

Romaldo Water Company Meeting- MaryJane Nelson and Mike Grua's home  
1/14/24.....4-6pm

Present:

Bill Hurst

Amy Love

Mike Grua

Mary Jane Nelson/ Cole MuCussic/ Andrew Hahn (briefly)

Brent Bixler

Nancy Bixler

Craig Jennings

Bob Carmody

Ember Bartsch

Kendra Bartsch

Ben Cassou

Kara Van Abeele

Bob Evans

Kimberely Evans

Amber York / Gregory Bosson

Not present:

Judy Jennings- Lives out of state

Kurt Lusink - Possibly was misinformed on the date

Ron Buzard- No reason provided

Robert Heilmayr/ Joan Dudney- Family Emergency

#### **BULLET POINTS OF TOPICS DISCUSSED:**

- A. Financial discussion
- B. Update on work to be completed
- C. Creating a board
- D. Tightening of water system regulations will be happening in the future
- E. Being responsible to the whole and taking responsibility for our part
- F. Forgiveness Policy
- G. Itemized expenses
- H. Payment log
- I. Upcoming meetings

#### **OUTCOMES OF TOPICS DISCUSSED:**

An overall theme was about impressing the importance of fulfilling well responsibilities, not only to ourselves, but also to the well itself, and to each other. Details below.

**A. Ben gave an update on our well bank account.** We presently have around \$7,131.69 , which is not enough to cover upcoming bills. To cover the upcoming expenses, at the last meeting- 11/29/23, we agreed to increase our water bill by \$100 per household to build up our kitty, starting December 2023. If you have not made this payment for December, please do. We also agreed to pay an extra \$2,500 per household by February. All but 3 households have paid their \$1250 by the December deadline. If you haven't already, please do so. In February, another \$1250 is due. Ben and Kara will provide a financial update each bill period. Amy agreed to help Kara with creating a template for this. We agreed to read meters once a month to monitor our water usage and catch leaks early. Please see itemized list of expenses and payments at the end of these minutes.

**B. Bill gave an update on some of the work that is before us:**

1. **Drafting a new water rights agreement for the well.** Legal work on this with the attorney has commenced for the time being due to the lack of funds. Eric Burkhart is the attorney that has been working on this for years with Bill. "Approximate" legal cost to complete this is around \$15-20,000 with a 20% margin of error. Infrastructure work to be completed to included in the agreement consist of ( but not exhaustive):
  - a) Survey work for well shaft to be included in agreement
  - b) At the discretion of each property owner: Securing easements for our water line across another's property, to be included in agreement. It was stated that home sales in California have been getting discounted up to \$100,000 for not securing easements for their water line. Water lines would need to be found, and it is best to bring them up to code by digging them down at least 18" and 1.5 feet around each side.
  - c) Tie in new easement ( What was this referring to?)
  - d) Secure liability insurance to cover all home owners on well system.
  - e) Include an indemnification agreement/ hold harmless agreement for all homeowners, since we all work on the well.
  - f) Secure errors and omissions insurance for all home owners too.
  - g) Discussion centered on whether we keep the current structure for our well, namely an association with a checking account and water rights. Or do we move to a non profit or business model. At this time, members are leaning to keeping it as is, but no formal vote was taken.
2. **Well infrastructure:**
  - a) We need to pour 4 feet of concrete to bring the pad up to code. Contractor Kevin (across from the mailboxes) is doing the work. We will need to be able to afford to pay him when he completes the work.
  - b) The electrical work has commenced, for now.. We've gone as far as we can go, for now. Anticipated \$12-15,000 in expenses ( with \$5,000 margin of error), to comply with edison requirements and inspections. The expected costs do not include possible expenses for pump related

issues. Hopefully we can still use our existing pump. (Someone said we should get it in writing, but I am not sure what that was referring to. ??)

- c) We need to dispose of the old well shaft. Brent Bixler offered to borrow a big plasma cutter to cut the top off of it. Concrete would then need to be poured in it. Bill has been communicating with the county officials to bring this up to code and he believes he can get agreement from them, for us to complete the work. TBD. It is extremely difficult to get vendors up here to complete work, so it's best we try and take care of this ourselves.
- d) Survey work is in process to add new well shaft into ownership agreement. We have to record it the same way it was recorded 50 years ago and Bill has secured this information. We have currently met the tankage amount requirements.
- e) Tankage- 6 months time line- \$20-25,000.

**C.** We agreed on creating a **board** whose assignment is researching and creating priorities for the next meetings. They will provide email updates to all households, on action items, when we pay our bill. It is not a governing or decision making board, but a collective to help spread the load of responsibility. (Decisions for our well are still by majority vote- 51%). Time commitment is approximately 4 hours a month. Members are to be meeting by phone within the month and will provide a structured agenda for the next meeting.

