

Ramah Water and Sanitation District Board meeting called to order by Board Chairman Robert Montague, on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 7:03pm.

Board members in attendance: Robert Montague, Whitney Croley, Michael Croley, Shawna Grassie, Blanche Clawson will be attending the meeting later virtually through google meets.

Also in attendance are the operator Flint Tietjen, the secretary, Michele Macias, and two community members who are RW&SD account owners.

Whitney River-Croley offers the opening prayer. Shawna Grassie leads the pledge of allegiance.

The board chairman asks if all board members had a chance to read over the July minutes. Everyone agrees they did. Robert Montague asks if there are any changes that needed to be made to the minutes. Everyone agrees that no changes need to be made.

**Shawna Grassie makes a motion to approve the minutes from the July 2025 meeting. Michael Croley seconded the motion. Board Chairman calls for a vote, all in favor say "Aye." The motion carries unanimously.**

Flint Tietjen gives the operators report. Operator repaired (put back up) the fence that is behind the office and connects to the neighboring property, the fence was down from when we put in a sewage line several years ago. The operator finished putting the water meter in for the new dollar general store that is being constructed. Board member asks when Cole Tietjen's official last day is? Cole's last official day at the transfer station was Saturday and he will do some mowing in town in the next couple of days. The new hire, Michael Macias, will be picking up customers' trash tomorrow (Wednesday August 13<sup>th</sup>) and working at the transfer station on Saturday. The operator took the lead and copper testing samples to Albuquerque; we are required to take 10 samples every 3 years now. We shouldn't have any issues with those testing results, because we haven't had any in the past. We have had customers complain about the smell of sulfur in the water and there is nothing we can do about the smell until we get some more rain or there is less demand on our water supply in town. Usually during the summer is when we have that problem because we pump so much more water during the summer.

The secretary gives her report. Each board member has a copy of the monthly July 2025 summary. In the deposits we had two payments from GMCSO, so the income shows much more for July because of those two different payments from the school being received in one month. 2<sup>nd</sup> page of the summary expenses shows the biannual water conservation fee

and several quarterly payments that were made. The bank reconciliations are presented to the board to sign.

At this time of the meeting Blanche Clawson joins via google meets, we ensure that she can hear us and that we can hear her.

Update on the NMDOT grant, we are approved for the grant and our contact at NMDOT says we need to let them know when we want to start the project. The board Chairman talked to Rodney with McKinley County roads about whether they have millings available and would we be able to purchase millings from them again like we did last year, because we got a much better deal on the millings when we purchased from McKinley County than we would get from C&E or another provider. The secretary will look up the letter or agreement we had with McKinley County last year for reference. It is discussed how many millings we think we would need for this project. Everyone agrees we should talk to the county again about getting millings for this DOT project. To start the NMDOT project we would need to complete some paperwork to submit to NMDOT and once that paperwork is completed then they would release the grant funds. The board discusses the primary road needing work is South Bloomfield going to the high school. When it was paved, there were no shoulders created, so the road on the sides is breaking off. A community member suggests the board look into funding from the state that helps pay for school transportation. The board discussed that when the school paid to have that road paved, RW&SD agreed to maintain the road. It is suggested that there still may be help with repairing the road through the department of education school bus route. The secretary will look into possible funding or help with that road since it is a bus route to a high school.

The secretary gives the board members an update on our wells and the discussion she had with the office of the state engineer when she called. We previously discussed what we would need to do to get the Tietjen well approved, when we had the report from Dr. Shomaker concerning our wells and how to move forward concerning the Tietjen well. When the secretary spoke with the office of the state engineer, they had no record of the Highway well. They did have the Lambson well in their records under RW&SD's ownership but did not have the Coffey Well under our name and ownership. The secretary thought it was best to ask Dr. Shomaker for advice on how to move forward and he says he will look over all the paperwork and type up a plan for us. Dr. Shomaker mentioned the existing water rights have been adjudicated in the Zuni River Basin litigation, so the beginning point would most likely be to file a declaration of ownership of water rights for each existing well before the OSE would accept any other applications for a new well. He says he will outline a plan for us.

