

This document is an extract of a larger publication.

civilgrandjury.org is a project of UnGovr.org, a US-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to government transparency and public accountability.



The Waters Are Murky: An Investigation into Transparency Issues at Sunnyslope County Water District

INTRODUCTION

The San Benito County Civil Grand Jury (Civil Grand Jury) initiated an investigation into Sunnyslope County Water District (Sunnyslope) operations following multiple complaints regarding district operations. One complaint was submitted directly to the Civil Grand Jury, and several other complaints were identified on various social media platforms and in articles published by BenitoLink.

The complaints included Sunnyslope's water rate increases, conflicts within its Board of Directors, and a perceived lack of transparency by the Sunnyslope Board and the General Manager. These transparency issues appeared to impede Sunnyslope's communications with the public. Conflicts among the Board of Directors appeared to center on a reliability fee imposed by the San Benito County Water District and whether the fee should be refunded to customers. During the investigation, sewer rate increases affecting some customers were implemented in April 2026, resulting in additional complaints. The Civil Grand Jury investigated concerns regarding Sunnyslope County Water District's policies, practices, and governance. During the investigation, the Civil Grand Jury identified issues related to sewer service rate increases, easement payment practices, due process within the governing board, and communication between District staff, the Board of Directors, and customers.

A lack of transparency can undermine trust within the District and among the public. The Civil Grand Jury identified instances in which established procedures may not have been followed, potentially resulting in inconsistencies with internal policies, procedures, and legal requirements.

METHODOLOGY

The Civil Grand Jury interviewed current and former staff and Board members of Sunnyslope County Water District, as well as the staff at San Benito County Water District, all of whom had firsthand knowledge of Sunnyslope staffing, Board operations, and practices. The Civil Grand Jury also reviewed the 2013 and 2024 rate studies, minutes from previous board meetings from 2020-2026, the California Government Code, audio recordings of Board meetings, and related documents. The Civil Grand Jury reviewed publicly available reporting, including BenitoLink articles and publicly accessible social media discussions. Additional documents were requested and reviewed, including assessments, easement agreements, board policies, the Sunnyslope Employee Handbook, and the website. The Civil Grand Jury also reviewed other water districts' policies to establish a baseline for best practices.

At the time this report was prepared, requested documents and emails had not been fully produced in response to Civil Grand Jury subpoenas.

BACKGROUND

Sunnyslope County Water District is a Special District operating within San Benito County. Sunnyslope was formed on December 17, 1954, as a California Special District pursuant to the California County Water District Act, §30000 et seq., to furnish water and wastewater services to residents of the District in San Benito County, California. (<https://www.sunnyslopewater.org>) Special Districts, such as Sunnyslope County Water District, are independent public agencies operating within the State of California. Sunnyslope's Board of Directors consists of publicly elected representatives chosen by District customers. Sunnyslope works cooperatively with other local water agencies, including the San Benito County Water District and the City of Hollister, to provide and maintain water and wastewater services throughout the county. The District also participates in regional planning efforts intended to improve water quality and

maintain reliable water supplies during drought conditions.

Sunnyslope County Water District serves approximately 8,000 homes and businesses within San Benito County. Areas served include Ridgemark Estates, Oak Creek, and the Quail Hollow neighborhoods. Sunnyslope is also expanding its service area to include Best Roads Mutual Water Company, Stonegate Community Service Area, and the Tres Pinos Water District. Sunnyslope, as a Special District, is governed by many of the same laws and requirements as any other local public agency.

DISCUSSION

Sewer Rate Adjustments

During the April 2026 billing cycle, a significant number of sewer customers residing in Ridgemark and Quail Hollow received bills substantially higher than those in previous billing cycles. The investigation found that Sunnyslope management changed the sewer billing methodology from incremental billing to a flat-rate structure. Although this possible billing methodology was discussed in the Raftelis Fee Study Report (2024) and a water rate hearing was held on August 6, 2024, the data presented at the 2024 meeting included only water rates and not sewer rates. Since that meeting, no hearing has been scheduled to specifically address a change to the sewer rate.

Modification of rates without due notice appears in conflict with Sunnyslope's Resolution 527, which requires the Board to consider written protests prior to the imposition or increase to any water or wastewater fee or charge, and with Proposition 218, which requires a 45-day notice prior to the scheduling of a public hearing in order to allow customers the opportunity to discuss and appeal any water or sewer rate changes. Sunnyslope's website contains no information on this subject, and there were no discussions of sewer rate changes at recent

public meetings of the Board of Directors before the rates were changed.

