highly Trained and Motivated Team

Strategic Challenge. The District's greatest strength has been its highly motivated and experienced staff and their willingness to work together to serve our community. Looking to the future, everything the District does will continue to depend on having an excellent staff, with adequate people to meet the needs of the District's customers and community.

The following objectives and implementation actions must be completed to fulfill Goal 1.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: Enough staffing to fulfill goals and objectives safely and efficiently

- 1.1.1: Conduct staffing analysis and make adjustments and hires if appropriate**
- 1.1.2: Develop and implement retention plan (will relate to benefits, pay, training, etc.)**
- 1.1.3: Evaluate and update pay and benefits if appropriate**

OBJECTIVE 1.2: Improve preparation for both unexpected events and planned succession of all key positions

- 1.2.1: Develop and implement a succession plan**
- 1.2.2: Develop and implement internship program to develop pipeline of potential new workers**
- 1.2.3: Develop and implement water/wastewater education program with College of the Desert to develop pipeline of new workers**

OBJECTIVE 1.3: Improve training and professional development

- 1.3.1: Develop and implement training best practices for supervisors**
- 1.3.2: Identify and implement opportunities for training and professional development**
- 1.3.3: Develop and implement mentorship program**

OBJECTIVE 1.4: Maintain and build upon the strong staff culture

- 1.4.1: Identify what makes us special, develop a plan to maintain and strengthen the culture, and implement**

GOAL 2: Increase Recycling, Reuse, and Sustainability

Strategic Challenge. Valley Sanitary District is located in a Desert with a stressed aquifer and water supplies are increasingly unreliable both regionally and statewide. One result is that Indio must pay about one million dollars each year to Coachella Valley Water District for over pumping and drawing down the aquifer. Nitrogen in the groundwater is a water quality issue that water recycling could help with by de-nitrifying the water. It is critical that the wastewater is recycled or reused to help maintain the groundwater aquifer, and to benefit people and the environment.

The following objectives and implementation actions must be completed to fulfill Goal 2.

OBJECTIVE 2.1: Increase recycling and reuse of resources and byproducts

- 2.1.1: Plan and implement recycled water with IWA through EVRA and other potential partners**
- 2.1.2: Evaluate and implement biogas and co-generation of power as appropriate**
- 2.1.3: Evaluate and implement reuse of biowaste as appropriate**
- 2.1.4: Seek grant funding for water recycling, biowaste, and other recycling and reuse projects.**

OBJECTIVE 2.2: Improve sustainability of the overall operation (e.g., lower carbon footprint)

- 2.2.1: Identify how to measure sustainability, and set benchmarks and actions to improve**
- 2.2.2: Optimize cost and benefit of the solar array**

GOAL 3: Excellent Facilities

Strategic Challenge. The District requires over \$100 million in facility upgrades and replacements in the coming decade. These facilities must work every day and around-the-clock without fail. It is critical that they be built and maintained to the highest standards with long-term cost-effectiveness in mind.

The following objectives and implementation actions must be completed to fulfill Goal 3.

OBJECTIVE 3.1: Facilities are managed using comprehensive long-range plans that are integrated with the financial plan

3.1.1: Identify what should be part of the preventive maintenance plan and implement it

3.1.2: Annual review of CIP and align with budget, rate analysis, and changing needs

OBJECTIVE 3.2: Increase use of technology to lower costs and improve reliability

3.2.1: Develop and implement technology recommendations to increase efficiency and effectiveness for all functional areas

GOAL 4: Increase Community Understanding and Support

Strategic Challenge. The District’s customers and ratepayers are not sufficiently informed about who the District is, the quality of services it provides, or its importance. This will become untenable over time as the District will need to ask the community for additional funding to meet quality, health, safety, and environmental expectations and regulations. Simply put, the District must have the understanding and support of its customers if it is to serve them effectively in the future.

The following objectives and implementation actions must be completed to fulfill Goal 4.

OBJECTIVE 4.1: Increase community understanding and support for the District and its program

4.1.1: Develop outreach plan, budget, etc.

4.1.2: Implement outreach plan

OBJECTIVE 4.2: Increase the District’s understanding of community wants, needs, and interests

4.2.1: Develop community listening tools in outreach plan (potentially surveys, sewer 101 group, track press, track calls, etc.)

