

# TUSCAN WATER DISTRICT

## Board Meeting Minutes – Feb 18, 2026

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**DATE:** February 18, 2026

**TIME:** 8:57 a.m.

**LOCATION:** In Person (Legal Counsel via Zoom)

**Directors Present:** Rich McGowan Steve Koehnen, Rayme Antonowich, Andrew Mendonca, Bill Chance, Craig Knight, Brian Mori, James Paiva, Todd Turley

**Staff Present:** Tovey Giezentanner, General Manager; Joe Hughes, District Counsel (via phone)

**Others Present:** Kamie Loeser; Danny Kearns; Maddie Munson, Jamie Johansson; Anne Dawson; Jim Graydon; Joanne Kidd; Susan Schraeder; Shannon Costa.

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### 1. Call to Order

President McGowan called the meeting to order at 8:57 a.m. A quorum was established. Technical audio/visual issues were noted.

### 2. Public Comment

Jamie Johansson addressed the Board. He thanked the directors, introduced himself as a district member and farmer, and announced his candidacy for the Assembly seat. He characterized the region's groundwater challenge as a distribution and infrastructure problem, advocated for streamlined regulatory processes for recharge, and urged the State Water Board to recognize surface-to-groundwater recharge as a beneficial use. No other public comments.

### 3. Approval of Minutes

**Action:** Motion by Director Knight, seconded by Director Mori, to approve the January 21, 2026 minutes. Approved unanimously.

### 4. Finances

The Board reviewed two invoices for payment:

- Giezentanner and Associates: \$7,500 (January invoice). GM Giezentanner noted one additional invoice at \$7,500 for February remains under the current rate, with the Board-approved rate increase effective in March (invoiced in April).

**Action:** Motion by Director Antonowich, seconded by Director Koehnen. Motion carried unanimously.

- Joe Hughes Klein (District Counsel): \$158. A prior invoice of \$3,050 had already been paid, though not yet reflected on the statement.

**Action:** Motion by Director Mendonca, seconded by Director Antonowich. Motion carried unanimously.

### 5. Investment Policy

District Counsel Joe Hughes presented the draft Investment Policy, describing it as a standard template used for water districts that outlines permitted investments.

- **Grant Fund Segregation.** President McGowan raised the issue of segregating grant monies, noting Ms. Loeser's prior comments. Mr. Hughes clarified that fund segregation is internal

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housekeeping, not part of the investment policy itself. He recommended the Board adopt a simple resolution directing segregation of grant funds and, separately, develop a reserve policy.

- **Account Authority.** President McGowan asked about procedures for moving funds between investment and checking accounts. Mr. Hughes advised that this is also internal housekeeping. He recommended multiple authorized signers for oversight—not just the General Manager alone. Director Mendonca asked about formalizing these procedures in writing. Mr. Hughes concurred and suggested coordinating with the District’s investment advisor, Chad Parker at Raymond James, to determine authorization requirements for the new account.
- **Action Items:** (1) GM Giezentanner to prepare a resolution addressing grant fund segregation and a reserve policy for the March meeting. (2) GM Giezentanner to coordinate with Raymond James regarding account setup, authorized signers, and administrative procedures and, if necessary, bring a resolution or policy to the Board for adoption. (3) Approve the Investment Policy in the Agenda Packet.

**Action:** Motion to approve Action Items by Director Chance, seconded by Director Antonowich. Motion carried unanimously.

### **6. Annual Land Use Inspection**

GM Giezentanner presented the annual assessment of district land use demographics, a requirement of the LAFCO formation conditions. Using the Butte County Assessor’s database from April 2025, GM Giezentanner created a pivot table aggregating general plan designations across the district’s approximately 96,000 acres.

#### **Findings.**

- Approximately 96,000 acres carry agricultural general plan designations (Ag 160, 80, 40, 20, A, or AS), representing approximately 99% of the district. Director Mori identified an approximately 59-acre discrepancy from the original formation figures; GM Giezentanner explained this was due to the county determining certain acreage was not assessable under Prop 218.
- The LAFCO formation condition provides that if more than 50% of the acreage transitions to municipal, commercial, or other non-agricultural uses, there would be an opportunity for that acreage to petition for a change in district type. The annual assessment confirms the district remains overwhelmingly agricultural. LAFCO staff was present.

**Action:** Motion by Director Mendonca, seconded by Director Mori, to approve the resolution accepting the annual land use inspection. Motion carried unanimously.

### **7. Ad Hoc Committee Reports**

**Surface Water Ad Hoc (Informational).** Two updates were provided:

- GM Giezentanner reported on a proposed one-year pilot transfer of approximately 1,500 acre-feet from Paradise Irrigation District (PID) to a landowner via Butte Creek for in-lieu irrigation (surface water replacing groundwater pumping). TWD’s role would be as facilitator, not a direct party to the transfer. Director Turley raised the need for a formal policy governing the District’s role in facilitating water transfers; counsel agreed. GM will

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provide draft water transfer facilitation policy for Board review at the March meeting. GM will also continue to outreach to PID and other stakeholders regarding the pilot transfer.

