

From: [Kevan Urquhart](#)
To: [Barbara Buikema](#)
Cc: [Domine Barringer](#)
Subject: Director Urquhart's Questions on Board Packet
Date: Wednesday, December 18, 2024 2:49:06 PM

Sorry for the long list late in the day. I do not expect a written nor immediate response. Hopefully the questions will help stimulate additional clarification & information from staff during tomorrow's Board meeting.

Sincerely,
Kevan Urquhart
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Questions for 12/19/2024 Board Mtg.

Item 6 – 11/21/24 Board Minutes. This question applies to how we list Board Member absences. Other Boards/Commissions I've served on note whether an absence was approved/noticed in advance, as all of ours usually are. Why can't the minutes reflect this? Some Boards/Commissions even take a vote to approved a pre-notified absence as valid an approved.

Item 12 – Collections Report. As mentioned in Item 26, why aren't we cleaning the forced main? What are the consequences of that? How are we going to do proper long-term maintenance? What capital improvements need to be made to achieve a better operational state? What would the timeline and costs for those improvements be? Are they in our Capital Improvement Plan? Answers to all these may necessitate a separate noticed agenda item at a future meeting. Please discuss with the President/President Pro-Tem to agendize them.

Item 13 – good report with good improvement ideas.

Item 18 – last bullet, page 139. What are the ramifications of the Discharge Permit violations if any [e.g., fines etc.]? What are we doing to prevent them in future? [some info on this was include in report]

Item 20 – This staff note doesn't include a thorough discussion of why this has to be at Range 34. It needs a salary comparison analysis for public transparency. I have been and will always request this for any new positon, classification change, or any salary range adjustment, as the public will want to know the details.

Item 21 – the CPO data is on the wrong line in the table and needs to be moved above/below = with the CSS as they're both at same pay range.

Item 23 - This staff note doesn't include a thorough discussion of why this has to be at Range 34. It needs a better salary comparison analysis for public transparency. The St. of CA Chemist comp is shown [Thank you] but the salaries and employers for the CASA comps are not shown, just alluded to, and I feel they need to be. I have been and will always request this for any new position, classification change, or any salary range adjustment, as the public will want to know the details. Why are we pre-assuming the position won't fill based on the normal comps used in all other salary setting? What quantitative evidence do you have this is necessary? Shouldn't we list at the normal level and see what happens, then reconsider if we don't get applicants? It does not appear that the LM has duties and legal responsibilities/liabilities equivalent to the CPO/OS/CSS, so shouldn't they be classified at a lower range? Does this proposal in this one case to break from past practice set a precedent for the future? I request that the ramifications that this proposal may have for future salary negotiations be referred to our labor negotiations lawyer for comment, and his response be discussed in a closed session, if it is appropriate to do so.

Item 24 – Who chooses whether to have management or an external consultant do this? That needs to be in the policy.

Item 26 – Appeal: Isn't this to some degree a long delayed application due to confounding circumstances vs just purely a brand new application?

The prior plumbing permit was issued for the Fire Station only. CAWD has the prior issued plumbing permit and it didn't include any other parcels. For what it is worth there was clearly an intention to connect the Gas Station property in the same connection, but it didn't pan out.

Para. 2 Page 210; please explain how the vague catch all Ordinance 2019-02 specifically prohibits this?

The specific section of Ordinance 2019-02 is Section 4.03 "PRIVATE PUMP STATIONS" paragraph B.6. "The pressure line from the pump system shall break to gravity flow prior to connecting to the sewer main."

Since this has been a recognized problem since 2014 that has affected multiple applicants [?~4?], why has no uniform policy been developed by staff and formally approved by the Board to provide planning & permitting transparency to applicants? Catch all regs like this may be necessary for unexpected and unforeseeable situations, but once a situation repeats itself, shouldn't formal policies and procedures be developed by staff and approved by the Board?

I can't say what the prior thinking was, other than we try to accommodate new and sometimes unique connections the best we can. There have been so few of these it hasn't been a big issue. However, I think the District should be careful in inviting anyone and everyone in the Highlands to connect in this way, because this is not how typical sewer collection systems are designed and I am trying to point out that they carry additional risk above and beyond a standard connection. Caution is warranted.

Page 211, Para. 4 – please provide the number of times in recent years that this catch all ordinance has had to be applied, and examples, so that I can understand how it is being utilized.

. Engineer discretion is used often when a developer is building new projects and the existing District Standards do not cover a unique situation. For example, engineer discretion was used extensively during the plan review process for the September Ranch development project. Had the District Engineer not had discretionary authority every detail would have had to involve rewriting the District Ordinance, bogging down the process. The District Engineer uses discretion in unique situations to balance the needs of the individual developer with the best interests of all the District ratepayers.

Page 211, last Para. 4 - please name and provide a map of the parcels referred to, and the dates and magnitude of their failures.

The report only points out one recent failure, and that failure wouldn't have happened to a standard connection that meets the District ordinance specified above (i.e. breaks to gravity).

Why hasn't the Fire Stations connection failed?

There is always a risk, and the consequence of risk can be predicted based on the specific situation. In this case a connection that doesn't "break to gravity" carries higher risks.

Was the recent failure solely/primarily due to the unpermitted and uninspected expansion of that separate residential system, possibly installed without a Certified PE designing it, and thereafter inadequately maintained??

The purpose of highlighting the recent failure was to illustrate the additional risk that pressurized connections inherently carry. Had that been a standard connection sewage from the District forcemain would not have backflowed onto the private property.

Who did that work, and who owns that property?

We can find out who did the work, and I would prefer not to name the property owner here.

Have we reported them as a building code/permit violation to the County?

No.

How does that event prove a properly designed connection would fail, if the Fire Station's hasn't?

A standard connection that "breaks to gravity" wouldn't fail in such a dramatic fashion because the District main wouldn't be backflowing into the private system. The homeowner could just stop using their water and the sewage would stop flowing.

What amount of sewage would this proposed connection provide vs the existing Fire Stations connection?

We haven't gotten to the stage in the application process where we assess the fees based on the flow and solids loading.

How is the engineering and design for this proposed connection different that the multiple much larger existing connections allowed to the forced main when it was constructed?

There aren't multiple much larger connections similar to the one being discussed here. Essentially all other connections to the District system (even in the Highlands) meet the requirement to "break to gravity". All the private lines that were part of the original construction connect upstream of the Highlands Pump Station and "break to gravity".