

Burton Water Cooperative

Community Newsletter #2

April 28, 2022

Hello Burton Community!

This latest Newsletter from the **Burton Water Cooperative** includes updates from the exploratory committees' research on the feasibility of the cooperative purchase and management of the Burton Water system.

If this is your first-time hearing about this cooperative concept, see the website (www.burtonwater.org) to get caught up. There, you'll see a list of frequently asked questions, links to the previous newsletter and the video recording of the previous community meeting, and information on the exploratory committees.

The Burton Water Cooperative Has Been Formed!

The Coop has been legally formed to undertake the many functions needed to move ahead. These include, for example, making collective decisions for exploratory committee work, submitting various applications, contracting for technical help, and raising funds.

Interim Board of Directors and Officers Selected

The interim Board of Directors of the cooperative has been selected for the feasibility period. Members were nominated by the Membership Committee to represent the Feasibility Committees and provide the skills and perspectives needed in this exploratory stage. They include **William Shadbolt** (President), **Chuck Weinstock** (Vice President), **Lisa Fitzhugh** (Secretary), **Don Furman** (Treasurer), **James Culbertson**, **Dawn Kerber**, and **Ben Lee**. See www.burtonwater.org for bios. This Board will serve until the members of the Cooperative decide whether to proceed with the purchase after which, if proceeding, the members will elect a new Board. The Board's regular meetings are on the third Thursday of each month at 4pm; cooperative members are welcome to attend (a link is posted on the website).

Joining/Participation Agreements for Membership in the Cooperative

The next big step in the feasibility study process is to build a membership base by asking the community to join the cooperative. Joining is important.

- 1. It gives us a way to communicate with you and for us to hear from you.**
- 2. It shows you support an investigation of this unique opportunity to control our water.**
- 3. It gives you a voice as only members can vote as to whether or not to purchase the water system.**

One membership equals one vote. People who are not members cannot vote. So, regardless of your current thinking on the cooperative concept (yay, nay or maybe), you need to become a member to have your vote counted. This initial membership comes with a nominal \$5 fee, required legally but set low to encourage wide participation. Joining/Participation Agreements will be mailed out to all Burton Water customers to the mailing addresses provided by them via the contact form on our website or from King County records.

Funds to Support the Feasibility Work

Initially it was believed that substantial grant support would be available through the Northwest Cooperative Development Center. However, most of that support turned out not to be available. We have worked diligently to develop a plan to raise funding. We have made amazing progress and will have exciting news to share plus a challenge to the community.

While a great deal of the work has been done by an incredibly talented group of Burton residents, there is some work that requires specific professional expertise. We want to have a well-researched process that examines the key aspects of running a water company and develops a sound financial plan for stable and sustainable operations. This due diligence process needs to be able to access skilled third-party expertise. The funds raised now will support this work.

We will need four main types of professional services—these include:

- Legal (organizational documents, purchase agreement, regulatory approval, and financing)
- Engineering studies of the condition of the water system, identification of future capital improvements, and cost estimates)
- Reports required by potential lenders
- Community outreach and communication

People Power

Equally important to the paid services we'll have to contract out for (above) is our need for a few more dedicated community volunteers. **Specifically, we are looking for someone with Project Management expertise who can help us track and manage the many moving pieces associated with this feasibility project.** We could also use some individuals who would be willing to help with database management. Getting to the finish line and having a proposal for the community to vote on will require a bunch of oars in the water, so consider joining this amazing team of volunteers.

Next Community Meeting is May 22 at 4:00 pm on Zoom

The Zoom link for the May 22 meeting will be posted on the website (www.burtonwater.org; send us an email if you have trouble finding the link). We will dive into more detail about:

- What a cooperative is, how they operate, and how we envision one working for the water system management in our community.
- The Joining/Participation Agreement and how important it is to get wide-spread participation in membership.
- Accomplishments to date, key tasks ahead and the feasibility schedule.
- Ways you can be enrolled and provide support.
- Your questions! If you have questions now, send them to info@burtonwater.org.

Wellfield Site Tours Still Available!

Email info@burtonwater.org if you are interested in seeing where your water comes from! These tours have been popular for those who have attended. We start with a brief discussion of the aquifer that is the source for the system and then take a walking tour of the facilities (i.e., wells, storage, sanitation, distribution) guided in large part by Nick Simmons (the system operator).