



Helix Water District
7811 University Ave.
La Mesa, Calif. 91942

HWD responds to taxpayer group's report

A recently released report by the San Diego County Taxpayers Association has created some interest in expenses incurred by board members of several water agencies in the region. While the report characterized those expenses as “perks,” Helix Water District’s payments to board members actually are standard compensation and reimbursements made in accordance with applicable laws.

While Helix has had insufficient time to review the report in great detail, any judgment of the Helix board of directors’ expenditures should be viewed in the context of what it takes to represent more than a quarter-of-a-million people in the District. The following information may be helpful in determining the value of those expenditures:

- 1) Helix is the second largest water agency in San Diego County with a \$1.5 billion infrastructure;
- 2) Helix delivers treated drinking water to more than 260,000 people within District boundaries and up to half a million people when including water treated and shared with neighboring agencies;
- 3) ;Travel reimbursement for board members in 2010 was the same as 2005 and even less in 2011
- 4) Rates of reimbursement for board members are in accordance with State of California guidelines;
- 5) Helix has made no increase in board members’ per diem rates since 2003;
- 6) Helix board members attend numerous meetings for which they receive no compensation;
- 7) During the studied period, Helix has reduced the number of regular board meetings from three to two per month and with it the associated expenses;

- 8) Helix requires receipts for all reimbursable expenses and any lost receipt is investigated and noted;
- 9) The Helix board is serious about cost reduction and cancels regular board meetings when possible by moving non-urgent items to the next scheduled meeting;
- 10) Helix is proud of its high level of transparency. Official policies are posted on Helix' website, hwd.com, and all expense reimbursements are published in board meeting packages, which are also posted on the web;
- 11) While at one point the board members were averaging up to eight meetings reimbursed per month, the 2011 average is 5.6 meetings reimbursed per month;
- 12) Travel is not considered a perk and is valuable to help educate and train board members about the complex water industry and the history of water issues;
- 13) Expenditures of the board members comprise approximately 0.2 percent of Helix' \$70 million Fiscal Year 2012-13 budget;
- 14) Helix continues to reduce operating costs and has reduced its workforce by more than 10 percent over the last four years;
- 15) Helix delivers safe drinking water to customers 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, at less than one penny per gallon;
- 16) As elected officials, board members must stay abreast of local, regional and statewide water issues;
- 17) Some of Helix's board members also serve on regional boards and that enhances their ability to represent District customers;

Helix Water District serves treated water to more than 260,000 people in La Mesa, El Cajon, Lemon Grove and parts of Spring Valley and Lakeside.

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