

LRGA

LOWER RIO GRANDE AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES

**LOWER RIO GRANDE AUTHORITY (LRGA)
BOARD MEETING
THURSDAY, JULY 3, 2003 – 9:00 A.M.
DONNA IRRIGATION DISTRICT
101 North FM 493
Donna, Texas**

Presiding: Bobby Sparks, President

The Lower Rio Grande Authority (LRGA) held its regular Board meeting on Thursday, June 12, at 9:00 a.m. Present were : Voting Members Ms. Sonia Kaniger, and Messrs. Bobby Sparks, Joe Barrera, Gordon Hill, Tito Nieto, Joe Pennington, Jimmy Steidinger, and JoJo White; Mr. Ken Jones, Administrative Agent; and Mr. Chuck Browning, non-voting member.

Guests: Linda Fernandez, Fernandez Group, Inc., Bill Norris, NRS Consulting Engineers, Carlos Rubinstein, TCEQ Watermaster; and John Trevino, TCEQ.

Mr. Jimmie Steidinger made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 12, 2003 Board meeting, Mr. Gordon Hill seconded the motion, and upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Following the Financial Report by Mr. Joe Barrera, ***Mr. Gordon Hill made a motion to approve this report. Ms. Sonia Kaniger seconded the motion, and upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.***

President Sparks moved to agenda item 4.A. and asked Mr. Ken Jones to report on the Legislative Update. Mr. Jones informed the Board that a letter was included in the binders from Bickerstaff, Heath, Smiley, Pollan, Keever & McDaniel, LLP, stating that SB 1902, which had created the Rio Grande Regional Water Authority, had been passed by both houses of the Texas Legislature.

The President then asked Mr. Gordon Hill to present an update on the Treaty. Mr. Hill reported that several meetings had been held with Mexico. Mr. Jo Jo White added that the State Departments from both countries were investigating prorating the water owed. Mr. Carlos Marin had called Mr. White to assure him that the IBWC was not ready to sign an agreement at this time. Mr. Hill stated that U.S. Agriculture Department Commissioner Susan Combes and other elected officials should meet with Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst to explain the concerns since he will be attending the Border

Governors Conference. Following discussion, it was agreed that Mr. Gordon Hill and Mr. Jimmie Steidinger would coordinate a meeting with Mr. Dewhurst. A suggestion was made that a rally and/or tractorcade addressing U.S. concerns regarding the Treaty be organized, and it was agreed that Ms. Linda Fernandez, Fernandez Group, Inc., would contact Ms. Karen Hughes regarding the President's stand on the Treaty.

Mr. Jones then informed the Board that a list of members of the LRGA was in the front of their binders, and a list of the Regional Water Planning Committee appeared under item 4.

The President then proceeded to agenda item 5. - Report from Carlos Rubinstein, TCEQ Watermaster, and thanked Mr. Rubinstein for attending. Mr. Rubinstein stated that as of June 28th, the reservoir level was 34.39%, and water is not being moved from Amistad at present. He added that HB 2250 had just passed, and there were at least three rules that the TCEQ would have to develop as a result of that bill: 1) define the watermaster's role in the event of a terroristic threat; 2) the TCEQ is to be the central repository of all documents dealing with water rights; and 3) Groundwater can be pumped into the Rio Grande so the river can be used as a bed and bank (this water must be conveyed to a tributary before it reaches the Rio Grande). He added that this ground water must be monitored, and there will be costs associated with this action. There is opposition from IBWC to this ground water conveyance to the river, and there is also a water quality issue. As the TCEQ develops the rules, there will be public hearings for comments to be offered. Mr. Rubinstein stated that Inflows must be present in order to divert water, and to date, he has never had to restrict anyone in the upper Rio Grande from diverting water.

Following Mr. Rubinstein's report, ***Mr. Gordon Hill made a motion that the LRGA Board write a letter to the Governor endorsing the reappointment of Chairman/Commissioner Robert J. Huston to the TCEQ. Mr. Jo Jo White seconded the motion, and upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.***

Discussion followed regarding a water bank being developed by the Irrigation District Managers Association, and it was agreed that a draft contract regarding this water bank would be developed by Mr. Jones and Mr. Rubinstein for presentation at the next LRGA meeting. Mr. Gordon Hill stated that fees to purchase water should be different for members and non-members, and Mr. Steidinger stated that the fees should be developed to be fair to everyone.

Chairman Sparks then moved to agenda item 6. A. - Master Plan Implementation, and Mr. Bill Norris, NRS Consulting Engineers, distributed information on the following:

1. Irrigation District Master Planning
2. NADBank Funding
3. Unfunded Irrigation Projects
4. Environmental/Irrigation Cooperation

Following Mr. Norris' report and discussion, the Chairman moved to agenda item 6.B. - Summit on Water Supply Issues in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, and recognized Ms.

Linda Fernandez. Ms. Fernandez requested the LRGA's support for this summit, and **a motion was made by Ms. Sonia Kaniger that the LRGA go on record in support of the concept of the Summit. Ms. Kaniger later amended the motion to include the LRGA being an organizer for the Summit. Mr. Tito Nieto seconded the motion, and upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Ms. Fernandez then continued with agenda item 6.C. - Printed Materials, and the Board was informed that the business cards, letterhead, and envelopes had been received at the LRGVDC offices in McAllen.

With regard to agenda item 6.D. – Website, Ms. Fernandez gave a brief summary on the Website, and asked the Board for approval of the website. **A motion was made by Mr. Gordon Hill and seconded by Mr. Jo Jo White, that the LRGA agree to the use of the Website for an annual cost of \$205 annually, plus a \$100 monthly maintenance fee, for a total of \$1,400 annually for this year. Upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.** Following action, Ms. Fernandez and Mr. Jones agreed to develop a general contract for public relations services by the Fernandez Group, Inc.

With reference to agenda item 7. - Consider Development of Bylaws, Ken Jones suggested that Bylaws be developed by the organization. Mr. Joe Barrera stated that he would furnish a draft bylaws to Mr. Ken Jones, and following discussion, it was the consensus of the Board that the following members comprise this committee: Ms. Sonia Kaniger, Mr. Joe Barrera, Mr. Gordon Hill, Mr. Charles Browning, and Mr. JoJo White.

The Chairman then proceeded to agenda item 8. - Discuss and Act on Future Meeting Dates and Locations, and Mr. Jones stated that the next meeting was Thursday, August 7, 2003. It was the consensus of the Board that the next meeting be scheduled for August 7, 2003, and that LRGVDC staff would attempt to locate a meeting place to accommodate a larger group of people.

New Business

With reference to agenda item 9. A. - Consider Letters of Support RE: BECC Certification of Irrigation District NADBank Projects, after Ms. Sonia Kaniger requested a letter of support from the LRGA, **Mr. Jo Jo White made a motion that the LRGA write a letter of support for Cameron County Irrigation District No. 2, Mr. Gordon Hill seconded the motion, and upon a vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

Following discussion, **a motion was made by Sonia Kaniger and seconded by Mr. Jo Jo White that the LRGA write a letter to the Texas Water Development Board recommending Mr. Gordon Hill as a member of the "Water Conservation Implementation Task Force." Upon a vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

Discussion then followed regarding certificates of membership, and it was agreed that these certificates would be another joint project between Ms. Fernandez and LRGVDC staff.

It was also agreed that selection of a legal counsel should be on the agenda for the next meeting, and that Mr. Jones would initiate a draft Request for Proposals (RFP) for review at a future meeting.

There being no further business to be conducted by the LRG Board, President Sparks adjourned the meeting.

Bobby Sparks, President

Joe Barrera, Secretary/Treasurer