

ITEM: INFORMATIONAL ITEM/STAFF REPORT

33. LETTERS RECEIVED

Meeting Date: June 20, 2023 **Budgeted:** N/A

From: David J. Stoldt,
General Manager **Program/** N/A
Line Item No.:

Prepared By: Joel G. Pablo **Cost Estimate:** N/A

General Counsel Review: N/A

Committee Recommendation: N/A

CEQA Compliance: This action does not constitute a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15378.

A list of letters sent by and/or received by the Board Chair and/or General Manager between May 10, 2023 and June 13, 2023 is shown below.

The purpose of including a list of these letters in the Board packet is to inform the Board and interested citizens. Copies of the letters are available for public review at the District office. If a member of the public would like to receive a copy of any letter listed, please contact the District office. Reproduction costs will be charged. The letters can also be downloaded from the District's website at www.mpwmd.net.

Author	Addressee	Date	Topic
Melodie Chrislock	Board of Directors and General Manager	May 11, 2023	Monterey Herald Response to Chesshire's Op-Ed and Letter to the Editor <ul style="list-style-type: none">Measure J by <i>Melodie Chrislock</i>
Melodie Chrislock	General Manager	May 16, 2023	<u>Letters to the Editor</u> Carmel Pine Cone <ul style="list-style-type: none">No Confusion on Measure J by <i>Melodie Chrislock</i> Monterey Herald <ul style="list-style-type: none">Measure J by <i>Gary Kreeger</i>Water Rate by <i>Sylvia Shih</i>Water War by <i>Michael Baer</i>
Melodie Chrislock	Board of Directors and General Manager	May 18, 2023	<u>Monterey Herald Letter</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Measure J Clearly Written by <i>Susan Schiavone</i>

Joel Pablo

From: mwchrislock@redshift.com
Sent: Thursday, May 11, 2023 3:59 PM
To: Alvin Edwards; Amy Anderson; George Riley; Karen Paull; District 5; Marc Eisenhart; Ian Oglesby; Dave Stoldt; Joel Pablo
Subject: Herald Response to Chesshire

My answer to Ron Chesshire's op ed and letter to the editor.

Melodie Chrislock
Managing Director
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Monterey Herald | May 9, 2023

Measure J

A recent letter to the editor claims Public Water Now (PWN) fooled people into voting for Measure J. Not true. I was PWN's communications director at the time. I spent endless hours explaining that Measure J was not just a feasibility study. Frankly, most voters didn't care, they just wanted to be rid of Cal Am and its pricey water.

When Measure J passed it became a law mandating that the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District proceed with a buyout of Cal Am if feasible. Feasibility was proven by expert consultants in 2019.

What's surprising today is that a few folks still want Cal Am in charge of our water. Why? Is this just misplaced anti-government ideology? Cal Am is investor-owned with a government guaranteed profit. It has no incentive to serve the public's interest or keep costs down.

Since Measure J passed in 2018, Cal Am has raised the cost of our water by \$26.4 million and they are currently asking for another \$15.3 million. We have no new water supply to show for any of this money.

Our new water supply from Pure Water Monterey was not Cal Am's doing and Cal Am delayed its expansion for three years trying to make a case for its expensive and unnecessary desal.

It was Monterey One Water and MPWMD, our public agencies, who provided the new water supply we urgently needed. Common sense would argue these are the folks you want in charge of your water, not Cal Am.

— *Melodie Chrislock, managing director, Public Water Now*

MONTERERY HERALD | May 3, 2023

YOUR OPINIONS

Measure J

We are all familiar with Lincoln's statement about politics. In the instance of Measure J it goes, "you only need to fool enough of the people one time, then you've got them hooked." I know what Measure J said and that's why I didn't vote for it. But what was sold to the voters, and it's still all over the Public Water Now website is, "let's do a feasibility study." That was the mantra, over and over, and that's what a great many of the voters believed they were voting for and nothing more. Unfortunately, they didn't read the rest of Measure J, and now are hooked into what may be a very long and costly exercise. There is a way out but those who were deceived need to awaken from the spell of the mantra.

