Southeast Water Coalition
A joint powers authority to protect the Central Groundwater Basin



MINUTES OF THE SOUTHEAST WATER COALITION JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY REGULAR MEETING OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE ENTITY

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2026
12:00 NOON

The Regular Meeting of the Southeast Water Coalition (SEWC) Joint Powers Authority Administrative Entity (AE) was held on Thursday, January 15, 2026 at the Norwalk Arts & Sports Complex, Hargitt Room, 13000 Clarkdale Avenue, Norwalk, CA 90650. The meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m. by Norwalk Staff member, Albert Mendoza. At the time the meeting was called to order, a quorum of members was present.

Ms. Madeline Gallagher took attendance, and the following AE members were present:

ITEM 1 - ROLL CALL

Alvin Papa	City of Cerritos
Andrew Caraveo	City of Commerce
Dan Mueller	City of Downey
Derek Nguyen	City of Lakewood
Albert Mendoza	City of Norwalk
Michelle Tse	City of Paramount
Frank Sanchez	City of Santa Fe Springs
Chris Castillo	City of South Gate
Joanna Moreno	City of Vernon
Ray Cordero	City of Whittier

STAFF AND GUESTS ON SIGN-IN SHEET:

Sarina Morales-Choate	City of Santa Fe Springs
Hector Rodriguez	City of Santa Fe Springs
Madeline Gallagher	SEWC Staff
Nicholas Ghirelli	Richards Watson & Gershon

Jacque Koontz	City of Norwalk (Staff)
Michael Jea	City of Norwalk (Staff)
Paul Liu	Water Replenishment District

ITEM 2 – PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ITEM 3 - CONSENT CALENDAR

A motion to approve the Consent Calendar was made by Ms. Moreno and seconded by Mr. Mendoza. The motion passed by the following voice vote:

AYES:	**Papa, Caraveo, Nguyen, Mendoza, Tse, Sanchez, Moreno, Cordero.**
NOES:	**None.**
ABSTAIN:	**Mueller, Castillo.**

ITEM 4 – DISCUSSION/ACTION REGARDING POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERSHIP AND CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOUTHEAST WATER COALITION

Mr. Mendoza reminded AE members that at the last Board meeting, the draft letter was approved to be sent out to the approved list of cities. He provided an update that the letter was sent, but no official responses from those cities have been received.

He also noted that during the Board meeting, there was a discussion regarding improving attendance of current SEWC members and potentially implementing penalties for cities with poor attendance.

There was a discussion regarding how to improve attendance and the general consensus was to send a courtesy letter to each SEWC city wishing them a Happy New Year, reminding them who their elected SEWC Board members are, noting the dates of the meetings for 2026, updating them regarding the change in lead agency come June, and emphasizing that in order for SEWC to thrive, attendance is extremely important. AE members noted that the letter should mention that if a Board member is unable to attend the meeting, they should send their Alternate. It was brought up that this letter could be an annual letter sent at the beginning of the year to encourage attendance and provide any relevant updates to member cities of SEWC.

There was a question regarding whether this letter should go to the City Manager or City Council and it was decided that the letter should be drafted and

presented at the next Board meeting where Board members can review it and provide direction as to where the letter should be sent, if approved.

ITEM 5 – DISCUSSION/ACTION REGARDING THE WATER REPLENISHMENT DISTRICT'S REQUEST TO JOIN THE SOUTHEAST WATER COALITION

The discussion began with Mr. Mendoza noting that Water Replenishment District (WRD) asked about the process to apply for membership of SEWC and they submitted a formal written request to join.

While Mr. Lui from WRD was in attendance, he later recused himself to provide an opportunity for AE Members to have an open discussion regarding the request.

After general discussion, a consensus was reached that further discussion was warranted to help provide clarity and make a recommendation to the Board. To that end, an ad-hoc subcommittee consisting of representatives from the Cities of Cerritos, Paramount, Lakewood, Whittier, and Norwalk was formed. The Ad-Hoc committee's purpose was to analyze the history of WRD's involvement, weigh the pros and cons of their membership, and consider alternative options, such as non-voting status. A formal recommendation to the Board could then be presented at the April Board Meeting, after the Ad-Hoc completed its evaluation and provided a detailed report at the next AE meeting in March.

After general discussion, Mr. Cordero moved to bring an informational update regarding the Ad-Hoc Committee's findings to the AE Meeting as a Receive and File, noting that the decision on whether or not to admit WRD to SEWC as a formal member will be brought to the April Board Meeting.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Moreno and was approved by the following voice vote:

AYES:	**Papa, Caraveo, Nguyen, Mendoza, Tse, Sanchez, Moreno, Cordero, Mueller, Castillo.**
NOES:	**None.**
ABSTAIN:	**None.**

After this discussion, Mr. Lui came back into the meeting and thanked AE members for the time and assured that if WRD becomes a member of SEWC again, there will always be a representative at the Board meeting.

Ms. Moreno, Mr. Sanchez, and Ms. Morales-Choate left the meeting.

ITEM 6 – DISCUSSION/ACTION REGARDING A POLICY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE ENTITY LETTERS

Mr. Mendoza reminded AE members about the discussion that took place at the November AE meeting regarding the AE sending letters on behalf of SEWC without Board approval. He noted that at the December Board meeting, the Board asked the AE to draft a template letter and policy on this topic and use the Strategic Plan as a reference when drafting the letter and policy.

Staff asked if any AE members had templates or policies that they could review and it was noted that the City of Vernon may have one. Staff asked AE members to please send any relevant policies or letter templates to Ms. Gallagher.

AE members asked Staff to help draft the policy and letter and bring it to the March AE meeting for review and comments before bringing it to the April Board Meeting.

ITEM 7 – FEBRUARY 5, 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS AGENDA

Mr. Mendoza opened up a discussion to confirm what items would be on the Board Agenda, and the following items were agreed upon:

1. New Membership Update and Improvement of Attendance of Current Membership
2. Receive and File Update for WRD's Request to Join SEWC
3. Potentially an ACWA Update

ITEM 8 – WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

None.

ITEM 9 - ADMINISTRATIVE ENTITY MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Mendoza provided a brief update regarding the ACWA membership, noting that there is an ACWA meeting on January 30th where SEWC membership will be voted on. Mr. Cordero asked if there was a link to join the meeting or if someone should be there to represent SEWC.

Mr. Mendoza and Staff also noted that the February Board meeting will be in a different building, but it will be at the same address. There will be signage and Staff helping direct Board members to the correct room.

ITEM 10 - ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:27 p.m.

The next regular Southeast Water Coalition Administrative Entity Meeting will be held on March 19, 2026 at 12:00 p.m. at the Norwalk Arts & Sports Complex, Hargitt Room, 13000 Clarkdale Avenue, Norwalk, CA 90650.

Chair

3/19/26
Date