
2019/2020 State of the District- Management Performance Report (Through December 31, 2020)



JANUARY 8

GROVELAND CSD
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Manager



Report Overview

The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overview of the state of the District and its services, as well as to summarize overall accomplishments for the year, including management's progress on achieving the Goals and Objectives established by the Board of Directors. This report is intended to inform the Board and public, and to convey to District staff our appreciation for the high level of effort and accomplishment. The Board will consider this report in conjunction with its annual General Manager performance evaluation process.

State of the District

The Board of Directors is responsible to govern the District through the establishment of the District's vision, developing policy and hiring a General Manager (GM) who is responsible for the implementation of Board policy. The GM is also responsible for the day to day performance of the District's personnel, facilities and services, finances and administration.

Background

It is important to understand the history of the District in order to understand how we arrived where we are and what we need to accomplish in the future. History helps us learn from past experiences both good and bad; and allows us to set SMARTⁱ priorities, goals, objectives and schedules. In the first [State of the District – Management Performance Report](#) in October 2019, I summarized many years of significant events within GCSD to help to identify historical Board and Management actions that likely contributed to the then-current state. We established a baseline condition for the District, which set the stage for the Board to utilize its professional staff and consultants to secure guidance to effectively plan for the future. In our business of public utilities and services we most times utilize a 50-year planning horizon in decision making on major infrastructure and equipment. As you can imagine, mistakes made in these multi-million-dollar investments and not planning for the inevitable failure of these assets in the future can be hugely costly to the public and ratepayers, for decades.

District Condition 2019

The District began its 2017/2018 fiscal year with Grand Jury investigations, tension among the board members and with a group of community members in meetings. District board and committee meetings were voluminous in number, sometimes contentious and produced little in terms of forward progress. In late 2017, two Board members resigned, and two new members of the Board were appointed. The current GM was engaged in February 2018 as a consulting manager. In March and April 2018, the Board as a team adopted its first slate of goals and objectives to clearly outline the vision for the District and expectations of management from the beginning of the relationship. In 2018, out of 17 staff members, less than six had been with the District more than five years, and most had just started with the District less than two years prior.

Board Vision and Goals

The Board of Directors adopted a solid vision and goals for the District in April 2018. Management Objectives were then developed and have been regularly reviewed and updated to support and achieve the Board's vision. These goals stand firm with the Board as of today.

- 1) Support Staff by providing a work environment that values, supports and improves employee recruitment, development, retention and cross-training of excellent employees
- 2) Propose new and amended policies and updated Ordinances that support accomplishment of management objectives and provide the framework for efficient operations
- 3) Plan, fund and implement improvements to the treatment plants and systems that integrate technology and provide for industry standard, efficient maintenance and operations
- 4) Improve the image of the District and treatment of employees through a variety of actions that raise public awareness of the good work of the District
- 5) Ensure that the District has adequate financial plans to invest in long term infrastructure improvements, achieve regulatory compliance, protect public and employee health and safety, and maintain service cost equity among the generations of our customers
- 6) Provide the structure, process and staffing for competent, transparent and accountable governance and administration of all District services

Board of Directors

By 2019, the Board of Directors had matured into a very efficient, effective, cooperative and considerate governance team. This Board, through their thoughtful support and trust in management, and compassion for the community and GCSA staff was the single most important factor in developing a wonderful work environment which then became the foundation upon which improvements have been made in all aspects of the District administration and operation.

The Board meetings became well managed, with board decisions and actions thoroughly discussed and thought out, including a thoughtful system of public input which proved to be very effective. By October 2019 the Board:

- 1) Completed the multi-day CSDA Leadership Academy (four of five board members)
- 2) Regularly attended CSDA Legislative Action Days and Annual CSDA Conference
- 3) Achieved the Recognition of Special District Governance Award, which involves attendance at the CSDA Leadership Academy and additional education in governance (four of five board members)
- 4) Established, reviewed and updated Board priorities and management objectives
- 5) Completed development and implementation of the first ever slate of Board Norms and Protocol to ensure cooperation and communication among the Board and for effective Board meetings
- 6) All Board members are current on mandatory training including ethics and harassment

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- 7) The Board achieved its maximum possible credit incentive program points (4 points each, liability and workers compensation) through its training efforts, **saving the District \$5,200** in annual insurance costs

State of the District 2020

Personnel

In my twenty six years of managing eight different special districts and leading hundreds of employees throughout the state, I must again reiterate that the current GCSO team has the most enthusiasm, common sense, drive and care for their District and coworkers of any District I have seen, or had experience with. Every day includes learning and they continue to actively seek and take on more responsibility. Our staff continues to provide excellent services in every aspect of what we do, more so in light of the adversity we have all experienced during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The performance bar remains high throughout the organization; which also provides solid pressure on management to maintain the momentum. The family environment, teamwork, drive for excellence and continued support from the Board has placed GCSO in the position of possessing one of the most desirable work cultures in the region; comparable with the best districts in the industry.