— *Ron Chesshire, Monterey*



Guest Commentary

Reconsider Cal Am takeover

By Ron Chesshire

In 2018, Peninsula voters were asked a question on the ballot for Measure J. “Should the (Monterey Peninsula Water Management District) look into acquiring our local water company and if it is feasible, move forward?” Over time this has been misconstrued as a voter mandate to purchase the water company no matter how long it takes, or how much it costs. “Feasibility” is in the eye of the beholder and the public has not had a vote as to whether it is feasible or not. Measure J can be amended by a vote of the people and that may come into play if the MPWMD continues to play games with our money and future.

The MPWMD has taken a damned the torpedoes, full steam ahead attitude. They tried to avoid complying with CEQA. They stated they did not need approval from the Local Agency Formation Commission. Upon application to LAFCO they were denied. No approval means no authority to move forward. Note — LAFCO evaluated the District’s financial planning and found it “does not ad-

LAFCO has determined that the MPWMD has no authority to operate a water system, yet the District is now suing them at our expense. This is irresponsible and shows no respect for the process or the ratepayers.

The MPWMD has a “Measure J” section on their website. One criterion they list for moving forward is it must be “legally permissible.” At present, they do not have approval and it is not. You will also find that they expected to move forward making Cal Am an offer in August or September of 2020. It appears that what they once thought was “feasible” may no longer be from a legal, budget or timeline perspective. Voters who voted for Measure J were told it would be quick, easy, and would lower costs. However, the MPWMD admits they could spend up to \$20 million and not succeed. Again, Measure J clearly stated that it was to explore the “feasibility” of a takeover, not rush straight to an unsubstantiated buyout spectacle as seen at the April 3 meeting. Inquiring minds would be suspect of the April 3 presentation which seemed to be all to conveniently arranged after the Coastal Commission hearing

Lower monthly bills are appealing to everyone, and that is likely why voters supported the Measure. But all we have 4 ½ years later is lawsuits, delays, and local government agencies rejecting the idea. At a minimum, MPWMD should put this effort on hold until they have the necessary local approvals to move forward. Many of us would like them to go further and reconsider the feasibility of their attempt. It is time for the District to stop wasting public funds. Cal Am is not for sale and a battle is brewing. California American Water will resist the use of eminent domain as other companies have and it is within legal possibility that they can win. Not all condemnation cases are “slam dunks” as MPWMD would have you believe and the Apple Valley case is one which has been presented where the Private Water Purveyor won out over the Public Entity. So why continue this takeover? This all makes for a distraction from the positive efforts that have been made in ASR, water reuse, and desalination to solve our ongoing water crisis. One may ask, “is it time to amend Measure J?”

Joel Pablo

From: mwchrislock@redshift.com
Sent: Tuesday, May 16, 2023 10:27 AM
To: Joel Pablo
Subject: Letters to the Editor

Carmel Pine Cone | May 12, 2023

No Confusion on Measure J

Ron Chesshire may be confused about Measure J, but most Cal Am customers are not. All you need do is look at your water bill to know Cal Am must go.

I was the communications director for Public Water Now during the Measure J campaign. I spent endless hours explaining that Measure J was not just a feasibility study as some attempts before it had been. Frankly, most voters didn't care, they just wanted to be rid of Cal Am and its pricey water.

The official Voter Guide was quite clear. It read, "A "Yes" vote is a vote to approve mandating that the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District establish a policy of public ownership of water systems by acquiring those systems, if feasible, currently owned and operated by Cal Am, through negotiation or eminent domain, and thereafter control the assets and manage the system."

When Measure J passed it became a law mandating that the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (MPWMD) proceed with a buyout of Cal Am if feasible. Feasibility was proven by expert consultants in 2019.

Buying Cal Am's local system through eminent domain is well worth the risk. The legal fees pale in comparison to what Cal Am continues to add to the cost of our water. In the four years since Measure J passed, Cal Am has raised the cost of our water by \$26.4 million and they are currently asking for another \$15.3 million.

