MAPLETON WATER DISTRICT

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION MINUTES

July 14, 2026 | 4:00 p.m. | Mapleton Lions Club Kitchen

Meeting Type: Public work session - Board training

Called to Order: 4:03 p.m. by President West

Location: Mapleton Lions Club Kitchen, 88151 Riverview Avenue, Mapleton, Oregon

Action Taken: None. No motions or votes were taken.

1. Roll Call

Commissioners Present: President Vanessa West; Vice Chair Art Donnelly; Commissioner Dustin Basurto; Commissioner Steve Elliott

Staff Present: Office Administrator Jordan Walker

Guest Presenter: Mark Knudson, Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO)

2. Board Training Led by Mark Knudson, SDAO

Knudson provided Board training focused on the legal authority, governance responsibilities, and risk-management obligations of Oregon special districts. The session was instructional; Board members asked questions and discussed how the guidance applied to the District.

Special district authority and structure. Knudson explained that a special district is a local government entity with statutory authority to contract, employ staff, acquire property, issue debt, levy voter-approved taxes or assessments, charge fees, and sue or be sued. He distinguished special districts from nonprofit and homeowners' association boards and discussed their ability to provide focused services across jurisdictional boundaries.

Board actions, quorum, ordinances, and resolutions. The training reviewed the requirements for valid Board action: a properly noticed public meeting, a quorum, and approval by the required majority. Knudson distinguished ordinances, which establish local law through a formal multi-reading process, from resolutions, which generally express policy and may take effect upon adoption. Legislative decisions remain with the full Board, although staff may prepare supporting materials.

Policy governance and administration. Knudson recommended that the Board operate primarily at the policy level and that trained staff manage day-to-day operations. The Board discussed the District's small size, staffing costs, and the operational duties currently assigned to commissioners. Potential shared-service, regional, or outsourced management and administrative arrangements were identified as options that may provide needed expertise while controlling costs.

Board policies and accountability. The Board discussed difficulties with overlapping roles, follow-through, and adherence to existing Board policies. Knudson advised commissioners to review, acknowledge, and follow the adopted Board handbook and to hold one another accountable during public meetings when Board conduct or assignments depart from policy. New commissioners should receive the policy handbook and complete the acknowledgement process.

Individual commissioner assignments and liability. Knudson explained that commissioners acting independently do not possess the authority of the Board and may create personal liability if they undertake operational work without Board authorization. When commissioner assistance is necessary, the Board should approve and record specific assignments in the minutes. Operational direction should flow through the Board's designated management structure rather than from individual commissioners to employees.

Staff supervision, workplace safety, and documentation. The training emphasized clear reporting relationships, current job descriptions, written performance expectations, consistent supervision, and documentation of deficiencies. Knudson recommended using SDAO risk-management and human-resources resources and ensuring staff are appropriately trained and qualified for assigned equipment and duties. The Board discussed challenges associated with employee supervision and the need to separate governance from day-to-day direction.

Financial stewardship and planning. Knudson reviewed Board responsibility for budgets, rates, lawful expenditures, internal controls, administrative policies, and long-term planning. He encouraged the District to maintain rates sufficient for operations and capital needs, use written purchasing and financial procedures, and consider strategic planning and partnerships that could improve economies of scale.

Public meetings and serial communications. Knudson reviewed Oregon public-meetings requirements and noted that mandatory state-approved training is separate from this SDAO session. A quorum may not deliberate toward a decision outside a noticed meeting, including through serial emails, texts, or intermediaries. Information may be distributed to commissioners, but replies and deliberation should occur in a public meeting. Committees making recommendations to the Board may also be subject to public-meetings requirements.

Executive sessions. The training covered the limited statutory grounds for executive sessions. Notices must cite the specific authority; discussion must remain within that authority; minutes must be maintained; and final decisions must be made in open session. Compensation may not be discussed in executive session. Knudson advised consulting District counsel or qualified human-resources resources when the proper basis or forum for personnel-related discussion is uncertain and reminded attendees that confidential executive-session discussions must remain confidential.

Government ethics and conflicts of interest. Knudson reviewed ethics rules applying to public officials, including relatives and household members, nepotism restrictions, prohibited use of office for financial gain or avoidance of financial detriment, gift limitations, and confidential information. Actual conflicts should be declared and the official should refrain from discussion and decision; potential conflicts should be declared, with participation determined under applicable law. He noted that penalties can be personal and encouraged reliance on written advice from counsel or the Oregon Government Ethics Commission when questions arise.

Governance as risk management. Knudson concluded that effective governance is the foundation for reliable service, budgeting, capital planning, policies, and strategic work. The Board recognized that unclear authority, inconsistent adherence to policy, and blurred Board-staff roles create governance risk in addition to the District's infrastructure and operational risks.

Follow-Up Items Identified

- Provide the Board policy handbook to commissioners who have not received it and obtain signed acknowledgements.
- Place commissioner operational assignments on a future agenda so any necessary duties can be specifically authorized and recorded.
- Ensure each commissioner completes the separately required Oregon public-meetings-law training.
- Use noticed work sessions or properly constituted advisory committees when collaborative Board development work would otherwise involve a quorum.
- Consult District counsel or qualified human-resources resources before convening an executive session when the statutory basis is uncertain.
- Continue evaluating a clearer management structure and possible shared or outsourced administrative and management services.

3. Adjournment

The training concluded at approximately 6:51 p.m. The work session ended thereafter. No District business was voted upon during the work session.

Approved by the Board of Commissioners on ______________________, 2026.

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President Vanessa West: Office Administrator Jordan Walker