4.2.2: Develop and implement actions to respond to identified community needs

OBJECTIVE 4.3: Rebrand Valley Sanitary District to increase public recognition of the District’s move toward reuse and recycling

4.3.1: Develop and implement rebranding strategy in coordination with outreach plan in 4.1.1.

OBJECTIVE 4.4: Become an environmental leader in the community and industry

4.4.1: Define results desired from environmental leadership

4.4.2: Identify and implement additional green initiatives to meet results in 2.3.1

GOAL 5: Long-Term Financial Strength

Strategic Challenge. The district has substantial reserves. However, cash flow is not strong enough for long-term sustainability. While the budget is detailed, transparent, and easy to read, it will need to be updated to align with the strategic plan.

The following objectives and implementation actions must be completed to fulfill Goal 5.

OBJECTIVE 5.1: Align long-term financial planning with strategic priorities

5.1.1: Review rates to align with strategic priorities, CIP needs, and changing conditions

OBJECTIVE 5.2: Extend financial planning to meet long-term needs while maintaining affordability for customers

5.2.1: Define "affordable" and update financial plan to address short-term and long-term needs balanced with the definition

OBJECTIVE 5.3: Update rate structure to ensure it is up-to-date and fair to all classes of customers

5.3.1: Update the rate structure to ensure it is up to date with current best practices, reflects current customer usage, and complies with legal mandates

5.3.2: Implement rate structure changes based on analysis

GOAL 6: Improve Planning, Administration and Governance

Strategic Challenge. The District has a dedicated, capable, and motivated staff. Regarding regulations, the District is in good shape currently, but needs to keep learning and adding resources to meet increasingly stringent regulations. Regarding legislative engagement, the District is strong in federal related matters, but needs more focus at the state level.

The following objectives and implementation actions must be completed to fulfill Goal 6.

OBJECTIVE 6.1: Meet evolving operational and customer demands

6.1.1: Develop and implement plan to address changing operational and customer response needs

OBJECTIVE 6.2: Increase regional collaboration

6.2.1: Define results desired from regional collaboration

6.2.2: Develop plan to increase regional collaboration

6.2.3: Implement plan to increase regional collaboration

OBJECTIVE 6.3: Improve administration and management

6.3.1: Review 10% of policies annually and update as needed

6.3.2: Transition from paper to digital processes to increase efficiency

OBJECTIVE 6.4: Increase emergency preparedness

6.4.1: Update Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPR)

6.4.2: Implement EPR recommendations

OBJECTIVE 6.5 Improve State level legislative advocacy

6.5.1: Evaluate needs for a state advocate

6.5.2: Retain state advocate if appropriate

OBJECTIVE 6.6: Improve Governance

6.6.1: Conduct annual Board self-assessment

6.6.2: Update new director orientation packet and process

OBJECTIVE 6.7: Maintain compliance with all regulatory, legislative, and permit requirements

6.7.1: Regularly review policies and procedures for compliance with permit

6.7.2: Implement changes identified in review process

Implementing the Plan

Monitoring, Implementation, and Oversight Actions

The District will take the following steps to ensure that the Strategic Plan is implemented, and results are achieved:

- The District will publish the Mission, Vision, Values, Goals, and Objectives on posters and handouts and display them around the District.
- Staff will incorporate the Mission, Vision, Values, Goals, and Objectives into the employee handbook, as well as orientation and training materials for new employees and Board and Committee members.
- The General Manager will present the Strategic Plan to the entire staff so they are familiar with it and can better undertake their individual roles in fulfilling it.
- The management and supervisory team will actively execute the Implementation Plan.
- The management team will monitor and track Strategic Plan goals, objectives, and implementation actions.
- The performance evaluation of the General Manager will include performance in implementing the strategic plan as one of the areas of evaluation.
- Committees will incorporate Strategic Plan monitoring as appropriate, and staff will provide an annual report to the entire Board on progress in implementing the plan.
- Staff will reference Strategic Plan items on Board meeting agendas as appropriate.
- The Board, with staff support, will review and update the Strategic Plan every three years and roll it forward.

Detailed Implementation Plan

A detailed Implementation Plan is being maintained in a separate spreadsheet by staff.

Appendix: Notes from the Staff Workshop

On December 4, 2019, nearly the entire staff participated in a strategic planning workshop that was designed to provide an opportunity to learn about the strategic plan and work to-date by the Board, to have questions answers and input to the Board. This was conducted immediately prior to the Second Board workshop where the results of the staff workshop were reviewed by the Board.

