

MEMO



Discussion/Action

Item #: 19

Meeting Date: October 21, 2022

To: Board of Directors
From: Director of Communications, Zoë Shoats
Approved by: General Manager, Felipe Melchor

Subject: Discuss Potential Additions to ReGen Monterey Website Content Including Video/Audio Recordings and Board Polices

Recommendation

Provide direction to staff if any additional items should be placed on ReGen Monterey website for increased communication to the public.

Background

A special district is a discrete local entity that delivers a limited number of public services in a specific geographic area. Special districts are separate and distinct from the cities and counties where they are located, but both are subject to the Brown Act allowing the public to access information and participate in the decision-making process fostering civic engagement and ensuring accountability.

In 2017 the Little Hoover Commission released a report entitled “Special Districts: Improving Oversight & Transparency” which cited the greater need for public transparency within special districts. It recommended requiring every special district to maintain a website outlining how to participate in decision making and an easy guide to revenue resources and expenditures, plus a published policy for financial reserves in its report. In 2020, this became law with the passage of SB 929 requiring special districts to post 1) access what service is being provided, 2) budget, and 3) contact elected representatives and staff.

As a California Special District, ReGen Monterey prides itself on transparency. To that end, ReGen Monterey not only meets the basic requirements of SB 929, but also applies for and has been awarded a Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF) District Transparency Certificate of Excellence continuously since 2014. The District Transparency Certificate of Excellence’s purpose is to “promote transparency in the operations and governance of special districts to the public/constituents and provide special districts with an opportunity to showcase their efforts in transparency.” As a part of the application, the special district must meet all areas outlined under “basic requirements,” a list of required website-specific requirements, at least four additional website-specific items, and two “outreach/best practices requirements.” ReGen Monterey’s latest application submitted in early 2022 is attached for reference.

Discussion

Recently the question was raised as to how ReGen Monterey achieves transparency with the public and if more should be done to further communicate with the public to further increase transparency, specifically as it relates to Board and Committee policies, meetings, and practices.

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Let's not waste this.



Below is a list of items that could be included on ReGen Monterey's website, should the Board choose:

- Expense and Travel Reimbursement Policy
- Agenda Preparation and Board Meeting Policy
- Joint Powers Agreement for the Monterey Regional Waste Management Authority (to include 2014 amendment)
- LAFCO Report Figure 1 from "2015 Municipal Service Review and Sphere of Influence Study: Monterey Regional Waste Management District", dated January 9, 2015.
- Letter from Legal Counsel Re: Board Member Residency; Board Alternate; Appointment and Removal; and Board Compensation (to include 2018 update on alternates)
- District Guiding Principles (rev. 10/4) and Guiding Principles for Acceptance of Regional Waste (or new white paper)
- Reserve Policy
- Board Bylaws (need to be created)
- Finance and Personnel Committee Bylaws
- Video or audio recordings of public meetings (retention policy: adoption approval plus 90 days when used for minutes preparation)
- Specific Public Records Request Form (separate from current Public Contact Form)

On October 5, 2022, both the Finance Committee and Personnel Committees reviewed staff's proposed options as listed above. After review and discussion, both committees recommended that the Board:

1. Include a sentence on the website letting the public know that policies pertaining to the Board can be obtained by contacting the board clerk.
2. Pilot a six-month recording of all public meetings to include Board meetings, Finance Committee meetings and Personnel Committee meetings. Review viewership and determine if it is worthy to continue.
3. Continue to host all public meetings as hybrid in-person and virtual as a new best practice allowing for maximum public participation.
4. Continue to utilize existing Public Contact Form located in the footer on every webpage for all public requests.

Financial Impact

There is minimal financial impact assuming the use of existing equipment to record public meetings.

Conclusion

ReGen Monterey is compliant with transparency requirements and has received recognition from the CSDA with a District Transparency Certificate of Excellence since 2014. With the understanding that ReGen Monterey has exceeded minimum standards of transparency in its normal operational practices, staff requests that the Board provide direction if any additional items should be placed on ReGen Monterey website for increased communication to the public.

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