

MINUTES – JULY 10, 2025
BIG BEND GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT #5
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The monthly board meeting of the Big Bend Groundwater Management District #5 was held at the District office in Stafford, Kansas on Thursday July 10, 2025. The board members present were Tom Taylor, Darrell Wood, Craig Zwick, Joe Schlessiger, Kerry Froetschner, Gary Hornbaker, John Janssen, and Fred Grunder. The board member not present was Marlyn Spare. The District staffs present were Orrin Feril and Vanessa Marks. The guests present were Lance Nelson, Cameron Conant, Chad Fisher, Brandon Bortz, Jeff Crispin (Zoom), Sarah Struby (Zoom), Nicki Fisher (Zoom), and Jim Schneider (Zoom).

The July regular board meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Tom Taylor.

Darrell Wood moved, and Craig Zwick seconded to approve the June minutes as presented. Motion carried 8-0.

Orrin Feril provided the board and public with the July treasurer's report and highlighted the unique items for further board review. Craig Zwick moved, and John Janssen seconded to accept the July treasurer's report as presented. Motion carried 8-0.

Lance Nelson and Chad Fisher, Kansas Water Users Association, requested to present a proposal to the District board. Currently, the District owns 876.5 acre-feet of water throughout the District. Throughout 2024 the KWUA has worked with KDA–DWR and the Rattlesnake Creek working group to conduct the Pilot Augmentation 1.0 project. This project showed positive results in 2024, and the group is seeking to compile a 2.0 version of the project. Consequently, the working group is requesting that the District lease the applicable water rights to KDA–DWR for the Pilot Augmentation 2.0 project. Following a thorough discussion, Darrell Wood moved, Fred Grunder seconded to authorize the lease of Water Right Nos. 16669-00, 28568-00, 35806-00, 35807-00, 36564-00 for one calendar year at no cost to the Kansas Department of Agriculture – Division of Water Resources for the purpose of groundwater conservation and management, prevention of economic decline, and stabilization of agriculture in the region. Motion carried 8-0.

Orrin Feril discussed staff activities for the past few weeks and upcoming months. In recent months, the District has been accepting applications for the Irrigation Technology Initiative (ITI) system evaluations. Within the past month, two evaluations were completed in Pratt county. The District is continuing to promote the project and will be sending further information out to producers to solicit more participation. Staff is currently collecting water level measurements throughout the region to see the impacts the recent rainfall has had on the aquifer. The next Great Bend Prairie RAC meeting will be held at the District office on July 11. It was noted that recently, Olsson's expenses have reached the previously budgeted amounts with NRCS. A discussion has already taken place, and it is agreed that an amendment to the agreement is warranted. It was the consensus of the board to continue to make payments to Olsson to keep them working on the project while NRCS works through the process of amending the agreement and extend financial support. Recently, Orrin attended a public meeting held by KNRC regarding the Rattlesnake Creek issue. The intention of Orrin's attendance was to dispel rumors and inaccuracies being spread throughout the region regarding the District's projects and activities.

Cameron Conant, KDA–DWR, stated that the Stafford field office has recently sent approximately fifty letters for over pumping throughout their region. Additionally, he noted streamgaging equipment the field office has acquired to keep better track of streamflow in the region.

Vanessa Marks, CKWBA, highlighted a programmatic review being conducted on the water bank by University of Nebraska in coordination with the Kansas Water Institute. The timeline for this review is to have a report completed before January 2026. She also noted some potential charter revisions the CKWBA board is considering.

Tom Taylor recessed the regular board meeting at 7:50 p.m. and opened the budget hearing at 8:00 p.m. to consider the 2026 budget. Orrin Feril provided proof of publication for the hearing and provided copies of the proposed budget to all in attendance. Mr. Feril read the proposed 2026 budget noting any proposed changes from the adopted 2025 budget. President Taylor then asked for any comments and questions from the audience including those attending via Zoom. Hearing no comments or concerns from the audience or board members, President Taylor called for the hearing to close and reconvened the regular meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Craig Zwick moved, and John Janssen seconded to adopt the proposed 2026 budget and Resolution 2025-2 as presented. Motion carried 8-0.

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-2

WHEREAS the Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5 (“the District”), Stafford, Kansas, was established under the authority of K.S.A. 82a-1020 for the proper management of groundwater resources of the state; and

WHEREAS, the District is a body politic and corporate and has the authority to levy a water user charge and land assessment under K.S.A. 82a-1028 (h) to finance the operations of the District; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors proposed the budget at this year's annual meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors has submitted the proposed budget for FY2026 to the eligible voters of the District at a budget hearing called for that purpose; and

WHEREAS, at least one (1) budget hearing notice was published in a newspaper or newspapers of general circulation within the District at least twenty-eight (28) days prior to the budget hearing;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Directors of the Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5 hereby adopts the proposed FY2026 budget as submitted at the budget hearing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE land assessment is hereby set at five (\$0.05) cents per acre for eligible tracts of land as defined by K.S.A. 82a-1030 (a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE water users charge is hereby set at two (\$2.00) dollars for each acre-foot of groundwater as defined by K.S.A. 82a-1030 (a).

ADOPTED the 10th day of July, 2025 by the Board of Directors of the Big Bend Groundwater Management District No. 5 at a regular meeting.

The next District board meeting is tentatively set for August 14, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.

With no further items to discuss, the board adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Attest by:  Dated: 8-14-25