



SANTA FE IRRIGATION DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Santa Fe Irrigation District
5920 Linea del Cielo
Rancho Santa Fe, California 92067
Safety Center

MONDAY, AUGUST 28, 2023
8:30 a.m.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael T. Hogan
PRESIDENT
Dana Frieauf
VICE PRESIDENT
Sandra Johnson
Ron Magnaghi
Andy Menshek

GENERAL MANAGER
Albert C. Lau, P. E.

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This meeting will be held at the above date, time, and location, and Board members and members of the public may attend in person. Members of the public may also attend virtually. Additional details on in-person participation and virtual public participation are below. Please note that in the event of technical issues that disrupt the livestream of the meeting, the meeting will continue, unless otherwise required by law, such as when a Director is attending the meeting remotely pursuant to certain provisions of the Brown Act.

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Individuals may address the Board of Directors during Oral Communications (for items not appearing on the posted agenda which are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the District) and regarding items listed on the posted agenda during the deliberation of the agenda item, as follows:

Making Public Comment for Those Not Attending In-Person:

Members of the public who wish to address the Board of Directors under Oral Communications or on specific agenda items **who are not attending in person** may do so as instructed below:

1. You may send **written comments** to the Board Secretary for receipt ***no later than 7:30 a.m., August 28, 2023*** to be read during the appropriate portion of the meeting. Written comments must be limited to 300 words/ have a reading limit of 3 minutes for each comment and emailed to cmcdowell@sfidwater.org, mailed to the attention of Celina McDowell, Board Secretary, SFID, P. O. Box 409, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067, or physically deposited in the District’s payment drop box located in the public parking lot at the District’s Administrative Office at 5920 Linea del Cielo, Rancho Santa Fe, California 92067.
2. To provide **verbal comments during the meeting**, join the Zoom meeting by computer, mobile phone, or dial-in number. On Zoom video conference by computer or mobile phone, use the “Raise Hand” feature. This will notify the Board Secretary that you wish to speak during Oral Communications or a specific agenda item. If joining the meeting using the Zoom dial-in number, you can raise your hand by pressing *9. Speakers are asked to state their name, address, and topic, and to observe a time limit of three (3) minutes each.

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ROLL CALL - CALL MEETING TO ORDER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Director Magnaghi

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS ON ITEMS NOT APPEARING ON THE AGENDA

Opportunity for members of the public to address the Board of Directors on items not appearing on the posted agenda, pursuant to Government Code Section 54954.3.

ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

The following items on the Action Agenda call for discussion and action by the Board of Directors. All items are placed on the Agenda so that the Board may discuss and take action on the item if the Board is so inclined.

1. Review of Updated AMI Portal Implementation (pages xx-xx)

ADJOURNMENT Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the Board of Directors for any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection on the District's website at www.sfidwater.org



The mission of Santa Fe Irrigation District is to meet the water supply needs of all its customers — safely, sustainably, reliably, and cost-effectively.

BOARD REPORT

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Albert C. Lau, P. E.

INITIATED BY: Teresa Penunuri, Public Communications Officer
Seth Gates, Director of Administrative Services

DATE: August 28, 2023

SUBJECT: Review of Updated AMI Portal Implementation

Strategic Focus Area:

GOAL 2. Customer Service Focus and Communication
2.3a Develop a new customer portal for water use tracking and bill pay

Recommendation:

Direct Staff to develop and send a survey / questionnaire to current customers who utilize the AMI portal to gauge their satisfaction and what their top priorities for enhancement and timing may be.

Background:

The District's installation of Automated Meter Infrastructure (AMI) was completed for all customers in 2021, which allows for remote collection of customer water usage data, ease of billing, and most importantly – allows customers to view their water use. To allow customers to view their data, the District utilizes the native online system from the manufacturer, Sensus. The Sensus Analytics platform is a web-based portal, allowing customers access to monitor their water usage, review past and current use trends, and set up usage alerts. These features allow customers to make more informed decisions about water use and potentially respond to issues such as leaks faster.

Staff issued a request for proposal (RFP) for an updated customer portal in Fall 2021, in alignment with the District's Strategic Business Plan. Several responses were received from companies leading the field in water use data tracking and outreach. After evaluating the proposals and recommending a company to update the portal, the Administrative and Finance Committee directed Staff to continue evaluating options, citing a better balance that could be achieved between cost and enhanced features not currently offered by Sensus. Staff continued encouraging customers to sign up for the portal and continued market research to monitor changes in the marketplace in regard to features, cost, and implementation timelines.

In the months following the presentation to the Administrative and Finance Committee, additional regulatory issues such as the continued development of water-use efficiency standards and State required water loss reporting, among others, have had an impact on the potential wants / needs of the District in relation to a new customer portal. Additionally, the District was required to modify its potable water rates due to the loss of local water supply, which will be in place until December 31, 2024, while another cost-of-service study is undertaken. This new cost-of-service study will evaluate budget-based rates, which would have a significant impact on the requirements for a new customer portal.

In June 2023, an updated presentation was made to the Administrative and Finance Committee that provided a recommendation to delay implementation of a new portal until more information on budget-based rates and rulemaking for the water-use efficiency standards moves forward. After a presentation at the June 2023 Board meeting, Staff was directed to provide additional research and options, with a special Board workshop to be scheduled to continue discussions on if a new portal should be developed or to expand outreach to encourage use of the existing portal (among other potential options).

Discussion:

Board Survey & Outcomes

In preparation for the workshop, a survey was sent to the Board to gauge satisfaction with the existing portal and to prioritize policy issues. The questions posed to the Board members are as follows. The Board members were asked to say whether they were: very satisfied, satisfied, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied. Included with each question is their respective outcomes.