The secretary presents to the board members the list of customers who received shut off notices and had not paid for the 2 months due before the time and date of the meeting, in the shut off notice the due date was August 11<sup>th</sup> and it is now August the 12<sup>th</sup>. The secretary is asking the board what they want her and the operator to do, because these people have received shut off notices and have not paid. The secretary also presents to the board the excel spreadsheet that shows a list of all current customers and who have been late with their payments and have received shut off notices. The excel spreadsheet shows there is a pattern of customers who have been late paying their bill more than 2 or 3 times and have received multiple shut off notices. The board asks a few questions and look over the list and they ask the operator to go to these customers' property and see if they are home we can collect payment before shutting off their services. It is discussed that RW&SD's policy is to mail a shut off notice out as soon as a customer is late paying their bill, on the shut off notice the total amount due is the late month, the "current" month and the late fee which makes up the total amount the customer owes and the customer is given approximately 28 days from the date of the notice to pay the full amount or their services will be disconnected. RW&SD began that policy because some customers were only paying for their past due month and not the total due, these customers were habitually late and stayed behind on paying for the services they were receiving. It is discussed that one of the customers is a renter and why isn't that account in the property owner's name? The reason is that account was set up before the board implemented the policy that all accounts are required to be in the property owners' name. If that customer's water does get shut off, then for it to get turned back on, the past due would need to be paid, a \$100 reconnection fee and the account would then be required to be placed in the property owner's name. There is one customer on the list who does not receive water from us, but uses our sewage treatment services, and the board discusses what options we have for getting payment from that customer since we cannot easily disconnect services, because we would need to dig up the sewage line and cap it off. There is a suggestion that we place a lien on the property to receive payment for that account. The board decides for the customer that only has sewage and maintenance fees, to send that customer a certified letter stating if they do not pay their bill, that RW&SD will place a lien on the customer's property to collect payment. The other two accounts that received shut off notices are water customers, so we could shut off their services if we need to. The operator will go to the two properties with water services the next morning and try to collect payment and if they don't, he will be shutting off their services.

The **next item on the agenda** is the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter approval resolution and the board chairman asks where a copy of that resolution is. The secretary states that they went over the 4<sup>th</sup> quarterly report in July's meeting and the board approved those numbers. We typed up a

resolution and the board members signed it previously; we have the resolution on the agenda for this meeting to ensure that we are following proper procedures and officially approving the resolution that approves the 4<sup>th</sup> quarterly report for fiscal year 2025 in a public meeting.

**Shawna Grassie makes a motion to approve the resolution for the fiscal year 25 , 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, that we discussed and covered in the July meeting. Whitney Croley seconded the motion. Board chairman calls for a vote, all in favor say, “Aye.” The motion carries unanimously.**

**The next item on the agenda** is the resolution authorizing filing of an application for financial assistance from the New Mexico Water Trust Board concerning our sewage treatment system. The board discusses this will be a similar process to the one we are currently going through with the WTB planning grant for the water system. This is a resolution to agree to apply for funding and at this point wouldn't cost us anything. This application would be for another planning grant for the wastewater treatment system and the wastewater PER that was paid for by McKinley County would qualify towards our matching funds.

**Whitney Croley makes a motion to accept the resolution FY26-01 authorizing the filing of an application for financial assistance from the New Mexico Water Trust Board concerning our sewage treatment system. Shawna Grassie seconded the motion. The board chairman calls for a vote and all in favor say, “Aye.” The motion carries unanimously.**

**The next item on the agenda** is vote and discussion on cemetery fencing. Each board member has a copy of a printout of fencing supplies from Home Depot, the board chairman and the operator compiled a list of fencing supplies and approximate costs for those supplies to install a heavy duty steel fence for 320 feet across the front of the Ramah cemetery from gate to gate. The board members look over and discuss the costs and the quality of the fencing. The board discusses needing to add bags of cement mix to the estimated cost of supplies and discusses the options for a cement mixer and the size of the auger the operator would need to dig the post holes for the fence. The secretary mentions that we did receive a quote from a fencing company and if they installed the fence, the quote was approximately \$39,000 for the fence and installation. If RW&SD buys the fence and fencing supplies, our operator, part time laborer and intern installed the fence, the total cost to us would be much less. The supplies for the steel fence, 320 feet, would cost us between \$9,000 and \$11,000. The board discusses how many feet of fencing they would install for this first section of the cemetery. 320 feet would be from gate to gate. The board discusses when interns will start working here, around the beginning of September.