The sudden change in sewer rates, implemented without proper notice, led to customer complaints directed to Sunnyslope's office and expressed on social media. Typically, front office staff receive management guidance on communicating water and sewer rate changes and addressing customer concerns; however, this guidance was not provided in this instance. Office staff reported receiving limited guidance regarding how to respond to customer concerns. Fourteen Ridgemark residents submitted formal complaints during the public comment period at the Board of Directors Meeting on May 19, 2026.

The issues raised by homeowners included significantly increased sewer bills and the impact that higher bills would have on both seniors and those who lived in single-person households.

The purpose of the May 19th meeting was to approve the flat rate, authorize the mailing of a Proposition 218 notice to affected customers, and schedule a hearing in 45 days. However, under Proposition 218, notices to customers and scheduling a hearing should have been completed before changing the rates.

Easements

One of Sunnyslope's current projects is the Water System Consolidation Project. Within agenda documents, the project is also referred to as the "Small Water System Consolidations with Sunnyslope Project." This project would consolidate several smaller community water systems, including Tres Pinos, Stonegate, Venture Estates, and Best Roads, and make Sunnyslope the lead agency for project planning, environmental review, and construction. The project requires connecting six miles of pipeline to complete it.

A March 16, 2026, article published by BenitoLink stated:

"There are six miles of pieces of pipeline," said Sunnyslope County Water District General

Manager Drew Lander. "The pipeline that goes out there is only about three miles, but we have other connecting pieces that have to go together and pieces inside of Tres Pinos in order to connect them, for a total of six miles."

Lander said construction of the pipeline began this month near Fairview Corners. He said neither Tres Pinos nor Stonegate could afford to pay the \$2 million or more required to upgrade their systems or drill new wells. He added that SSCWD will not be footing the bill to pay for connecting Tres Pinos or the other small communities to its system. "

Timeline of the project

On March 27, 2023, the Department of Water Resources notified San Benito County that it had been awarded \$13,274,684 in grant funding for the Small Water Systems Consolidations with Sunnyslope Project.

On June 24, 2025, the Sunnyslope Board approved a memorandum of understanding with the County to provide these services. The costs for this project will be paid from the Department of Water Resources grant and from assessments received from users of the water system. The work for this project must be completed by December, 2026.

To complete this project, six easements are required to connect the existing Sunnyslope water system to the smaller community water systems. The easements would grant Sunnyslope the right to use part of a landowner's property, without owning the land. This would allow Sunnyslope to install and maintain water infrastructure on private property.

Normally, a Special District or Public Utility could use eminent domain to acquire the right to use real property for public benefit. Eminent domain allows the government to acquire private property for public use with fair compensation. Fair compensation is often debated and calculated based on the property's fair market value and any associated damage or benefits.

For landowners, stopping an eminent domain case is unlikely; however, negotiating higher compensation is possible.

On December 16, 2025, the Sunnyslope Board voted to authorize the first of six easements necessary to complete the water consolidation project. This first easement involved an existing easement maintained exclusively by the San Benito County Water District. The easement runs parallel to the Highway 25 corridor between Best Road and the Tres Pinos School District property. Sunnyslope is required to move the waterline west at a cost of \$1,047,827. San Benito County Water District would cover this cost.

The Easements and Their Acquisition

At the January 27, 2026, Board meeting, the Board accepted the remaining five easement proposals.

The remaining five easements are as follows:

- Foxhill Tank Easement, Containing 1,940 sqft
- Highway 25 Transmission Easement, Containing 2.26 acres
- School Property Transmission Easement, Containing 6,954 sqft
- Stonegate Transmission Easement, Containing 15,505 sqft
- Ridgemark Transmission Easement, Containing 0.75 acres

Land appraisals were solicited and used as a basis for compensation to each property owner. Eminent domain was not used as an instrument for acquiring the required land rights. During the meeting, the question of eminent domain was raised but dismissed because the process can be lengthy. Sunnyslope employees and Board members stated in interviews that they have known for at least two years that these easements were needed. At the January 27, 2026, Board meeting, the General Manager stated that deals were made with the landowners

without using eminent domain because there was not enough time to pursue that option. The information provided in Table 1 under "Paid to Owner" was obtained via interviews with Sunnyslope staff.