Questions Discussed in the Staff Workshop

Following a review of the draft plan developed to-date by the Board and Management Team, staff worked individually and in groups to respond to the following questions:

1. If your group had the power to make up to three changes. What three things would you choose to do to make the District better, and, why did you choose these?
2. Is there anything else your groups wants the Board to hear as they plan the District's long-term future?
3. It is important to focus on just a few priority issues, recognizing that in practice it is not possible to accomplish everything at once and that there are limits on time, money and personnel resources. Please take a moment to review all the issues and items we have discussed suggest some priorities to vote on. Each person was given four stickers that they could apply to any topic or topics as a "vote" representing their priorities.

A summary of the results of the discussion is found on the following page.

Summary Notes From the Staff Workshop

Note that ✓ = Repeated Comment

STAFF COMPENSATION PLAN 22 Votes

Evaluate and implement a compensation package that helps recruit and retain high quality staff

MORE STAFF 21 Votes

✓ Increase staff development and training

✓✓✓ Add staff due to shortage. This will improve safety since sometimes field workers are alone without backup.

There are great employees here

TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS 21 Votes

Tablets to better share information and communicate. Reduces staffing needs

Need an asset management system for development

Upgrade SCADA. Have a field Toughbook and Wi-Fi so staff can work in the field

Could use density meters and to improve technology

Need staffing for new technology.

TRAINING 20 Votes

Broader professional development

Help in passing exams

Onsite training and invite other districts here to train

More budget for training

More cross training to better utilize people, help with succession and cross certification

More management training

We need a space for training

MORE BOARD / STAFF COMMUNICATION 20 Votes

Help the Board understand more about the value the staff brings

More communication about the Board actions and directions to staff. Options include: through GM communication, by passing on the minutes, through management communication, or videotaping board meetings

Staff engage more in planning like for the CIP

BOARD NOTE: Board wants to avoid micromanaging but suggested a quarterly luncheon with the Board.

BETTER COMMUNICATION BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS 5 Votes

For example, formalize relationships on how engineering interacts with and impacts operations

COMMUNICATION TO THE PUBLIC 5 Votes

Make more interesting and brochure-like rather than just reading

FACILITIES 2 Votes

More lockers, more space for people

SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT 2 Votes

Enough supplies and equipment

Redundant parts for emergencies

Keeping redundant parts is tough with limited staffing.

LATERALS

Provide insurance to customers to extend laterals closer to the curb. Extend the lateral grant program.



Prepared by:





**Valley Sanitary District
Board Workshop
Held November 2, 2021**

November 2021

**Management
Partners**



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Workshop Report

The Valley Sanitary District (VSD) conducted a Board workshop on November 2, 2021 at the Fantasy Resort Events Center, Pa'at Room, from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. The workshop provided an opportunity for the Board of Directors and District management to review effective governance practices, discuss roles and responsibilities, reach a consensus about how strategic plan initiatives will be monitored and reported, discuss citizen participation, and strengthen teamwork. This report contains a summary of the results of the workshop.

The workshop was facilitated by John Bramble (Special Advisor) and Julie Hernandez (Senior Management Advisor) with Management Partners.



Workshop Overview

Objectives

- Review and discuss effective governing practices;
- Clarify the Board's roles and responsibilities along with executive staff;
- Agree upon how the Board and the General Manager will monitor and report on the strategic plan results; and
- Discuss and agree upon additional methods to increase citizen participation.

Agenda

- Welcome from the Board President
- Public comments
- Opening comments from the General Manager
- Introduction and agenda overview
- Icebreaker exercise
- Review interview themes and key accomplishments
- Review and discuss practices of effective boards
- Discuss roles and responsibilities
- Discuss norms
- Lunch break
- Review strategic plan and roles for implementation
- Explore expanding citizen participation opportunities
- Wrap up and next steps

Participants

Board of Directors



- President Scott Sear
- Board Member William Teague
- Vice President Dennis Coleman
- Secretary/Treasurer Debra Canero
- Director Mike Duran

Executive Staff

- General Manager Beverli Marshall
- Facilities Operations Manager Dave Commons
- District Engineer Ron Buchwald

Workshop Ground Rules

At the start of the workshop, the facilitators suggested several ground rules to help the group have a successful workshop:

- Assume good intent
- Listen to each other – be respectful to the person speaking
- Seek consensus and areas of agreement
- Model how we want others to act

Workshop Preparation

In preparation for the workshop, John Bramble and Julie Hernandez held interviews with Board members, and discussed the workshop with the General Manager. An agenda, handouts, and PowerPoint presentation were prepared.