Cal Am is investor-owned with a government guaranteed profit. It has no incentive to serve the public's interest or keep costs down.

Why does Ron Chesshire want Cal Am in control of our water? What does he hope to accomplish by falsely accusing Public Water Now of deceiving the public? Does he really think he can convince thousands of voters to amend Measure J and vote for Cal Am? Good luck with that.

Melodie Chrislock

Director, Public Water Now

Monterey Herald | May 6, 2023

Measure J

The recent letter about voters being ignorant of the contents of Measure J is condescending and insulting. Voters overwhelmingly supported Measure J because we are tired of our water being controlled by a private, for profit company. Cal Am's first priority is to their shareholders. That's their fiduciary responsibility. That doesn't mean the people of Monterey Bay have to accept that reality and in voting for Measure J we rejected it thoroughly.

— Gary Kreeger, Del Rey Oaks

MONTEREY HERALD | APRIL 30 2023

Water rate

I am thankful for the even-handed and clear reporting by Dennis L. Taylor on April 26 concerning the request to increase water rate by Cal Am. It is a great report, I learned more by reading it than being there.

The ratepayers lined up to speak against the rate increases, describing so many personal woes and criticism of the performance of Cal Am. Yes, the mood there could send Cal Am packing.

I heard about Cal Am's customer assistance program. Yet, I did not know the percentage of assistance being higher than other Cal Am service areas (30% vs 20%) nor the further increase to 35% that is being asked.

Well, I tell myself, had Cal Am not charged the highest rate in the nation, maybe there would be little or no need to have customer assistance. All customers could pay the bill. That would be better for all than giving Cal Am a reason to raise the rate and pretend to be a good Samaritan.

— Sylvia Shih, Monterey County

MC Weekly | April 20, 2023

Water War

Thanks for writing this (“After months of delay, Cal Am signs water purchase agreement for Pure Water Monterey expansion,” posted April 7). The Peninsula was actually waiting for years for Cal Am to sign the agreement, because the expansion took many months to get approved by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) before Cal Am delayed the signing for many months thereafter.

That is why the public buyout offer of Cal Am is so important. It’s not just Cal Am, it’s the two-headed monster that includes the CPUC. If the [Monterey Peninsula Water Management District] runs the water distributorship, the CPUC disappears from the ratemaking and regulating that they do so spectacularly poorly.

Michael Baer | Santa Clara County

Joel Pablo

From: mwchrislock@redshift.com
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 12:15 PM
To: Alvin Edwards; Amy Anderson; George Riley; Karen Paull; District 5; Marc Eisenhart; Ian Oglesby; Dave Stoldt; Joel Pablo
Subject: Herald Letter - Susan Schiavone

Monterey Herald | May 17, 2023

Measure J Clearly Written

How do we know, as suggested by a recent letter to the editor, that a great many voters for Measure J thought they were only voting for a feasibility study? This is pure conjecture. Measure J stated that a feasibility study would show if it would be financially feasible to go ahead and buy the system, and if it was too expensive, it would stop there. And the feasibility study showed it was not too expensive. That was always the goal, the study was a safeguard against a buyout at a prohibitive cost. If it was too high, don't buy. The only way to find out was to do the study first. This was repeatedly stated in all Public Water Now campaign literature. Voters clearly wanted MPWMD to buy the system and become a public water agency, removing the profit motive from our local water service. Several town hall meetings were held to discuss this, and also presented information on other water systems that bought out private suppliers and how they accomplished it.

Further, it is pretty hard to be fooled by the official Voter Guide which said, "A "Yes" vote is a vote to approve mandating that the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District establish a policy of public ownership of water systems by acquiring those systems, if feasible, currently owned and operated by Cal Am, through negotiation or eminent domain, and thereafter control the assets and manage the system." Those of us who actually worked on the campaign were clear in our communication to potential voters that this was about acquiring the system. Attempts to deny the integrity of the election are deeply disturbing and simply not true.

Susan Schiavone, Seaside