


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

**THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026**
**12:00 NOON**

The Regular Meeting of the Southeast Water Coalition (SEWC) Joint Powers Authority Administrative Entity (AE) was held on Thursday, March 19, 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**

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| Chris Kuebert | 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 |
| Chris Castillo | City of South Gate |
| Ray Cordero | City of Whittier |

**STAFF AND GUESTS ON SIGN-IN SHEET:**

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| Nicholas Ghirelli | Richards Watson & Gershon |
| Jacque Koontz | City of Norwalk (Staff) |
| Marco Ramirez | City of Norwalk (Staff) |
| Patricia Santana | City of Norwalk (Staff) |
| Madeline Gallagher | SEWC Staff |
| Vera Robles DeWitt | Water Replenishment District |

## ITEM 2 – PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. DeWitt from WRD offered a public comment, clarifying that she was speaking from personal opinion rather than on behalf of the agency. She shared that she has been concerned about the ongoing undercurrent in recent meetings and has been following minutes closely, particularly regarding new members. She referenced past tensions and emphasized her desire for a more amicable relationship. She stressed that while disagreements are inevitable, collaboration is essential. She also noted that someone from one of the SEWC cities had recently approached WRD for a support letter, and the agency provided it.

## ITEM 3 - CONSENT CALENDAR

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

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| **AYES:** | **Caraveo, Mueller, Nguyen, Mendoza, Tse, Castillo, Cordero.** |
| **NOES:** | **None.** |
| **ABSTAIN:** | **Kuebert.** |

## ITEM 4 – DISCUSSION/ACTION REGARDING THE WATER REPLENISHMENT DISTRICT'S REQUEST TO JOIN THE SOUTHEAST WATER COALITION

The discussion began with Mr. Mendoza noting that at the last AE meeting, there was a discussion regarding Water Replenishment District (WRD)'s formal written request to join SEWC. He continued by stating that a consensus was reached for further discussion. An Ad-Hoc Committee consisting of representatives from the Cities of Cerritos, Paramount, Lakewood, Whittier, and Norwalk was formed to review the request and make a recommendation to the Board.

Mr. Mendoza concluded his report by noting that WRD sent a more recent letter just prior to this meeting, which rescinded their request to join. The letter was included in the Agenda Packet for review.

Mr. Nguyen noted that this discussion is a moot point now given WRD's rescinded request to join SEWC.

There were no further comments.

## ITEM 5 – DISCUSSION/ACTION REGARDING A POLICY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE ENTITY LETTERS

Mr. Mendoza recapped the discussion that took place at the previous AE meetings 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.

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.

Mr. Nguyen noted that this policy would only be used when there was a time constraint and he recommended editing the letter to say "Board Chair" and list the Board members underneath it. Additionally, in the policy, he recommended updating the language from "Chair" to "Board Chair". Last, he recommended that the second paragraph be updated to include the amount of people that SEWC serves (~600,000).

There were no further comments or questions.

After general discussion, Mr. Nguyen moved to approve the following recommendation:

a. Bring the AE Correspondence Policy and Letter Template to the Board for approval, with recommended edits.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Mueller and was approved by the following voice vote:

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| **AYES:** | **Kuebert, Caraveo, Mueller, Nguyen, Mendoza, Tse, Castillo, Cordero.** |
| **NOES:** | **None.** |
| **ABSTAIN:** | **None.** |

## ITEM 6 – DISCUSSION/ACTION REGARDING UPDATES TO LEAD AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

Mr. Mendoza provided context around potential updates to lead agency responsibilities and the option to outsource some responsibilities when the lead agency transitions in July, if desired. The first item of discussion was the potential of paid staff time for the lead agency, where the lead agency would bill staff time to SEWC for reimbursement. AE members discussed whether this is appropriate, noting that other cities have never been reimbursed and that supporting SEWC has traditionally been part of each city's commitment. Questions were raised

about whether all cities should be paid for meeting attendance and preparation time, though some felt the money could be better prioritized elsewhere. One suggestion was that the lead agency could receive an annual administrative amount (possibly 10%) from contributions, but it was also noted that with the 2-year rotation, costs would even out over time.