Opening Comments

The workshop began with a welcome by Board President Scott Sear, who thanked the participants for attending the workshop, and invited public comments. No members of the public were present.

General Manager Beverli Marshall welcomed everyone and thanked the Board for participating in the day's discussions. She emphasized the importance of the session, shared her hopes for the day, and introduced the facilitators.

After Board members and staff introduced themselves and shared what they hoped they would learn from the workshop, John Bramble provided an overview of the day to establish a shared understanding of the workshop's purpose and objectives. He reviewed ground rules for the day, along with objectives and the agenda for the workshop. John also explained the purpose of the "bike rack," which is a time management tool that tracks items that are raised but will not receive attention during the workshop. The following item was added to the bike rack during the session:

- VSD should schedule more opportunities to celebrate successes.



Icebreaker Exercise

Julie Hernandez led the group in an icebreaker exercise to build relationships and strengthen teamwork. Each participant was provided with two questions to answer and instructions for completion. The questions helped participants identify common personal and professional elements among the Board and executive staff. As the group shared results of the exercise, the following themes emerged:

- Shared interests: travel, children/family, sports, genealogy
- Many participants have long public service records
- Shared passion to learn and grow
- Different experiences and perspectives – but the same goals
- Good board members – think about agenda items from different perspectives that add richness to the final product
- Military service



Recent Accomplishments

John Bramble reviewed the accomplishments that were mentioned during the Board interviews. These accomplishments are listed below:

- Implemented staff training program
- Held Board communications training
- Developed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and funding strategy
- Rebuilt lift station



- Kicked-off diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) program
- Initiated youth engagement program
- Implemented rate study

Additional accomplishments that the group mentioned are summarized below:

- Proactively moved to wards
- Completed staffing and compensation study
 - ✓ Showed that VSD was behind on compensation
 - ✓ Changed morale for the better
- Addressed forgotten infrastructure
- Visionary leadership
 - ✓ 1925 Act – prior residents had foresight to start this district
 - ✓ 1957 – The California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) was formed, and VSD was the 6th to join, allowing CASA to become a statewide organization
- Handled pandemic well and quickly
 - ✓ Business never stopped
 - ✓ Handled technology well
 - ✓ General Manager and staff “made the District shine”



Practices of Effective Boards

John led the group in developing a shared understanding of how VSD’s Board performance compares to current research on high-performance governance. John emphasized the importance of building relationships, working as a team, and being well prepared. The participants were provided with an article from the *Institute for Local Government* (ILG) and discussed attributes of effective governing boards and what it means to

practice good governance. The six attributes of high-performing governing boards are provided below.

Attributes of High-Performing Governing Boards

- Commit to **True Partnerships** among Members, General Manager and Staff
- Exhibit Clarity and **Respect for Roles** and Responsibilities
- Demonstrate **Civility** and Respect for All
- Conduct **Effective Meetings**
- Hold Themselves and the General Manager **Accountable**
- Practice Continuous **Learning**

Roles and Responsibilities

John reviewed the governing roles of the Board of Directors and General Manager, which helped set the foundation for discussing and agreeing upon norms later in the workshop. The roles that were specified are shown on the slides below.

Board Member Role

- Do what is in the best **long-term interest** of the community
- Do what is in the interest of the District
- **Respect** the chain of command
- Work through the General Manager
- **Meet** with the General Manager on a regular basis

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General Manager's Role

- Serve as **chief executive officer** of the organization
- Guide and develop staff** and create a productive organizational culture
- Provide policy **advice** to the Board
- Help make the Board productive and successful and help each member succeed
- Help staff **achieve** the Board's goals

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In small groups, the participants engaged in discussions about roles. The groups identified the following roles of the Board members and General Manager.

