

## **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING HILL COUNTY WATER DISTRICT**

The regular meeting was held on March 4, 2026, at the Hill County Water District's office in Hingham, Montana.

Board members present: Lowell Strissel, Dan Hybner, Shane Borlaug, Kevin Springer, Tina Wood, Rob Moog, Larry Fossen via phone. Absent: Jason Myers.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS:** Mark Copenhaver with North Rudyard County Water Users Board.

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Chairman Lowell Strissel. Also present was Manager Chad Hedges, and Secretary Genevieve Hanson.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Mr. Copenhaver stated there was hearsay that Ag Tap customers would be charged a \$51.00 base fee regardless of water use. The Board and Mr. Hedges advised Mr. Copenhaver that he was misinformed- Ag Tap customers will be charged a base fee only during months when they use water.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS:** President Strissel asked for corrections or additions to the minutes of February 4, 2026, regular Board meeting previously received by all Board Members. On motion by Shane Borlaug, seconded by Tina Wood, the Board approved the minutes of February 4, 2026, regular Board meeting as presented.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- a. **HCWD Rules and Regulations regarding Base Fees and Reconnect Fees:** In continuation with last month's meeting discussion regarding base fees and reconnect fees for temporary or permanent-disconnect customers, as stated in the HCWD Rules and Regulations, some disagreement was expressed. There is concern that \$325.00 for a reconnect fee for permanently disconnected customers was too much to pay, and a monthly base fee of \$51.00 for temporary-disconnect customers is also excessive. The Board explained that these fees were put in place to recover the cost of the meters which are owned by the District. In addition, \$325.00 reconnect fee for permanently disconnected customers was put in place to deter customers from continuously disconnecting when they would leave for a period of time and reconnect when they'd return. It was reiterated that the District also treats the water, in addition to maintaining equipment, thus the costs need to be recuperated through base fees and reconnect fees. The customer has the option to weigh finances- it may be cost-effective to permanently disconnect and pay a \$325.00 reconnect fee if the customer is gone longer than seven consecutive months. The question arose

whether the reconnect fee of \$325.00 is charged only as a penalty for violation of the Rules and/or abuse of the line. Because the Rules and Regulations specifically state that a reconnect fee is \$325.00 the Board clarified that the fee is charged regardless of whether it's a penalty for violation, or simply reconnecting a permanently disconnected line. It was suggested that the Rules be amended in the coming months to eliminate the grey area and the question of when reconnect fees are assessed. It was also clarified that each Water Association has the discretion to charge their individual reconnect fee on top of the District's \$325.00 reconnect fee. Lastly, the Board discussed Change of Ownership fees, which can be defined by the Board. This fee is currently set at \$50.00 for the purpose of reimbursing the District for Administrative costs.

### **NEW BUSINESS/EMPLOYEE REPORT:**

- a. **Water Loss Report** - Provided by Mr. Hedges. Of note was Inverness and Joplin, which both had high water loss due to leaks. They were at 44% and 45% respectively.
- b. **Inverness Water Leaks** - As discussed above- the leak was discovered and fixed.
- c. **Chester/South Rudyard Hutterites** - They are requesting hook up to the District line.
- d. **CCR Report** – The Lab that previously prepared the Customer Confidence Report (CCR) no longer provides these services. Going forward, the DEQ will prepare and provide that report. As soon as it is available, it will be posted to District website.
- e. **PFAS Testing** – PFAS stands for polyfluoroalkyl substances and is more commonly known as “forever chemicals”. PFAS is a group of synthetic chemicals used in various products due to their resistance to heat, water, and oil, raising significant health and environmental factors. Mr. Hedges provided an update on the requirements of PFAS testing which will need to happen soon. The District is waiting for testing materials to arrive in order to perform the sampling. Those materials will be mailed from California, and samples will similarly be sent to California, for lab testing.
- f. **Water Conference March 23-25** – Mr. Hedges informed the Board that he will be attending the annual Water Conference on March 23-25, 2026 in Billings.

**FINANCIAL REPORT:** One CD is coming to term on March 5, 2026. Ms. Hanson presented options for reinvestment which included reinvesting with Independence Bank at 3.75% or 1<sup>st</sup> Bank at the same rate or combining this CD with May-term CD. On motion was Kevin Springer to reinvest with Independence Bank but delay reinvestment by one week to avoid a concurring term date with the Board meeting next year. Shane Borlaug seconded, and the Board approved reinvestment with Independence Bank for 52 weeks at the interest rate discussed above.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** None

**DELINQUENCES:** The Board reviewed current delinquencies. There is one customer in the 90+ day column. Ms. Hanson will call this customer to arrange CC/Auto pay.

**BILLS:** The Board reviewed the list of monthly bills; a copy of the list of current bills is affixed to these minutes. On motion by Shane Borlaug, seconded by Rob Moog, the Board approved all such bills for payment.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Tina Wood motioned and Kevin Springer seconded for meeting adjournment at 8:10 PM.

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Genevieve Hanson, Board Secretary

**Next Regular Meeting-** Wednesday, April 1st, 2026, at 7:30p.m. at the District's office at 104 Second Street, Hingham, Montana.