- Question 1- Rate your satisfaction with the usability of the existing AMI portal (including sign-up, ease of use, navigation, etc.)

Very Satisfied - 0

Satisfied - 2

Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied - 1

Dissatisfied - 1

Very Dissatisfied - 1

- Question 2 – Rate your satisfaction with the AMI Portal Leak Detection Notification capability.

Very Satisfied - 1
 Satisfied - 1
 Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied - 2
 Dissatisfied - 1
 Very Dissatisfied - 0

- Question 3 – Rate your satisfaction with the AMI portal ability to set the usage threshold and notification capabilities.

Very Satisfied - 1
 Satisfied - 0
 Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied - 2
 Dissatisfied - 2
 Very Dissatisfied - 0

- Question 4 – Rate your satisfaction with the overall functionality of the portal.

Very Satisfied - 0
 Satisfied - 1
 Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied - 1
 Dissatisfied - 2
 Very Dissatisfied - 1

As can be seen from the outcomes in these four questions, the usage threshold and notification and the usability and functionality of the portal (i.e., ability to set thresholds, sign-up and easy of navigation) were the main areas of dissatisfaction; however, no questions had consensus positivity. With the outcome of these four questions, it is apparent that improvements to the portal should be undertaken – with the questions of when and with what priorities remaining.

The policy priorities that the Board were presented to rank from least to most important were as follows:

- Item 1 – Water-use Efficiency – This policy objective would focus on educating customers about their consumption patterns and encourage them to adopt water-saving practices. Providing tips and suggestions for rebates based on their usage data further incentivizes customers to reduce their use. For consideration, the State is mandating indoor and outdoor standards, but the estimated one-year rule-making process has yet to begin. These standards must be appropriately communicated to each customer.
- Item 2 – Leak Detection and Alerts – This policy objective would focus on identifying abnormal water usage patterns. Policies can mandate timely alerts to customers, encouraging corrective action and preventing water waste.
- Item 3 – Budget Management and Usage Tracking – This policy objective can encourage the integration of budgeting tools that allow customers to set water usage

- targets, receive notifications when they approach or exceed their predefined limits, and help estimate their bills. Billing calculations should be clear and provide education and resources for additional information. Note- any changes to the water rate structure will necessitate a major overhaul to the portal and re-education to customers on its use.
- Item 4 – Customer Engagement and Outreach – This policy objective would focus on engaging customers through the portal. Educational resources, conservation tips, rebates and classes and other informative content to raise awareness of water-use efficiency. Additional information on outages, planned construction and maintenance would also be pushed to customers.
 - Item 5 – Accessibility and User-Friendly Interface – This policy objective would ensure that the portal is user-friendly and accessible to all customers, regardless of age or technical experience. Considerations for accessibility features, such as text-to-speech options, options for visually impaired users, and a potential App.

The Board identified leak detection and alerts as the top issue (with a score of 4.4– higher scores mean greater priority), tied with accessibility and user-friendly interface (with a score of 4.4). Water-use efficiency (score of 2.8), budget management and customer engagement (score of 2.4) and outreach (score of 1.0) followed in that order.

Potential Outcomes Based on Survey

With the top two Board survey priorities being leak detection and accessibility and user-friendly interface – whatever portal the District provides its customers, the Board feel that they are very satisfied with what the portal provides in those areas. Based on the RFP that was issued in 2021, a new portal that could be implemented now could prioritize these two items, with constant water use alerts and a mobile application-based portal that could be provided (among other enhancements to these areas).

Deployment of a new portal that focuses on these enhancements would take approximately 9-12 months to properly deploy to customers – where current users could be migrated, new training provided, and all data properly transitioned to the new platform. Based on the prior RFP, this would cost approximately \$50,000 - \$100,000+.

Potential Second Portal Transition

While considering the policy issues in relation to implementing a new portal, there are other items that the Board should also consider regarding the timing of implementation and customer impact.

- Rulemaking/Implementation for AB 1668 and SB 606 (Conservation as a Way of Life): The formal rulemaking for this legislation began in August 2023 and is estimated to take one year to final approval by the State Water Resources Control Board. Data from AMI will be used to determine the District’s overall budget, and the portal has the potential to be used to reach customers, allow customers to estimate their water use on a monthly or annual basis, and track variances per the final standards. The portal will

need to be updated when this rulemaking is completed, currently estimated to be July 2024.

- Cost of Service: The District will begin a new cost of service process beginning in 2024. Changes to the potable water rate structure will need to be included in the portal and may have an impact on the programming and cost of the portal. This may include budget based rates, where improvements to the portal could include usage prediction within your assigned budget.
- Customer Impact: Outreach, enrollment and training for a new portal will need to be done and there is a potential for customers to have to go through two enrollment and training cycles depending upon the timeline for the above-mentioned issues.

If the Board were to direct Staff to transition to a new portal in the next year, it is possible that these future items could be accommodated through optional task orders; however, this would make the RFP more complex and potentially attract less interest in the project. The other option / potential would be to transition to another portal in the future that could better accommodate these items, with added expense and potential for customer confusion.

Staff Recommendation

The recommendation is that the Board direct Staff to issue a customer survey to the current users of the portal, asking what their satisfaction is with the current portal and what their priorities in a portal may be that aren't currently being met. Customer survey(s) are a goal under the Strategic Plan, and this feedback would be valuable for the Board to review prior to directing Staff to change the current portal. Staff should be able to complete this survey within 45-60 days, and then could bring this information back to the Board (in combination with any direction provided to Staff at this meeting) to review and receive any final direction on the approach Staff should take in replacing / keeping the current portal.