

Elizabeth A. Bettenhausen, Ph.D.



17 June 2020

Board of Directors
Cambria Community Services District
[via email](#)

Dear Directors:

Here's a short story, semi-fiction, documentary, about an aspect of 7.A., 18 June 2020 Agenda.

A budget does what?!

I was watching the surf fairly early in the morning. The 7 ft. NW swells went up and down with short periods, so the surf sounded intensely at low tide. This tenor and alto chanting got interrupted when a guy came down from the steps from Shamel Park.

“Good morning. Aren't you the woman who speaks at the CCSD meetings?”

“Good morning to you, too,” I replied. “I've been known to do that, when I can't find anything better to occupy my time.”

He laughed and said, “That's one I can believe. But I do have a question.”

“When is the next rate increase?”

“No, but that's sort of connected to this. A neighbor was asking me how much we pay for that new old water plant out along San Simeon Creek. I tried to look at the budget, but I got sidetracked when someone saw a drone going up to the windows of all the houses on our street.”

“You were on the right track,” I said, “and the drone operator wasn't!”

“They can get a little scary sometimes,” he replied. “Plus, it pisses me off when privacy goes down the public drain.”

“Me too. On that cost for the emergency plant, go to the Agenda for the meeting on June 18th. You can look at pages 162 and 164. You'll see the Total Expenditures lines, coming to \$1,121,000 and \$50,000, running up a total for the plant of \$ 1,171,000 for the coming year.”

“So it’s just over a million a years, give or take.”

“Well, not quite. The SWF—that’s their name of the plant at the moment—also has to pay the Administrative Overhead Allocation. But that’s not in the budget pages for the SWF.”

“Here we go!” he said. “Why don’t they make this clear?”

“I gave up on that hope a long time ago,” I said, pausing for a bit as some really load waves crashed to the sand. “It looks like the SWF rates pay for the SWF in its budget. So far, so good. But those costs for CCSD’s administration are not there. They show up on p. 156.”

“And that’s not the SWF budget page?”

“Nope. It’s the page for the Water Fund, which is all about our ordinary water rates and expenditures.”

“What’s on p. 156 again?”

“Two more expenditures for SWF. BIG ones.”

“How big?”

“\$ 313,786 and \$ 104,595. They are expenditures for SWF, but not paid with SWF rates.”

“You got to be kidding, right?” SWF rates don’t pay for SWF expenditures to the tune of ...how much was that again?”

“It totals up to \$ 418,381.”

“And that’s in addition to the \$ 1,171,000?”

“You got it.”

“Where does the money for that 400 thousand plus come from?”

“That comes from the regular water rates we pay every two months. Of course, we pay the two sets of SWF rates too. But they don’t cover around half a million of expenditure for SWF.”

He stood staring out at the ocean. “Now I know why I gave up looking at the budget. I saw that pie chart on p. 106 and the bar chart on p. 111. I tried to find “SWF Fund – See budget schedules on pp. 58-68” mentioned on p. 110. But those pages talk about ‘CIO Solutions.’”

“It’s nuts, isn’t it? I get the sense that they don’t want to come right out and answer the question. So what else is new?”

“You got that right. Anyhow, I hope you’re going to the meeting,” he said.

“It’s on Zoom, so I can get lots of other work done as I glance at the monitor now and then and catch a discussion, if it sounds worth it. You could give yourself a treat and attend from home!”

“I’m sure I’ve got something else scheduled at that time,” he said, and we nodded with blah humor. “So what again will it cost for the next year?”

“About a million and a half. \$1,589,381.”

“And how much water did we get from it so far?”

“Oh, no,” I said. “I came to the beach to check on some limpets on the rocks and see whether the sea stars are back. I’m not touching water use with a 10 foot—oops, with a 6 foot pole.”

“Thanks anyhow,” he said. You helped me understand what they mean by transparency.”

“You’re welcome. Now, enjoy your walk!”

He turned and started walking north toward the stretch where the surfers were riding some long waves.

But then I called to him over the surf. “Don’t forget to look at p. 177!”