Operator has a big cement mixer, but board members have a cement mixer available as well. Everyone discusses that the NMDOT project and the cemetery fencing project would need to be worked on separately. It may be possible to finish the NMDOT project first and then still have enough good weather to complete the cemetery fencing, depending on when we can start the NMDOT project and get millings ordered and delivered. The board discusses proceeding with ordering the fencing supplies soon, because the prices will keep increasing and we could store the supplies until we are ready to use them.

**Shawna Grassie makes a motion to proceed with the fencing for the cemetery, front portion (320 feet from gate to gate) with the proposed size and style from Home Depot in the amount of \$12,000 to include the panels, the fence wire, the brackets and the cement. Michael Croley seconded the motion. The board chairman calls for a vote. All in favor say, "Aye." The motion carries unanimously.**

**The next item on the agenda** is discussion and vote on buying a skip loader. The skip loader we are considering purchasing is currently in a repair shop. It runs, but there is something going on with the power, so once the repair shop figures out what is going on with the skip loader and what it would take to repair it, then the operator will test the skip loader and can make an offer to the seller. The board discusses how much the seller is asking for the skip loader and how much RW&SD would be willing to purchase the skip loader for as long as it is in good working condition. The skip loader would help us complete the upcoming NMDOT project we have planned. The secretary and the operator looked up comparable options for pricing and age of skip loaders, there are not a lot of comparable options available in NM, but one that is available in the area, was printed out and presented to the board and its age and pricing are similar to the one we are looking at purchasing from a local seller.

**Whitney Croley makes a motion to buy the skip loader, with the option for the operator to offer less than the asking price, but he can spend up to \$24,000, only as long as it is in good working condition. Shawna Grassie seconded the motion. The board Chairman calls for a vote, all in favor say "Aye." The motion carries unanimously.**

**The next item on the agenda** is the discussion and possible vote on which style updated map for the RW&SD water and sewage line mapping the board prefers. The operator and the secretary discussed and looked at options for updating the mapping system. There is an online option, where we can build and map the system online, but that would cost approximately \$20 per month for the subscription to that mapping system. Or we could use the paper print out maps that we have used in the past and the operator updates the sewage and water lines on that same paper print out maps. Everyone discusses how often we need to update our map for our system, and would it be a worthwhile use of the

district's money to pay for a monthly subscription for an online mapping system, when a paper mapping system would be sufficient for our records, since we are such a small district. The board decides it's best to use the same paper mapping system for the operator to update and there is no need to vote on that.

**The next item on the agenda** is discussion and vote on ordering more smoke canisters for rodent/prairie dog control. The operator gives an update on how many smoke canisters he has left from when we ordered 400 a couple of months ago. He has approximately 70 canisters left, he used the majority of them at the cemetery, some at the sewage treatment plant and some at the district office. The prairie dog population is really bad right now, so the board discusses ordering more, so we can have them on hand for when we need them. The last time we ordered it took several months for us to get the boxes that we ordered. The board discusses how many boxes we should order and agrees that ordering 2 boxes or up to 5 boxes of smoke canisters would be a good idea, because we need to have enough smoke canisters to control the prairie dog population and we can store what we don't use. The idea is to be able to get the prairie dog population under control and have extra smoke canisters on hand for future use.

**Shawna Grassie makes a motion to order more smoke canisters for the rodent/prairie dog control up to \$2,500. Michael Croley seconded the motion. The board chairman calls for a vote, all in favor say "Aye." The motion carries unanimously.**

**The next item on the agenda** is getting an extra dumpster for fall clean up. The board discusses whether the district made any money on the previous extra dumpster. We did not make a profit on the previous extra dumpster, but it filled up in one day. The board members agree it is a valuable opportunity for the community members to dump extra trash here locally, instead of that trash accumulating in their yards or in the community. The board discusses that we should probably get two extra dumpsters this time, once one fills up, get another one and the prices we would charge would be the same. The board discusses how soon we could get an extra dumpster delivered to the transfer station and how quickly we could get a flyer out to the community. The operator mentions having taken metal to a place in Gallup to sell and get money for the metal, which the money from that goes back to RW&SD. It is discussed that we could take batteries (example: car batteries), because we will be able to take those somewhere to get money for those as well.