Table 1. Board Member and General Manager Roles

Board Members	General Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree upon desired outcomes Agree upon methodology to evaluate success and failures Authorize money for consultants Conduct annual retreat for setting and evaluating goals Delegate emergency authority Develop long-term plan (5 years and beyond) Develop relationships with other elected officials Develop short-term plan (0-5 years) Develop vision Conduct elected-to-elected communications Be inclusive with staff for goal setting and vision Provide feedback process and changes Provide resources Set goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist with vision and goal development Work together with the Coachella Valley Regional Water Management Group (CVRWMG) Coordinate Board and staff development through the California Special Districts Association (CSDA), and others Evaluate and report preparedness status Facilitate retreat with consultant Find ways to meet/implement Board expectations Implement plans Maintain expectations up and down Manage advocacy consultant Network with City Managers and other General Managers Review and propose orientation binder Translate the Board's goals and vision to staff

- Participate on the board of the East Valley Reclamation Authority (EVRA)

Additionally, the group specified the following roles of the President:

1. Keeping flow going
2. Communicate with General Manager
3. Maintain the expectations of Board and staff
4. New director orientation



Board of Directors' Norms

John Bramble provided some sample norms for the group to review. In small groups, the participants selected five to seven norms they felt would be most useful to the VSD Board. The groups took turns reporting out to the large group which norms they chose. The Board agreed that they would adopt the following norms:

Norms

1. Approach the business of governing in a professional manner
2. Communicate through the general manager
3. Demonstrate honesty and integrity in every action and statement
4. Disagree agreeably and professionally
5. Fully participate in board meetings and other public forums while demonstrating respect, consideration, and courtesy
6. Honor discussions before decisions
7. Inspire public confidence in our local district

8. Participate in scheduled activities
9. Show respect for proper roles of elected officials and district staff in ensuring open and effective government
10. Work for the common good, not personal interests
11. Work together as a body, modeling teamwork and civility for our community

The Board agreed that they would adopt the following as their Top Six Norms:

1. Work together as a body, modeling teamwork and civility for our community
2. Honor discussions before decisions
3. Demonstrate honesty and integrity in every action and statement
4. Inspire public confidence in our local district
5. Show respect for proper roles of elected officials and district staff in ensuring open and effective government
6. Work for the common good, not personal interests

Roles for Implementing the Strategic Plan

The group reviewed the six goals that are identified in the strategic plan. These goals are listed below.

- Goal 1: Fully staffed with a highly trained and motivated team
- Goal 2: Increase recycling, reuse, and sustainability
- Goal 3: Excellent facilities
- Goal 4: Increase community understanding and support
- Goal 5: Long-term financial strength
- Goal 6: Improve planning, administration, and governance

In small groups, the participants reviewed and discussed the roles of the Board and General Manager in implementing the Strategic Plan and Goal 6 of the Strategic Plan. The Board was invited to provide clear direction to the General Manager regarding their expectations.

The Board agreed that their role is to represent the Strategic Plan in the community through outreach, and to evaluate staffs' implementation by evaluating the success of projects pertaining to the goals. This community outreach should be primarily conducted by the Board President in partnership with the General Manager.

It was mentioned that the Board and General Manager also have responsibility for conducting outreach to other agencies to ensure sanitation waste disposal is included in emergency preparedness plans.

Community Outreach and Resident Participation

The purpose of this segment of the workshop was to identify new ways to involve external stakeholders and communicate successes to the community. In a general group discussion, participants brainstormed answers to the following questions regarding community outreach and resident participation:

- What should the District do more of?
- What is missing?
- What should the District do less of?

The group agreed that a primary focus should be increasing public knowledge that VSD exists. A summary of the community engagement ideas is presented below:

- Have a presence at community events
- Speak at the historical society and explain the District's history
- Broaden education outreach efforts in schools, in the hope that kids will share information they learned with parents
- Explore whether the partnership with the City of Indio can be used to provide information about VSD to City of Indio residents

In addition to increasing public knowledge about VSD in general, the group identified specific aspects about the District that should be marketed, including VSD's purpose, history, special district status (i.e., they are not part of the local water district), and sustainability efforts (e.g., biosolids and reclaimed water).

The group further identified that what is missing is the ability to market VSD through utility billing statements, similar to other utilities, because VSD customers are billed through property taxes.