- The South Vina/Western Canal Feasibility Analysis is being finalized and will be provided to the Board at the March meeting. Maddie Munson (Water and Land Solutions) noted public presentations on both the PID and Western Canal projects are planned at the Vina GSA and SHAC meetings in March. GM will provide the Feasibility Analysis at the March meeting.
- Public Comment: Jim Graydon raised concerns about Vina GSA visibility into TWD's surface water work and the pace of project development ahead of Prop 4 grant applications. Board members responded that all information is public through agenda packets and meetings and emphasized that TWD was formed to be an implementing agency. Anne Dawson asked about potential impacts of recharge near the Stanley Park TCE area; GM Giezentanner clarified this is a separate project and that contamination concerns must be fully addressed before any project advances.

**Recharge Ad Hoc (Informational).** Three updates were provided:

- t-TEM permeability testing is complete at the Rock Creek East site (~100 acres on Keefer Road); engineer results expected by early to mid-March.
- Dry wells were discussed; a presentation by Geosyntec is being planned for an upcoming Butte County Water Commission meeting and TWD Board Meeting. County supervisors have expressed growing interest.
- An analysis of the Durham Mutual Water Company mainline canal and Butte Creek siphons is underway to evaluate the cost of restoring infrastructure for surface water delivery to ag land currently on groundwater.

Danny Kearns (Provost & Pritchard) presented preliminary findings from the Rock Creek/Keefer Slough corridor flood-MAR analysis covering three sites. Using the recently received DWR hydraulic model, the team provided preliminary storage estimates from the East site under certain conditions and is working to extend the model to better quantify available water volumes. A deliverable covering all three sites will be routed through the ad hoc committee to the Board in March or April.

### **8. General Manager Report**

GM Giezentanner provided updates on the following topics. Slides and supporting materials were included in the agenda packet.

- **Interbasin Coordination.** Seven sub-basins are engaged in an ongoing coordination effort focused on interconnected surface water at basin boundaries. The work plan supports the current GSP update, with implementation targeted for the 2032 cycle.
- **Water Commission.** A well ordinance update is underway (led by the Department of Environmental Health). The Water Commission has requested to review draft language before it goes to the Board of Supervisors. A dry wells presentation is also being scheduled for the Water Commission.
- **Sustainable Conservation.** GM Giezentanner reported a conversation with this nonprofit, which has access to environmental and private funding for recharge projects with habitat components.

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- **Sites Reservoir.** Jerry Brown, Executive Director, presented at Chico Noon Rotary. The project is awaiting a water right permit from the State Water Board. Up to 1.5 million AF of storage; first major upstream storage project in California in ~60 years.
- **NCWA.** The Northern California Water Association is working to expand the window for diverting excess flood flows for recharge.
- **Annual Report / TAC.** GM Giezentanner raised several concerns regarding data and methodology in the Vina Sub-basin annual report process:
  - **Water Use Data:** The groundwater model shows approximately 273,000 acre-feet of water use in the sub-basin for the most recent year—roughly 30,000 acre-feet above the long-term average of 233,000 acre-feet. 2025 had fewer extreme hot days and no significant new acreage coming into production. GM Giezentanner has requested that the methodology be described in writing in the annual report narrative and may request an expedited staff review.
  - **Reporting Format:** GM Giezentanner requested that groundwater level maps be presented in depth-to-groundwater (in addition to above mean sea level), noting that stakeholders think in terms of depth to water. The TAC indicated this is not appropriate. Ms. Loeser explained the technical challenge with depth-to-groundwater maps given varying ground surface elevations across the basin and suggested a cross-section example might provide more clarity for landowners while maintaining the current approach.
  - **Cumulative Storage Change:** After three consecutive above-normal water years, the model still shows a deficit of approximately 327,000 acre-feet. GM Giezentanner noted this is difficult to reconcile with the recovery observed in the late 1990s under comparable or worse conditions, and with observations from Board members suggesting the basin is as full as it has been since approximately 2000. GM Giezentanner has asked staff for clarification and more detail on the model.
  - **ET Model Concerns:** Director Mori noted significant discrepancies between modeled evapotranspiration (ET) and actual crop water use, citing approximately 15 inches less irrigation on his operation than the crop coefficient projected. He characterized the consultant response (“the only alternative is metering all wells”) as insufficient, arguing that there are other ways to refine ET calculations. Ms. Loeser noted that UCCE Farm Advisor Emeritus Joe Connell, who serves on the TAC, also raised questions about the ET calculations and remote sensing data. She acknowledged county staff shares many of the same questions and emphasized the importance of getting the data right for the long term.

### 9. Board Member Comments

Brief discussion on drought definitions and basin resilience.

### 10. Closed Session

The Board moved into closed session. GM Giezentanner exited. District Counsel participated via phone.

### 11. Adjournment