**Shawna Grassie makes a motion to do another Ramah Beautification with 2 dumpsters this time, in August and September with the same prices and guidelines as the previous Ramah Beautification in July. Michael Croley seconded the motion. The board chairman calls for a vote, all in favor say, "Aye." The motion carries unanimously.**

Everyone discusses what days and hours we could get the extra dumpster and the availability of the part time employee to work the extra dumpster.

**The next item on the agenda** is the discussion and vote on what charges, if any, if a trash customer has more trash than what fits in their trash bin every week. We have a new person picking up trash, so we want the board to clarify if we should charge customers extra if they have extra trash (more trash than fits in the trash bin). The board discusses that all of the trash bins for the customer need to be the same size. The operator states that now all customers have the same size trash bins. The board members discuss several different issues concerning trash pick-up, how often does a customer have more trash than what fits in the bin, how much customers pay every month to have their trash picked up, would it be worth the employee's time to keep track of how many extra bags there are. What we have done in the past is if a customer had a lot more bags every week, we would keep track of how many extra bags there were and the sizes and add that to the customer's monthly bill, the charges for those extra bags were according to what we would charge at the transfer station. We charge the RW&SD customers \$35 dollars per month for one trash bin to pick up their trash every week. The board discusses that \$35 dollars a month is quite a bit of money to pay every month, and it might not be worth the time and effort it would take to keep track of the extra bags every week. The board discusses if the bags were stacked on top of the trash bins and possibly only counting extra bags that were on the ground, but then there would be some issues with that approach as well. Most board members agree that the amount the customers pay monthly is enough and it would take too much time and effort to keep track of extra bags and those specific charges. The board discusses one location that every week has more trash and should be considered a commercial location and be charged a "commercial rate" for trash pickup which is to charge for 2 trash bins, same as we charge one of the other "commercial" locations for two trash bins. Everyone discusses that the location needs to be designated as a commercial property and how best to communicate that decision with the customer. It is decided that the board will send a letter to that customer stating that we will charge them the commercial rate for trash pick-up (two trash bins) or the customer would need to find another way to discard their household and business trash. The board directs the secretary to type up a letter to send to that customer and they would like to send it certified mail to ensure the customer receives the letter. It is also discussed that RW&SD has a right to require a property that serves food commercially to have a grease trap, so that our sewage system is protected from grease. It is discussed that a letter can be sent asking the customer who serves food commercially and uses our sewage system to verify they have a proper grease trap in place and that the operator could come inspect the grease trap with the customer's permission. That



inspection by the operator would only be to ensure there is a grease trap in place to protect our sewage system.

The secretary states that the google meets meeting will end soon even though it was scheduled until 9pm. That means at any minute board member Blanche Clawson would be disconnected and not involved in the discussion and votes anymore.

**The next item on the agenda** is the discussion of the secretary's safety and district office safety measures, the board chairman asks if there is anything that needs to be discussed in the open public meeting concerning secretary safety and district office safety. A community member suggests calling the sheriff and it is discussed by everyone present that the McKinley County sheriff's office was called, initially the deputy sheriff said since there wasn't a direct threat to the secretary's safety, there was nothing they (the sheriff's department) could do, and an incident report was filed. The community member suggests the possibility of a restraining order. Everyone discusses the option of a "no trespass", but those present are not sure since RW&SD is a public entity if a no trespass could be enforced.

**Shawna Grassie makes a motion to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:07pm to move into an executive meeting. Whitney Croley seconded the motion. The board chairman calls for a vote and all in favor say, "Aye." The motion passed unanimously.**

**Shawna Grassie makes a motion to come back into the general meeting at 8:35pm from the executive meeting. Michael Croley seconded the motion. The board chairman calls for a vote. All in favor say, "Aye." The motion carries unanimously.**

In the executive meeting we discussed the secretary's safety and decided to look into getting a ring camera for the office to help with security.

**Shawna Grassie makes a motion to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:35pm to meet again in September. Michael Croley seconded the motion. The board chairman calls for a vote. All in favor say, "Aye." The motion carries unanimously.**