Easements				
	Size/Acres	Assessed Value*	Paid to Owner	Also Paid to Owner**
Foxhill Tank Easement	0.045	\$ 58,400	Unkown	0.5 acre foot of water in perpetuity (forever)
Highway 25 Transmission Easement	2.26	\$ 11,800	\$100,000	5 water connections (curent value \$8,800)
Highway 25 Transmission Easement	5.57	\$ 14,600	Unkown	
School Property Transmission Easement	0.16	\$ 12,700	Unkown	
Stonegate Transmission Easement	0.36	\$ 500	\$10,000	
Ridgemark Transmission Easement	0.75	Unknown	Unkown	
* Assess values were provided by SSCWD				
** At the timeof this report, the contracts between SSCWD and the landowners had been requested and promised to the CGJ. Subsequently these agreements were subpoenaed.				

Table 1

Eminent Domain can take up to 18 months to settle. It can also take much longer, even years, if the landowners disagree with the compensation and seek a court judgment. The fair market value of these properties is relatively low, and the cost of pursuing a court ruling could be prohibitive for both parties. Although Sunnyslope knew the easements were needed, the eminent domain timeframe became impossible due to the timing of negotiations.

Negotiations began sometime after July 1, 2025. The landowners had a distinct advantage because all construction must be completed by January 31, 2027, due to bond funding limitations. For the Highway 25 Transmission Easement, Sunnyslope is obligated to pay the homeowner \$100,000 and \$44,000 in water connection fees for a parcel of land valued at less than \$12,000. The Foxhill Tank Easement on property owned by a single homeowner includes an unknown amount of compensation, plus 0.5-acre foot per year of well water in perpetuity. During an interview, the cost of 0.5-acre foot of well water was estimated at approximately \$2,000 for the customer. The grant funds are expected to be exhausted within approximately one year, after which Sunnyslope may continue absorbing associated costs. It costs Sunnyslope

less to deliver the water. The total budgeted for easements in the grant that San Benito County Water District has with the Department of Water Resources is \$287,500. The Sunnyslope packet for the January 27, 2026, meeting states the following:

"The two land easements critical to the successful completion of this project are the Foxhill tank expansion and the Highway 25 transmission easement. To acquire these easements, there is additional compensation which has been negotiated."

There was no mention of the actual compensation for any of the properties. The Civil Grand Jury requested the signed contracts, and as of the date of this report, has not received them. When various interviewees were questioned about the contracts, they were unable to verify whether they had been signed. In interviews, the Civil Grand Jury was advised that the "in perpetuity" component of the Foxhill Tank Easement contract may be modified, but there is currently no way to confirm that it has been changed. Questions about whether rights could be transferred or sold were addressed with assurances that this would not occur, but there is no way to check whether these stipulations were included in the contract.

Interviews with Sunnyslope staff, former staff, and neighboring water districts revealed that granting water resources and connections in perpetuity as payment is unusual at best. Several interviewees expressed concern that providing water in perpetuity could potentially be interpreted as a gift of public funds. The Sunnyslope staff stated that they were attempting to modify the Foxhill Tank Easement deal so that it would not remain in perpetuity; however, Sunnyslope did not provide additional details requested by the Civil Grand Jury. One interviewee stated that the City of Hollister has many agreements with landowners in which water was given as compensation for some sort of exchange. The Civil Grand Jury was unable to corroborate this claim. The one specific instance cited involved the "Cienega Pipeline." The assertion was that water has been provided free of charge to residents along the Cienega Pipeline for decades. The Civil Grand Jury attempted to verify this assertion and found a long history regarding the water supply used by the residents of the Cienega Valley and the City of

Hollister. There does not seem to be a comparable case.