Members were chosen:

- a) Bill - Grand Poobah
- b) Bob- Commissar of Easements
- c) Ben and Kara- Curators of the Gold
- d) Nelson- Grua household - The Royal Court
- e) Robert and Joan- TBD

Additional general services provided by Ember as the Master Gardener (providing weed abatement and plantings at well site) And Amber as the Court Reporter.

**D.** There was discussion that we are still currently deemed by the county as a "Small Water System.". However, Bill has apprised that **regulations are tightening** and in years to come, we will be expected to comply with stiffer requirements, including:

- a) How much water we are expected to have per connection
- b) More testing and recording by a licensed professional like Dean May

This increase in scrutiny is partly due to the increased density in Santa Barbara. It will be helpful to have the new county fire station when it is built at the top of the pass.

- c) And more.....

**E.** There was pointed discussion about the importance of **all households being responsible to each other**. It's important for us to be transparent, as well as hold each other accountable. Responsibilities include:

- a) Volunteering to help
- b) Paying our monthly bills as well as the extra costs

- c) Attending at least one meeting per year, but preferable all meetings to have a say in the decision making process. And to notify when one is not going to be present. And to be sure to expect and read notes after each meeting. Bring any questions to the next meeting and since meetings will be held more frequently, try not to take up individual member's private time.
- d) To do one's part on legal issues that concern their property
- e) Use of the hardship clause by alerting treasurers when they are going to be late with payments. \$25 penalty incurs for late payment.
- f) If the damage to our water line was caused by ourselves or by nature, it seems in order that we would be responsible for fixing our line. If the damage was caused by the property owner who is granting the easement, it is respectful to assume this household will take care of the damage, both physically and financially.

We should do our best to remind each other if one has overlooked their responsibilities. Consequences for being neglectful will be inevitable, as other households are not in the position to pick up the slack for other's neglect. It also seems homeowners would not want to suffer the legal repercussions of neglect, when it comes time to sell, by choices that are their own doing. The consequences of non compliance will be voted on in the next meeting.

**F. Leak forgiveness** policy was reiterated. To detect leaks earlier, we voted in November to report our meter readings to the treasurers, every 1st of the month. Billing will still be every other month. We are allowed one forgiveness claim per year. To qualify, the leak must be double the amount of your average gal/day . \$400 will be subsidized for a leak detection service. Charges for Tier 3 and 4 would be cut in half. If one locates the leak themselves, Tier 3 and 4 are still discounted for that 2 month period. Please report the date of the notice of leak immediately to Ben and Kara. It could be helpful to email them a picture of the leak area with a description of the area.

**G. Current balance and expenses;**

Balance: \$7,131,69

Recent bills: \$9500 (pd) to Dino Pauletto. Trenching SCE conduit, repair pipe, electrical meter panel ( partial payment).

\$3,500 (pd) Hansen Well Do Service

Upcoming bills: \$3,800 - Topographic Survey ( paying this week)

**H. December payments:**

Bartsch: \$250.00 PAID

Bixler: \$250 PAID

Buzard: \$250.00 PAID  
Cassou/ Van Abeele: \$250.00 PAID  
Carmody: \$250.00 PAID  
Evans: \$250.00 PAID  
Grua/ Nelson: \$250.00 PAID  
Heilmayr/ Dudney: \$250.00 PAID  
Hurst/Love: \$250.00 PAID  
Jennings: \$250.00 PAID  
Lusink: \$250.00 PAID  
York: \$250.00 PAID

**Extra Expenses: \$2,500 due by Feb.1st, 2024 - (KVA - I think this was going to be due with the next bill in early March? Could be misremembering and if we need it now and prefer this timeline we can keep it as is)**

Bartsch: \$1,250 PAID.....\$1,250 DUE  
Bixler: \$2,500 DUE  
Buzard: \$1250 PAID .....\$1,250 DUE  
Cassou/ Van Abeele: \$1,250 PAID.....\$1,250 DUE  
Carmody: \$1,250 PAID.....\$1,250 DUE  
Evans: \$1,250 PAID.....\$1,250 DUE  
Grua/ Nelson: \$2,500 DUE  
Heilmayr/ Dudney: \$1,250 PAID.....\$1,250 DUE  
Hurst/ Love: \$1.250 PAID.....\$1.250 DUE  
Jennings/ \$1,250 PAID.....\$1,250 DUE  
Lusink: \$2,500 DUE  
York: \$1,250 PAID.....\$1,250 DUE

I. Meetings will be quarterly. The next one will be on Sunday, 3/17/24 at 10am, and will be hosted by the Nelson /Grua royal court within their hilltop castle.