Success

Success will be defined by VSD's ability to tell its story and present itself as an environmental health organization that focuses on reclaimed resources. VSD will be able to measure success by the following indicators:

- VSD community outreach efforts become a higher priority with Board and staff
- People in the community know VSD
- VSD is recognized publicly (i.e., in newspaper articles)

- VSD is invited to be a part of events
- VSD is asked to partner with schools and City committees
- People express interest in serving on the Board because VSD is seen as a trusted community asset, not just a service provider
- Greater attendance and more participation by the public occurs at Board meetings
- VSD Board members are invited to be members of other community boards

In order to reach success, the group agreed that both the General Manager and Board members need to have a presence in the community, as well as the following:

- Implement the recommendations from the marketing consultant
- Provide message statements and coaching for the Board to conduct enhanced outreach efforts
- Utilize polls to identify if the public knows VSD and what they know about the District
- Analyze invitations received by the Board to attend community events and track the number of invitations received by type - using this information, strategize how receipt of meaningful invitations may be improved

Wrap Up and Next Steps

John Bramble summarized the day's agenda, and the agreements reached. He explained that Management Partners would prepare and submit this summary report.



To conclude the workshop, each participant was asked to offer one valuable take-away from the day's discussions. The comments that were shared are listed below:

- This was an opportunity to discuss and to learn from the experience of the consultant
- We clarified a few best practices
 - Using titles at meetings
 - Teamwork was reaffirmed
- Having the communication styles evaluation helped
 - Discussions today were richer
 - Keep growth going

- This is an evolutionary process that pushes us to grow more and more
- We are more cognizant of challenges and how to address them together
- It was comfortable to participate, and ideas were appreciated
 - Discussions were heartening and showed Board commitment and involvement; Board members want to do good work
- The workshop was foundation building; we have an amazing starting point from which to build

Upon the conclusion of the workshop, participants were asked to complete a brief survey about the workshop. A summary of the survey responses is provided in Attachment A.

Attachment A: Summary of Workshop Evaluations

Valley Sanitary District Board Workshop Held November 2, 2021 Consolidated Workshop Evaluations



The best thing about this workshop was...

- Team building, discussion
- The communication with the Board and staff, and the openness of all individuals
- The process that allowed for a sharing of ideas
- The opportunity to talk about key issues with the Board
- We learned the proper way to address each other in board meetings
- Being able to communicate with fellow Board members and General Manager and staff
- The flow and structure – the layout and path
- Unison with all

Some thing(s) which could have been better...

- Nothing, I loved all of it
- Hard to say; some of the slides might have been communicated better, just verbal, not on the slides
- More interaction by Julie; questions, thoughts, and input
- More time
- All was great
- Not much - excellent presentations
- It seemed to drag towards the end – not engaged in topic?
- You did just fine

What elements of the session will be most useful to you?

- Team/group events
- The individual work teams and the report from the groups
- The prioritization of the norms, the breakout sessions
- Small group discussions
- Creating our goals
- Clarify the Board roles and responsibilities
- All of it – good experience
- Outreach

I'm glad that the facilitator(s)...

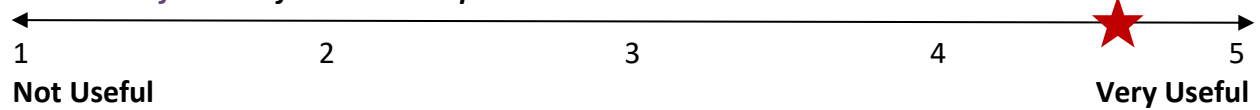
- ...were interactive and friendly
- ...added points for discussions, and thoughts and topics

- ...kept us on target
- ...guided the whole session - no one spoke out of turn
- ...presented some topics of interest
- ...used humor – made it fun
- ...was on point all day

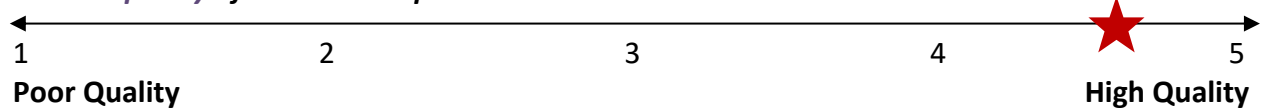
I wish the facilitator(s) would have...

- ...brought ice cream
- ...insights from other agency experiences

Overall usefulness of the workshop: 4.66



Overall quality of the workshop: 4.68



OTHER COMMENTS:

- Thank you, see you next year
- Excellent presentation
- Continue to move forward