Dispute Resolution Inconsistencies

Members of this year's Civil Grand Jury have directly observed conflicts between the Sunnyslope County Water District Board of Directors during open board meetings in the fall of 2025. One dispute at the November 2025 Board meeting resulted in a Board member using an abstention vote to indicate dissent and/or protest. According to the Sunnyslope Duties of Members of the Board of Directors, an abstention vote may be used only in the case of a personal or financial conflict of interest. The Duties also state the following regarding abstention from a vote: "Unless such a conflict of interest exists, however, Directors should not abstain from the Board's decision-making responsibilities." More importantly, disputes centered on the appropriateness of the San Benito County Water District's reliability fee charged to Sunnyslope. In 2014, the San Benito County Water District imposed a reliability fee on the Sunnyslope and the City of Hollister Water District to cover part of the costs associated with the Accelerated Drought Response Project (ADRoP), which all three districts agreed to as part of the San Benito County Master Plan. The current San Benito County Master Plan Update (2024) is a comprehensive plan and agreement between San Benito County Water District, the City of Hollister Water District, Sunnyslope, and San Juan Bautista Water District. The districts agreed to construct underground aquifers to store the water that the county receives from the Central Valley Project. The stored water would be used during droughts to avoid higher-priced water by eliminating reliance on the free market, where prices are traditionally higher during droughts. Prior to the ratification of the current plan, San Benito County Water District obtained a \$20 million grant for ADRoP with the caveat that the districts in San Benito County would also have to contribute the final \$50 million cost.

According to multiple people interviewed from Sunnyslope, the San Benito County Water District insisted that the reliability fee was necessary to secure the grant. It was explained that the additional money collected would be placed in an interest-bearing reserve fund controlled

by the San Benito County Water District and dedicated to this project. The fee paid by Sunnyslope was incorporated into the higher rate structure approved after the Rate Study was completed in May 2024.

The reliability fee was charged to Sunnyslope before the board had authorized it, and Sunnyslope initially objected and started the official dispute process with Step One, which called for the Sunnyslope board to meet with the San Benito County Water District and discuss the issue. The full board voted to proceed with Step One. The three conflict resolution steps detailed from the San Benito Urban Area Water Supply and Treatment Agreement (5/29/13) includes the following resolutions (Resolution Step Three is not cited in this report since the Sunnyslope Board did not reach this step in the dispute.):

Resolution Step One:

The managers or other persons designated by the disputing Parties will negotiate on behalf of the entities they represent. The nature of the dispute shall be reduced to writing by each such Party together with the relevant facts asserted and shall be presented to the manager of the other Party, who shall then meet and attempt to resolve the issue. If the dispute is resolved at this step, there shall be a written memorialization of such resolution, signed by each disputing Party's manager and ratified by each Party which shall be binding upon the Parties.

Resolution Step Two:

If the dispute cannot be resolved within ten (10) days at Step One, one the disputing Parties shall submit the matter to non-binding mediation. The dispute shall be heard by a mutually acceptable mediator and any common costs of mediation shall be borne equally by the disputing Parties. The Parties shall each bear their own costs and fees therefore. If the issue is resolved at this step, a written memorialization of such resolution shall be signed by each manager and approved by the respective disputing Party.

According to several reports, there were no open meetings after Step One was implemented, and Step One extended beyond the 10-day resolution period identified in the agreement. The dispute was eventually resolved after staffing changes at the San Benito County Water District and through private meetings between management from both water districts. The disagreements observed during the Sunnyslope Board meetings in the fall of 2025 among board members were apparently the result of the decision not to follow already-mandated conflict-resolution steps, which would have required instigating Step Two within 10 days of the approval of Step One. Step Two would have involved the transmission of a letter from the Sunnyslope attorney to the San Benito County Water District. By a vote of four to one at the November 2025 Sunnyslope meeting, the board decided not to proceed with the letter. The Board expressed a preference for Sunnyslope to minimize litigation in its business dealings, a preference that coincided with its decision not to proceed with Steps Two and Three. This decision was followed by public criticism expressed through BenitoLink and social media.

Although staff and board directors generally agreed during the Civil Grand Jury interviews that the ADRoP Project is a valuable initiative, disagreements arose regarding its funding through an initially unapproved reliability fee and the Sunnyslope board's failure to adhere to established procedures for resolving the conflict. While the topic of the board's failure to follow the steps receded in subsequent meetings in 2025-2026, the resignation of one board member and various interviews with board members and Sunnyslope staff suggest that this issue has not been fully resolved.

Transparency/Communication Issues

During the 2025-2026 investigation, the Civil Grand Jury discovered several instances in which communication issues impeded transparency, both within the organization and in how information was communicated to the public.

Public Issues

While examining the Sunnyslope County Water District website, the Civil Grand Jury identified missing information. A review of board meetings from 2020 to 2026 revealed missing minutes from multiple meetings, even though the minutes had been approved by the Board. The absence of approved meeting minutes on Sunnyslope's website makes it difficult for the public to remain informed about ongoing projects and board decisions.

