Special Joint Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Delta-Mendota Subbasin GSAs Joint Powers Authority and the Coordination Committee

Wednesday, February 4, 2026, 1:00 PM
SLDMWA Board Room 842 6th St., Los Banos, CA 93635

Meeting Minutes

PARTICIPANTS:

Committee Members

Joe Hopkins, Aliso Water District
Augustine Ramirez, Fresno County A&B
Jarrett Martin, San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors
Chase Hurley, Central DM Region
Lacey McBride, Central DM Region
Jim Stilwell, Farmers GSA
Ric Ortega, Grassland Water District
Vince Lucchesi, Northern DM Region

Others Present

Lauren Layne, Legal Counsel, Baker Manock & Jensen
Kait Palys, INTERA
Patrick McGowan, Panoche Water District
Ray Tarka, San Luis Delta-Mendota Water Authority

Present Via Zoom/Phone

Palmer McCoy, Mercy Springs Water District
Steve Stadler, San Luis Water District
John Wiersma, San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors
Amir Mani, EKI
Anona Dutton, EKI
Andrew Francis, LSCE
Ethan Andrews, Provost & Pritchard
Gilbert Torres, Fresno County
Jacinta Cabral, Madera County
Jason Dean
John Brodie
Liam's iPhone
Lisa Beautler, Stantec

Leslie Dumas, Woodard & Curran
Rick Iger, Provost & Pritchard
Ryo Takanashi, Water One
Sarah Boogay, California Department of Water Resources
Thomas Cleverdon
Will Halligan, LSCE

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order/Roll Call**
   Chair Hopkins called the meeting to order at 1:09 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
   Chair Hopkins led the pledge of allegiance.

3. **Committee to Consider Corrections or Additions to the Agenda of Items, as Authorized by Government Code Section 54950 et seq.**
   Lauren Layne (Legal Counsel, Baker Manock & Jensen) swore in the Coordination Committee Members as the new Board of Directors for the Delta-Mendota Subbasin GSAs Joint Powers Authority (DM Authority).

4. **Election of Officers**
   Ms. Layne provided background context, including the Subbasin's adoption of a single Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP), the adoption of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to implement the GSP, and the formation of the Joint Powers Authority. She stated that the Board of Directors are the same members and alternates as the Coordination Committee and stated that per the JPA Agreement, the positions of Chair and Vice Chair shall rotate annually in alphabetical order of the GSA name.

   Chair Hopkins stated that in the MOA, the rotation of Chair and Vice Chair shall take place in March and asked if they would rotate at the March 9th meeting. Legal counsel responded that the rotation of Chair and Vice Chair can happen at the March meeting.

   MOTION:
   Director Hurley made a motion to maintain the Chair Hopkins as the DM Authority Board Chair and to maintain his position as the Vice Chair until the new rotation on March 9, 2026. Director Stilwell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

5. **Opportunity for Public Comment**
   Chair Hopkins opened the floor for public comments, and no public comments were provided.

<u>Action Items</u>

*Items requiring a unanimous vote of all Directors are indicated by ****

6. Approval of Budget for the Fiscal Year Starting March 1, 2026 and Authorize Initial Cash Call***

Taylor Blakslee and Lauren Layne described the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget that was approved under the San Luis Delta-Mendota Water Authority and ratified by the Coordination Committee during the January 12, 2026 meeting.

Raymond Tarka, Director of Finance, SLDMWA, stated that the last date to take in the Delta-Mendota Subbasin JPA/Coordination Committee invoices is February 15,2026.

Mr. Blakslee provided background on the initial cash call assessment and potential second assessment and recommended that the Board/ CC authorize the initial cash call once the funds have been reimbursed to the Subbasin GSAs.

Chair Hopkins asked if they can expect the final SLDWMA invoice in the next few days and Mr. Blakslee confirmed that is the case.

Mr. Blakslee and Anona Dutton (EKI) provided explanation regarding the RFP contract proposal discrepancy with the current FY27 Budget that was ratified by the Coordination Committee on January 12, 2026. This included the optional task for basin-wide groundwater monitoring under section 5.2 of the EKI proposal.

Director McBride asked if there would need to be a budget amendment down the road and Ms. Layne stated an amendment could be revisited by the Board in future meetings.

> **MOTION:**
> Director Martin made a motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2027 budget for the DM Subbasin JPA and to approve the initial cash call as presented. Director Hurley seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Director Stilwell asked if there is a final deadline by which the optional basin-wide monitoring needs to be decided. Ms. Dutton stated that the decision for optional monitoring would need to happen soon and the model calibration (section 3.2) by end of the first quarter.