AE members also discussed creating a standalone SEWC website to centralize all agenda reports and materials, which would reduce staff responsibilities. It was brought up that it would be important to hire a designer who can ensure ADA accessibility. There were no major objections to this idea, with a suggestion to launch the website around the time of the lead agency transition and have previous lead agencies maintain historical materials on their sites with direct links.

Last, there was a discussion around financial management responsibilities of the lead agency. It was noted that currently, the lead agency creates a fund within their finance department, using warrant requests and CalCards for expenses like food. AE Members noted that once the system is established, operations run smoothly, and knowledge and processes transfer through meetings between outgoing and incoming finance departments.

It was requested that Ms. Koontz and Mr. Mendoza compile Norwalk staff hours and costs to assess whether or not it makes sense to hire support or continue to maintain responsibility as the lead agency. Additionally, Mr. Kuebert confirmed that he will research website scope and maintenance requirements and both topics will return to the next AE meeting.

## ITEM 7 – DISCUSSION/ACTION REGARDING SOUTHEAST WATER COALITION POLICIES AND JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT UPDATES

Mr. Mendoza noted that during the February Board Meeting, a discussion took place regarding potential updates to the Southeast Water Coalition (SEWC) Joint Powers Agreement (JPA). Additionally, there were past conversations regarding the development of formal policies, such as a Reserve Policy or a Lead Agency Transition Policy.

AE members discussed these items, and the general consensus was that a formal JPA update may not be necessary right away, but establishing formal policies, such as a Reserve Policy or a Lead Agency Transition Policy is of interest. It was also discussed that the Transition Policy should be written as we learn from the lead agency transition from the City of Norwalk to the City of Cerritos. There were ideas such as including a checklist and best practices in the policy to ensure a smooth transition.

Another discussion arose, as Mr. Kuebert noted that there is a conflict for the City of Cerritos during the current AE meeting times, so SEWC will need to find a new

time to meet. Mr. Kuebert confirmed that he will send Ms. Gallagher availability and she will pass it along to all AE members to vote on which date and time works the best.

## ITEM 8 – GENERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Mr. Ghirelli provided a brief update on a bill which established a PFAS remediation fund. In the previous cycle, it had been passed by both houses, but it was vetoed because there was no dedicated funding source. Now, the bill has been reintroduced and Mr. Ghirelli noted that he will provide updates on the status of the bill in the future.

## ITEM 9 – DISCUSSION REGARDING ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA WATER AGENCIES (ACWA) UPDATES

Mr. Mendoza noted that copies of the ACWA Welcome Packet were available and reported that he had asked the ACWA representative about logins and how to set up accounts. ACWA indicated there is no specific limit on the number of accounts, but they do need to approve the total number requested. The representative noted that ACWA typically provides accounts to member agencies based on their needs. AE members agreed that they would likely be on the ACWA site the most frequently given their regular engagement with SEWC matters, but cities differed in who they would recommend providing a login. Ms. Gallagher agreed to send an email to member cities asking which two login emails each city prefers.

## ITEM 10 – APRIL 2, 2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS AGENDA

Mr. Mendoza opened up a discussion to confirm which items should be on the next Board Agenda, and the following items were discussed:

1. WRD Update
2. WRD Fiscal Year 26/27 Budget Update
3. AE Letter Policy & Template
4. General Legislative
5. ACWA Update

## ITEM 11 – WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

None.

## ITEM 12 - ADMINISTRATIVE ENTITY MEMBER COMMENTS

None.

## ITEM 13 - ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

The next regular Southeast Water Coalition Administrative Entity Meeting will be held on May 21, 2026 at 12:00 p.m. at the Norwalk Arts & Sports Complex, Hargitt Room, 13000 Clarkdale Avenue, Norwalk, CA 90650.

Chair

5/21/2026
Date