Additionally, during interviews with Sunnyslope staff, it was discovered that audio recordings of Board meetings existed. When questioned about the recordings, some members of management appeared unaware that the recordings existed. At the April 28, 2026, Board meeting, the general manager stated that meetings were not recorded; however, the Civil Grand Jury obtained audio recordings of the Board meetings from Sunnyslope. Furthermore, the Civil Grand Jury confirmed that Sunnyslope's general manager is aware of these recordings. These recordings are public records, and they are protected by the California Public Records Act (CPRA).

The CPRA is specific about what public records are and it defines "public records" as "any writing containing information relating to the conduct of the public's business prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency, regardless of physical form or characteristics" and it further defines a writing as "any handwriting, typewriting, printing, photostating, photographing, photocopying, transmitting by electronic mail or facsimile, and every other means of recording upon any tangible thing any form of communication or representation, including letters, words, pictures, sounds, or symbols, or combinations thereof, and any record thereby created, regardless of the manner in which the record has been stored."

Furthermore, if a recording is made, for whatever purpose, it must be made available to

members of the public in response to a request under the CPRA. The recording may be erased or deleted 30 days after the recording is made. If recordings of public meetings are hidden, it can affect how much citizens believe Sunnyslope, as a public institution, is acting ethically and competently.

Several individuals interviewed by the Civil Grand Jury expressed a desire to encourage public participation in Board meetings and within the policy-making process. However, other interviewees expressed limited interest in increasing public participation. Two interviewees explained the lack of participation in meetings is a result of a community that is satisfied with Sunnyslope's performance. However, there is no evidence of a correlation between nonparticipation and customer satisfaction. Unfortunately, the inconsistent posting of minutes and the lack of available recordings from Board meetings could make it difficult to fully engage Sunnyslope's customers.

The Civil Grand Jury uncovered a situation where the public was not notified of a new program that would affect customers moving into new communities. In 2025, the Board approved the implementation of the Statewide Community Infrastructure Program (SCIP). This program will change how developmental impact fees will be collected from future housing expansion, but there has been no outreach to explain the components of this program and how it might benefit residents. Upon further investigation, the Civil Grand Jury learned that the adoption of this program will shift the payment of this fee from developers to new homebuyers, which may result in slight property tax increases over approximately 20 years for future homeowners. The proposed benefit to customers would be to theoretically lower housing prices, since developers would not need to add developmental impact fees to the price of each house. At a board meeting in April, one board member raised the question of whether homeowners would see the benefits of this program and if the developers would be compelled to lower their house prices in exchange for the elimination of their responsibility to pay the developmental impact fee, but the remaining board members declined to address this potential issue.

Transparency from Within

The current rate study (2024) was compiled by Raftelis, a company contracted by Sunnyslope to help define current and future water rates. When the Civil Grand Jury posed questions about the Raftelis report, which served as the blueprint for setting water rates, several interview participants had difficulty explaining the rationale for how rates were calculated or describing the methodology that Raftelis used. According to interviews, Raftelis did not provide the calculation templates used in developing the report, which hindered management's overall understanding. As a result, Sunnyslope management and the public cannot fully analyze the specifics of the report.

At the April 28, 2026, Board of Directors meeting, the General Manager shared information about work that is being considered between Sunnyslope and the City of Hollister. Further investigation by the Civil Grand Jury revealed information about a contract outlining consulting services that Sunnyslope will provide to Hollister over two years for a \$40,000 fee. Records do not indicate whether the Sunnyslope Board of Directors was informed about this contract prior to its signing. According to an interview with a Board member, contracts exceeding an unspecified amount are supposed to be signed by the Board president and are subject to Board review. The Civil Grand Jury later confirmed that the approval threshold was \$15,000, which indicated that the contract needed to come before the Board for approval.

A clear process exists when hiring union workers at Sunnyslope; however, there does not appear to be a similar policy among management employees. While some management staff were hired after the district conducted an outside search procedure and traditional interviews, others were promoted from within without a formalized process. Providing advancement opportunities for existing employees appears reasonable, but the lack of structure and only verbal assurances has led to employee confusion and anxiety.