Director Ortega asked what the scope of the optional monitoring is and Ms. Dutton stated that they would be collecting groundwater level measurements, not groundwater quality monitoring.

7. Appointment of Legal Counsel and Authorize the Chair to Execute an Engagement Agreement***

Ms. Layne stated that the engagement agreement was not included in the Board packet because it is protected by attorney-client privilege.

MOTION:
Director Lucchesi made a motion to appoint Lauren Layne, Baker Manock & Jensen as legal counsel for the DM Subbasin JPA and to authorize the Chair to execute an engagement agreement. Director Martin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

8. Approval of Consultant Contracts***

a. Authorize a Contract with Hallmark Group for Program Management Services
Mr. Blakslee provided background on the contract provided by Hallmark Group.

MOTION:
Director Martin made a motion to authorize the contract with Hallmark Group for Project Management Services and Financial Support Services. Director Lucchesi seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

b. Authorize a Contract with EKI for Groundwater Sustainability Implementation Support Services
There was continued discussion regarding the model calibration and the optional basin-wide monitoring tasks. Director Lucchesi stated that he would like to take the optional services before the Northern DM Committee for consideration, but does not anticipate the optional services are needed at this time.

MOTION:
Director Hurley made a motion to authorize the full contract with EKI for Technical Support Services, on the condition that section 3.2 and 5.2 are revisited by the Board for potential budget amendment. Director Ortega seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

c. Authorize a Contract with Houston Engineering for Data Management System Services
Mr. Blakslee provided background on the contract provided by Houston Engineering and Ms. Layne noted that the contract had included an amendment to section 18, changing the governing law to State of California.

MOTION:
Director Martin made a motion to authorize the contract with Houston Engineering to maintain the DMS. The motion was seconded by Director Ortega and passed unanimously.

9. Selection and Approval of the Delta-Mendota Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan Manager
Director Martin directed staff to make sure to have the Plan Manager be the point of contact for the Subbasin in general, not just for correspondences with the Department of Water Resources.

MOTION:
Director Martin made a motion to select and approve Taylor Blakslee, Hallmark Group, as the Delta-Mendota Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan Manager. The motion was seconded by Director Lucchesi and passed unanimously.

10. Appointment of Secretary

MOTION:
Director Lucchesi made a motion to appoint Hallmark Group to the DM Subbasin JPA secretary and treasurer. The motion was seconded by Director Ramirez and passed by unanimous consent.

11. Appointment of Treasurer

This item was addressed in the motion above.

12. Adopt Resolution No. 2026-1 to Establish a Bank Account, ACH Transactions and Assign Signatories

Mr. Blakslee provided a summary of the resolution establishing the bank account, ACH Transactions and the signatories for the DM Subbasin JPA. He recommended the Authority set up an account through Chase Bank, but would work with Hallmark Group CFO to establish banking.

Member Stilwell asked if the DM Authority would have to get credit approval for ACH's and Mr. Tarka (SLDMWA) stated that there will need to be an approval process by the DM Subbasin JPA signatories for money going out.

MOTION:
Director Martin made a motion to adopt the resolution and to assign Chair Hopkins, Vice Chair Hurley, and Director Stilwell as signatories of the Board, with Hallmark as the backup signatory. Director Lucchesi seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Director Hurley asked if we are still on track for a full transition from the SLDMWA on March 1, 2026. Mr. Blakslee responded that there will be a full transition at that time, with the potential for an extended contract with W&C for the annual report.

13. Review and Consider Approval of the Northern DM Region Special Projects Agreement

Ms. Layne stated that the current agreement with Northern DM and SLDMWA will terminate upon the signing and execution of the new Special Projects Agreement between the Northern DM and the DM Authority.

Director McBride asked about the DM Authority's ability to appoint a committee and Ms. Layne stated that the Chair of the DM Authority can appoint a committee at any time.

Director Stilwell asked how the accounting is handled to ensure Northern DM expenses are covered, aside from their Board position on the DM Authority. Ms. Layne responded that Hallmark Group will be responsible for the continuation of funds 63 and 64 and will ask for cash calls from respective groups.

Director Stilwell asked about how the insurance costs or audit costs would be impacted by the Authority taking on additional contracts and Mr. Blakslee stated that it could, and that staff will get a report to the Board for consideration in subsequent meetings. Director Stilwell directed staff to look into this and to refine the approach to separating out budgets. Ms. Layne added that the Joint Powers Act allows the DM Authority to enter into separate contracts.