He glanced back, laughed, and walked away faster.

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The Preliminary End

From: [REDACTED]
To: [BoardComment](#)
Subject: Memorial crosses.
Date: Saturday, June 13, 2020 7:51:44 AM

This is a very important time in history which Cambria needs to be a part of. Black Lives Matter and we need to reflect that we embrace all humans regardless of skin tone. Please keep the crosses. They are a reminder why this change in our nation is necessary. Thank you...Martha Goodwin. Cambria resident.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

From: [REDACTED]
To: [BoardComment](#)
Subject: Re: June 18 2020 regular meeting comments
Date: Thursday, June 18, 2020 1:05:04 PM

I'll be there to read them. Thanks.

Sent from my iPad

On Jun 18, 2020, at 12:40 PM, BoardComment
<boardcomment@camabriacsd.org> wrote:

Thank you. Do you plan on attending the meeting and reading your comments during each item? Or, would you like me to read each one?

From: Christine Heinrichs [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, June 18, 2020 12:12 PM
To: BoardComment <boardcomment@camabriacsd.org>
Subject: June 18 2020 regular meeting comments

Hi, Haley:

This is what I've got so far.

June 18 2020 meeting comments

Public comment:

The board's minutes include the names of those members of the public who address them at public meetings, but the minutes do not mention what anyone said. There's no comment as to what the speakers were asking of the board, or what they were favoring or opposing. This leaves the minutes oddly silent on what the public's responses are to the issues before the board.

I make it a point to include my comments in writing. Future minutes should reflect what those of the public who address the board are saying. Thank you.

Item 5C Utilities Report

I look forward to reading the EWS Project Description, which will be the subject of a public meeting next Thursday. Director Howell assured us that the public would have a week to review it. Please release it so that we may do so.

I hope that next week's meeting will answer questions about the plant, such as: Why is the district planning to run it for two months of testing? Why eight hours a day, five days a week? What information will that produce? How does running the plant relate to the required Instream Flow studies? Instream flow studies need to be done when the plant is not running, to establish the baseline stream flow.

Does the district have the appropriate permits required to run it, and discharge water into the existing percolation ponds?

I ask the board not to approve hiring any more personnel at the district until a Forest Manager is hired. The reason given for not hiring a Forest Manager is that the district can't afford one. If the district can afford more personnel, and more salary increases, and electric vehicle charging stations, it can afford a forest manager to improve the health of the Monterey Pine forest.

Item 7A:

Dr. Bettenhausen has pointed out the misleading accounting of EWS expenses, attributing only \$1.1 million to it, ignoring the additional over \$400,000 in costs. That doesn't include the \$100,000 contractor recently hired for required studies to support the Coastal Development Permit, either. More than one and a half million dollars on this non-functioning plant.

As elected representatives, you know well that the amount of money available to the district is limited. You are making choices as to how to spend that money. Your vote in favor of this budget approves of spending this money NOT on improvements in water storage, such as replacement of the Stewart Street water tank, which is years past its useful life; NOT on replacing the rusty water pipes that are constantly leaking, losing water that the EWS is supposed to provide; NOT for a forest manager to improve the health of the forest and help in fire prevention; NOT on improvements to the aging wastewater treatment plant, which is estimated to need \$11 million of updates. NOT on repairs to the Vets Hall.

Directors often have favorite projects. Later in this meeting is a proposal for electric vehicle charging stations. No money for those, when so much is going to the EWS.

That's what you are choosing by voting for this budget. I ask you to reconsider, remove funding for this project except to mothball it, and put Cambria's money to work for projects that benefit Cambria.

Item 8B:

I ask the board to evaluate the grant application for two electric vehicle charging stations, but defer it until other financial needs have been met. The request for \$43,000 for two electric vehicle charging stations should be denied. Cambria has more pressing needs than electric vehicle charging. The district's main missions are to provide water, wastewater and fire protection. Electric vehicle charging could be addressed by the tourism board or other community organizations. Spend that money on the deferred maintenance to the Vets Hall, rather than charging stations out front.

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Christine Heinrichs