The Pledge of Allegiance was given.

Treasurer’s Report
Director of Finance reviewed the March 2020 treasurer’s report. The Commission accepted the March 2020 Treasurer’s Report. The Counterparty and Sector reports were included in the commission packet.
Director updated the Commission that two credit rating agencies Fitch and S&P, have contacted the District to find out current impacts on customers loads and collections during the COVID-19
pandemic. Fitch had already planned to review the District’s rating in May as part of an ongoing review cycle. Director will return to a future commission meeting with updates.

Director informed the Commission that he and staff will continue to provide days cash on hand updates, as well as year-end projections and power market updates as needed during commission meetings.

**Consent Agenda**

Motion by Lori Sanders, seconded by Barry Bush to approve the Consent Agenda as follows:


b) Approving Vouchers audited and certified by the auditing officer as required by RCW 42.24.080, and those expense reimbursement claims certified as required by RCW 42.24.090, have been recorded on a listing made available to the Commission. As of this date, the Commission does approve the following for payment: Accounts Payable: Automated Clearing House (DD) payments 79408-79475 79629-79653 in the total amount of $1,939,181.55, Checks & Customer Refund payments (CHK) 78793-78902 in the total amount of $559,129.30, Electronic Fund Transfer (WIRE) payments 5283-5309 in the total amount of $8,564,442.08; Residential Conservation Rebates: Credits on Customer Accounts in the total amount of $840.00; Payroll: Direct Deposit – 03/19/20 79252-79407 in the total amount of $346,558.82 and Direct Deposit – 04/02/20 79476-79628 in the total amount of $336,294.16, for a grand total of $11,746,445.91. Voided checks in the total amount of $517.78 were included on the report.

c) Approving work order #592041 for the Gum St. Control House & Battery Bank installation.

d) Authorizing the General Manager on behalf of the District to sign Change Order #1 of Contract #19-03 with CompuNet, Inc. to increase the not-to-exceed amount by $460,000.00; bringing the new not-to-exceed amount to $880,000.00 plus Washington State sales tax in accordance with RCW 54.04.080.

e) Authorizing the General Manager on behalf of the District to sign Change Order #3 of Contract #16-08 with Heritage Professionals Landscaping, effective May 1, 2021, extend the term of the contract to April 30, 2021 and increase the not-to-exceed amount by $59,976.00; bringing the new not-to-exceed amount of the contract to $269,712.00.

f) Authorizing the General Manager on behalf of the District to sign Change Order #2 of Contract #19-14 with DJ's Electrical, Inc. to increase the not-to-exceed (NTE) amount by $160,000.00; bringing the new NTE amount to $674,943.00 plus Washington State sales tax. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Report from Management**

*General Manager:*

1. Commissioners confirmed receipt of General Manager’s email that contained the District’s submitted letter and comments regarding the Columbia River System Operations (CRSO) Draft Environmental Impact Statement. General Manager also held a brief discussion on a recent email received from PPC; this email will be forwarded to the commissioners as well.

2. General Manager provided an update on water year and system generation forecasts. A discussion was held on the BPA flex-spill that started on the Lower Snake River Dams on April 4th and will begin on the lower Columbia River dams on April 10th. Spill will be to 125% total-dissolved-gas (TDG) levels as long as gas-bubble trauma monitoring is not interrupted by COVID-
19 outbreak; in which case TDG would be reduced to 110%. General Manager provided an update on March loads, current market prices, and irrigation loads. Staff is beginning to work with The Energy Authority (TEA) to look at options for mitigating the District’s projected summer capacity deficits. Staff is working with TEA to develop the District’s 2020 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) which will be finalized in August. Staff is also wrapping up the 2021 load forecast which will be brought to the May 12th Commission meeting for approval.

3. A discussion was held on the Governor’s Proclamation 20-28; which temporarily waived and suspended portions of RCW 42.30 Open Public Meetings Act and RCW 42.56 Public Records Act. Currently this proclamation expires at midnight on April 23, 2020. General Manager discussed possible updates to future commission meetings if they continue to take place remotely.

Senior Director of Engineering and Operations:

1. An update was provided on the operations department skeleton crews and crew rotations. Currently there have not been any reports of COVID-19 exposure to staff or family members.

Director of Customer Programs & Services:

1. Director provided an update on customer service staff, who are currently telecommuting and handling phone calls from home, with one employee coming into the office each day to process mail and drop box payments. A discussion was held on call volume and customer service self service payments.

2. Director noted that a very generous $2,500 donation was made to Helping Hands by the African American Community Cultural & Educational Society. In a letter that accompanied the donation, the District was thanked for supporting the community through the Helping Hands program.

3. Commissioner Lori Sanders noted there is a new organization in the community called Helping Hands for Seniors. Given the similarity in name to the District’s Helping Hands program, she wanted to ensure staff was aware of the new organization in the event the District’s customers had questions about the programs. Staff will follow up the other organization to ensure they are aware of the District’s Helping Hands program.