Summary of Accomplishments in Personnel

The Board's goal related to Personnel is:

- Support Staff by providing a work environment that values, supports and improves employee recruitment, development, retention and cross-training of excellent employees

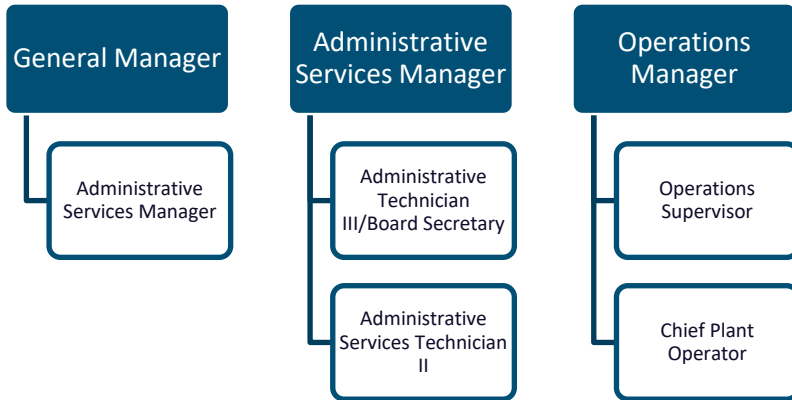
Listed below are a summary of the results of the efforts of the GCSO team over the past 15 months which achieves the Board's goal:

- 1) General Manager completed the training necessary to achieve an updated California Special District Manager (CSDM) certification
- 2) Planned and completed implementation of work at home system that provides physical separation of administrative employees to avoid COVID-19 exposure and provide more flexibility in work schedules while not affecting the level of customer service
- 3) Operations and maintenance personnel certified at the required state level and continue to advance certifications
- 4) The Operations Manager assumed complete control in the planning and implementation of capital improvement projects in conjunction with the District Engineer. This effort has allowed for the completion of more system replacement projects in the last two years than were completed in the decade before. In addition, the Operations Manager has assumed responsibility for coordinating the final design of the downtown Groveland/Big Oak Flat water distribution and sewer collection system projects; to make sure that the work we complete in these \$10 million projects address the highest priority maintenance concerns of the District. This position has a strong capability and focus on major maintenance of our existing assets to extend their life, ultimately saving many thousands of dollars.

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- 5) The Operations Manager could not be as successful without the stellar performance of the Chief Plant Operator and Operations Supervisor, who continue to take the day to day responsibility for producing safe water and getting it to and from customer homes. This support team is a thoughtful, positive, energetic and adaptive lot who have excellent skills and leadership capabilities.
 - 6) Implemented the Lead position in collection and distribution providing advancement opportunities for highly performing field employees
 - 7) Implemented the Operations Supervisor position who is competently leading the staff in maintenance and operations of the water distribution and sewer collection systems; relieving the Operations Manager to focus on implementation of the Capital Improvement Plan and increased administrative responsibilities. The Operations Supervisor quickly took on the initiative to develop and responsibility to implement the program to GPS and map all major district assets, populate and implement the Cartegraph asset management program and a human resources performance management software program
 - 8) The Chief Plant Operator (CPO) continues to modify historical processes and procedures in a manner that improves operational efficiency and reduces expenses every year. The CPO has the admiration and respect of the water and wastewater operations crew, and they all constantly exhibit exemplary work ethic and produce an awesome product
 - 9) Completed and implemented the 2019 compensation study to adjust salaries to levels comparable to other similar special districts. In 2020, implemented a modified medical insurance program and secondary insurance to reduce cost while providing a medical benefit matching our competitors who are members of CALPERS
 - 10) Designed and implemented the modified work schedule for operations, maintenance and administrative employees; providing a 4-10 and 9-80 workweek to increase productivity, family time and the appeal of our work environment in the region and industry
 - 11) Performed salary and job description research, resulting in the addition of an Information Technology position to the GCSO organizational chart to improve operational efficiency and security, as well as productivity of all employees and cost savings
 - 12) Maintained an excellent safety record and Experience Modifier of 82% which provides a discount on our workers compensation insurance
 - 13) Our independent annual audits remain unmodified and show positive progress financially as discussed recently. The [Management Discussion and Analysis for the 2019/20](#) audit a significant increase in financial net position of the District in total, as well as reductions in in debt service expense due to refinancing. There were also no weaknesses identified or recommendations from our auditor, which is a solid testament that our only finance staff, our Accountant, continues to perform excellently and meticulously maintain the District financial statements. Management staff is conducting succession planning for the retirement of our Accountant next fall.
 - 14) Trained, cross-trained and transitioned a very qualified and quickly advancing Administrative Services Technician, into the Board Secretary role and where she recently completed Board Secretary certification

through CSDA. This position assuming these responsibilities is freeing up significant, valuable time for the Administrative Services Manager to focus on leading the department and completing critical financial planning activities. This person has also eagerly transitioned into performing complex administrative functions including design and documentation of processes, procedures and tasks that organize and streamline District service administration including, but not limited to:

- a) Researched, identified, scheduled and implemented various administrative and financial technology solutions
 - b) Documentation of construction projects from initial design through completion
 - c) Processing and management of agreements such as construction, development and grants
 - d) Processing and management of easements, encroachments and related permits
 - e) Research and completion of the (LAFCO) Municipal Service Review
- 15) Our first-line customer service person, and newest Administrative Services Technician competently and with customer accolades held the primary responsibility for operation of the office customer lobby and phones, with assistance of the Accountant, during the COVID Pandemic to facilitate excellent customer service and to provide physical space which allowed many other staff to transition to working remotely. This successful transition could not have occurred without the impeccable work ethic of our administrative staff.
- 16) An additional Administrative Services Technician who excels with all-things technology and database driven has assumed the direct responsibility for implementation of a variety of asset management, records management, customer service, utility billing and financial software programs, in addition to covering in the office and taking the lead in utility billing and related matters.
- 17) Our Administrative Services Manager has been actively involved and a trusted advisor in all aspects of District management, including but certainly not limited to:
- a) Managing the development impact fee study process
 - b) Managing the budget development, implementation, monitoring, reporting and amendment processes
 - c) Actively advising and participating in evaluation and response to County land development projects and processes
 - d) Managing debt refinancing processes
 - e) Managing all Human Resources processes including research and response to COVID-19 requirements



As one of the most momentum-stopping events that can occur is the loss of key staff and the associated loss of institutional knowledge and efficiency. Succession planning to reduce the impact of the loss of key staff is one of the most critical roles of an effective General Manager; including preparing for their own departure. As is obvious in the successes above, we have the right team and a solid succession plan in the works. The graphic below details the succession plan being implemented, with training,

responsibility assignments, performance measurements and coaching to support advancement.

Maintaining field staff for a full career continues to be a challenge, however we are currently in a position where we have been able to attract solid talent when we have a vacancy.

Infrastructure, Operations, Administration and Finance

As discussed in the Personnel section above, the staffing, skills, responsibilities assigned and performance monitoring have allowed the District to sustain and increase maintenance activities and water/wastewater quality, meet all regulatory requirements, complete important system and facility maintenance projects, and replace and improve critical assets at a pace faster than we have in the past decade, and in a high quality long-term manner.

Renovation has begun on the Clearwell renovation project funded by a \$3.4 million dollar state grant. The project is proceeding on schedule and will be completed in this fiscal year. This project will result in both clear wells and chlorine contact tanks being renovated with a coating to last another 20 to 30 years and a fully renovated booster pump system to move water from one system to another reliably and efficiently. All of this was completed at no cost to the right players.

We have received the state water resources Control Board funding contract for the downtown Groveland Big Oak Flat Wastewater Collection System Renovation Project. The purpose of this project is to replace and renovate miles of pipeline and manholes to reduce maintenance costs and extend the life of the infrastructure for many years. Again this project was funded with a \$4.4 million dollars State grant and \$1.4 million low interest loan for construction, and an additional grant of \$400,000 for planning and design of the project. Construction on this project will begin in the spring of 2021.

We have completed the design and low interest loan funding for the wastewater treatment plant headworks replacement project, which will go to public bid in the next 2 months and be completed by the end of this

calendar year. The project will result in a new screen for wastewater solids, electrical and control components, new irrigation systems for our recycled water system and other related improvements.

In addition, the following are in progress or completed:

- 1) Achieved priority position through Tuolumne County for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for \$3.2 million in funding, and await the release of the 2021 allocation in hopes of being funded.
- 2) We have significantly progressed in the planning for park improvements and have begun the process of evaluation and design of the project components. We have also received significant Interest in financial and in-kind participation by consultants working for the city and County of San Francisco and participating in the community benefits program. We have high hopes that funding will be provided through this program to further the priority projects at the park. We also are prepared to embark on the \$185,000 park renovations funded by the proposition 68 grant funds through the per capita program.
- 3) With the assistance of Bob Asquith and Twain Harte CERT's Carol Hallett, we have formed the Groveland Area CERT program to assist in emergency situations
- 4) Completed and adopted the 2020 Fire Master Plan update
- 5) Adopted deployment standards as recommended in the Fire Master Plan update, and developing plans to increase staffing in the region
- 6) Secured funding from county for the CAL FIRE Amador station and actively evaluating options to increase fire staffing in the region
- 7) Forming community facilities district to provide funding from new land development projects in the GCSD boundaries for fire department operations
- 8) Establishing our first ever development impact fees and aligning connection fees with law and CIP. These fees will apply to new development only and will offset the impact of new development on district services
- 9) Implemented cloud based utility billing and accounting software
- 10) Implemented asset management, personnel management and records management programs which provide documentation of all aspects of the operation not based on the brains and recollection of individual employees
- 11) Completed refinancing of water and sewer debt resulting in Savings in the tens of thousands and allowing us to pay off debt sooner

ⁱ SMART business planning (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timeframe (oriented))