Chair Hopkins asked if those contracts could enter into cost share agreements and Ms. Layne stated that there would need to be another joint powers agreement signed to cost share, but would not necessitate the establishment of another joint powers authority.

Director Stilwell asked about and suggested having separate accounts for the Northern DM Committee, the DM Authority, and potentially the Central DM Committee.

MOTION:
Director Martin made a motion to approve and enter into the Special Projects Agreement (affective March 1, 2026) as presented with the condition that more clarity in the budget reporting from Hallmark Group is provided in subsequent meetings. Member Hurley seconded the motion, and Director Lucchesi abstained from the vote. The motion passed unanimously.

14. Review and Recommend Member GSA Adoption of the Revised Memorandum of Agreement

Ms. Layne stated that the redline and clean version were provided in the packet. She outlined that the main changes in revised and restated MOA is the dissolution of the Coordination Committee, and that only 21 GSAs will be signing the MOA since Widren Water District GSA and Oro Loma Water District GSA are now in the Central DM GSA.

Director Stilwell expressed concerned about language in section 7.2 regarding the monitoring and maintenance of the monitoring network to be a subbasin-wide cost and directed legal counsel to change the language to "develop and maintain a monitoring network at the subbasin level".

MOTION:

Director Martin made a motion to approve the revised and restated MOA, with discussed amendments to section 7.2 and directed the plan manger to distribute the MOA with a cover memo for action by GSA Boards for approval.

15. Review and Consider Initial Approval of the Draft Conflict of Interest Code

Ms. Layne stated that the DM Authority will need to file with the FPCC since it is a multi-county authority. She reminded directors that the jurisdictional boundary of the DM Subbasin JPA is the entire DM Subbasin, not just GSA or county-level boundaries.

MOTION:

Director Ortega made a motion to approve the draft COI code and directed legal counsel to submit it to the FPCC for filing. Director Ramirez seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

16. Selection and Approval of the Delta-Mendota Subbasin GSAs JPA Mailing Address

Mr. Blakslee provided background information regarding the establishment of a mailing address for the DM Subbasin JPA.

MOTION:

Director Ortega made a motion to adopt the mailing address of the office of Baker Manock & Jensen as the mailing address for the DM Subbasin JPA. Director Lucchesi seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

17. Approval of the 2026 JPA Board Meeting Schedule and Location

Mr. Blakslee recommended that the JPA Board continue meeting on the second Monday of the month and select a meeting location within the Subbasin boundary.

Chair Hopkins directed staff to move the May meeting to the 18th, the September meeting to the 21st, and the November meeting to the 16th. The Board directed staff to maintain the October 12th meeting.

MOTION:

Director Martin made a motion to approve the 2026 DM Authority Board calendar with the above amendments and to approve the Grassland Water District Board Room as the meeting location beginning on March 9, 2026. Director Hurley seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

18. Review and Consider Approval of Insurance Coverage for the JPA

Staff recommended that the Board review this topic at a subsequent meeting.

19. Discuss and Take Appropriate Action on Authorizing Updates to the Website and Domain Name, an Email System, and Logo

Mr. Blakslee provided background and recommended staff to work with the outreach/communications ad hoc on the website updates. He also recommended that the website domain remain the same with new email and stated that staff is looking for Board direction regarding maintaining or updating the logo from the DM Subbasin.

MOTION:
Director Martin made a motion to authorize staff to work with FSS Lisa Beautler and the communications ad hoc committee to implement website updates, to maintain the same website domain, and to retain the same logo as is. Director Ortega seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Report Items

20. Update on the Development of Specific Administrative Policies
Mr. Blakslee and Layne provided the list of administrative policies stating that 3 of 4 policies have already been drafted and will be distributed for subsequent meetings.

Closed Session

21. Conference with Legal Counsel – Anticipated Litigation
The Committee will meet in closed session to confer with legal counsel on significant exposure to anticipated litigation pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) of Government Code Section 54956.9: (1 case)

Open Session

22. Report from Closed Session
Ms. Layne stated there was no reportable action.

23. Next Steps
Mr. Blakslee stated that next steps will be distributed via email, but include distributing form 700 for Directors to fill out and submit and the distribution of the clean MOA with a cover memo for GSA Board consideration of approval.

24. Reports Pursuant to Government Code Section 54954.2(a)(3)
Ms. Layne stated that there was nothing to report.

25. Next Joint Meeting(s):
- **a.** February 9, 2026, SLDMWA Board Room 842 6th St., Los Banos, CA 93635

26. Adjournment
Chair Hopkins adjourned the meeting at 2:59 p.m.