Manager of Communications & Governmental Relations:

1. Manager provided an update on the District’s COVID-19 communications plan to customers and staff. External communications to customers include news releases, radio spots, a COVID-19 webpage on the Benton PUD website, and social media posts with reminders to customers that employees are still available to provide services and keep the lights on during this time. Internally, staff launched Microsoft Teams as a way for employees to continue meeting and collaborating while working from home, the employee newsletter, “Thursday News” includes reminders on public records, ergonomics, and safety and employees have been offered various online web courses to complete during this time.

2. Manager informed the Commission of two upcoming community engagement activities the District is involved in; Congressman Newhouse is hosting a blood-drive in the District’s auditorium on Friday, April 17, 2020, and the District is working to partner with Kennewick
Irrigation District and other community partners on a lighted truck parade that would go around Trios Hospital to show support.

**Director of IT & Broadband Services/Rich Nall, Noanet:**
1. The Washington PUD Association Telecom committee on behalf of the Washington State Broadband Office has sent out an information request to determine the PUD’s capability to assist providing broadband solutions for school-aged children. The primary request has been to identify potential wireless wi-fi hot spots in areas with large drive-up access that can be turned on or installed where students can come to in order to use. The state has said that any solutions may be needed for the remainder of the calendar year. Director informed the Commission the District already provides high speed broadband service to the schools in the Benton PUD service territory and they have their own wi-fi operating at the schools.

Rich Nall, Noanet provided an update that he has begun reaching out to each of the school Districts. Mr. Nall has spoken with the IT Director at the Kennewick School District and they are in an excellent position. Mr. Nall has also reached out to the Prosser, Benton City, and Patterson School Districts but believes they are in the same positive position as Kennewick School District. Kennewick School District has turned up their wi-fi access, with filters in place, inside and outside of the school to allow anyone to sit in the parking lot to access the internet. Mr. Nall also provided an update on the District’s existing wireless broadband network located on the west end of Clearwater and in downtown Kennewick as well as some updates that are in progress that will meet the needs of customers in rural unserved or underserved areas. Director stated the District has seen an increase in bandwidth used in residential and the healthcare sectors as can be expected.

**General Manager/Director of Finance & Business Services/ Director of Customer Programs & Services:**
1. General Manager stated Director of Finance & Business Services and Director of Customer Programs & Services will hold a discussion regarding analysis and considerations of possible assistance to customers whose income was most affected by COVID-19. Stimulus checks and unemployment benefits, along with other sizeable amounts of Federal and State assistance being made available through low-income programs are expected to provide significant help to many citizens with paying their energy bills in the months ahead.

General Manager reminded the Commission that suspending disconnects for non-payment has provided District customers with near term piece-of-mind and that staff is currently recommending the District continue to monitor financial assistance being provided to citizens and that we allow more time for accounts receivable data to reveal which customers may need additional assistance in the future.

Director of Finance & Business Services informed the Commission that staff are monitoring AMI data by customer class and are comparing current 2020 data to previous years, specifically 2018 which held a similar weather pattern. An update on customer loads was provided. Staff are also monitoring the age of receivables.
Director of Customer Programs & Services provided an update on customer accounts currently eligible for disconnect and compared this number to the same period in 2019. The number has increased while the temporary suspension on mailing of Urgent Notices and on disconnects for non-pay is in place. Director reviewed three options for the Commission to consider in the future to assist customers affected by COVID-19. Director noted that staff is recommending the District hold off on implementing a credit or discount program due to additional Federal and State funds that have been made available to customers. Director reviewed the stimulus money and additional funds from Washington State, including additional LIHEAP funding that may become available.

Commissioners held a brief discussion with staff on the three options. Commissioners were in agreement to wait until a future meeting to make a decision about implementing a credit or discount program. Staff will continue to monitor Federal and State assistance and will return to a future commission meeting with a recommendation if needed.

Director informed the Commission that staff will return to the next commission meeting with a recommendation to extend the current motion in place that ends April 30, 2020, authorizing temporary changes to the District’s Customer Service Rates and Policies. The changes include discontinuance of the assessment of the 1% late fee on past due balances, suspension of the mailing of urgent notices to customers with delinquent account balances, and suspension of disconnects for non-pay.

**Meeting Reports**

Commissioner Jeff Hall stated he attended the NoaNet Board meeting via conference call and will also attend the WPUDA association meetings via conference call.

Commissioner Lori Sanders stated she has attended some of the NWPPA COVID-19 webinars.

Hearing no objection, Commission President Jeff Hall adjourned the Commission Meeting at 10:29am.

ATTEST:

Barry A. Bush, Secretary

Jeffrey D. Hall, President