Our interviews revealed discrepancies with how certain activities were perceived by various members of management and the Board. There were differences of opinion among the individuals interviewed about the termination of a contract between Sunnyslope and San Benito Foods in Hollister. The differences involved the reasons why the contract was not renewed and who bore greater responsibility for its termination. There was also evidence that Sunnyslope's management is unaware that the conflict among members of the Board from the fall 2025 Board meetings has not yet been fully resolved and that these issues are likely to resurface.

While some of the communication issues found may not be significant on their own, there appears to be a recurring pattern of communication deficiencies that impact both public understanding and internal decision-making, impeding the ability to make informed decisions.

Summary

The Civil Grand Jury identified significant transparency concerns within Sunnyslope. The lack of transparency stems from two factors: inconsistencies in the implementation of processes and policies, and a communication approach that often omits pertinent details for the public, staff, and the Board. This approach to communication may be inconsistent with Proposition 218 requirements and related provisions of the California Constitution. Inconsistencies with the process of obtaining easements have resulted in awards given to landowners that do not always match the assessed value of their land. Bypassing clear conflict-resolution steps has led to conflict within the board, and this inconsistency has the potential to perpetuate further conflicts. Finally, communication issues among Sunnyslope employees, board members, and the general public are impairing Sunnyslope's ability to function fully as an open, transparent agency.

Findings & Recommendations

F1: Sewer rates were changed without the public notice required under Proposition 218.

R1. Review and, if necessary, suspend implementation of the revised sewer rates pending compliance with Proposition 218 notice requirements. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

R1A. Rebate or credit back any increase of sewer charges to impacted customers. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

R1B. In alignment with Proposition 218, begin the process to raise sewer rates, including a 45-day public notice, a public hearing, and the creation of an official ordinance by the Board. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

R1C. Update the Sunnyslope website to reflect new sewer rates once the ordinance has passed. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

F2: The easement acquisition process appears inconsistent and may not fully align with established procedures.

R2. All contracts for easements should be made available to the Board in writing prior to approval. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

R2A. The board should take a more active role in the development of contracts on behalf of Sunnyslope, such as developing a detailed set of procedures for the General Manager to follow. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

R2B. The current easement contracts should be immediately available to the public. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

F3: The decision by the Sunnyslope Board to bypass the established steps in conflict resolution contributed to additional conflict among Board members and the airing of grievances in the public forum.

R3: All policies and steps for dispute resolution need to be followed. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

R3A: In the event that the established conflict resolution policy needs to be amended, an

agreement between board members needs to be reached within the confines of Board meetings. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

F4: Communication and transparency issues are significantly affecting interactions among Sunnyslope management, staff, Board members, and the public.

R4. Management needs to give staff clear direction when policies, prices, or procedures change by putting them in writing. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

R4A. The Board of Directors should conduct training so that the general manager and the Board are familiar with the Sunnyslope County Water District Policy Manual. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

R4B. Using the Sunnyslope website, news sources, and social media, notify the public concerning new programs and initiatives. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

R4C. The Board should approve the use of recordings at Board and committee meetings. These recordings should be retained and posted on Sunnyslope's website so the public can participate in the process. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

F5: When the general manager is negotiating contracts, such as those for the easements and the contract with the City of Hollister, the Board is not receiving all of the pertinent details.

R5: Management needs to follow established policies for communicating with the Board so that they receive information regarding contracts or changes to contracts. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

F6: When Sunnyslope creates a recording of a Board meeting, it becomes a public record, subject to CPRA and the Brown Act. Sunnyslope currently records Board meetings; however, the existence and availability of these recordings are not clearly communicated to the Board or the public.

R6: Sunnyslope should immediately post all Board and committee meeting audio recordings within its possession on its website. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

F7: Sunnyslope accepted an outside rate study that did not include methodology templates from the contractor, which hindered their ability to fully analyze the recommendations within the report.

R7: Require, as a stipulation, outside contractors to provide methodology templates to management. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

F8: Current hiring practices for management positions are creating confusion within the District.

R8: Develop a clear hiring process for management to include written agreements when promoting from within the organization. To be implemented by August 19, 2026.

RESPONSES REQUIRED

The following responses are required, pursuant to Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, from the following governing boards within 90 days:

Sunnyslope County Water District Board of Directors

INVITED RESPONSES

The following individual is invited to respond:

Sunnyslope County Water District General Manager

Disclaimer: This report was issued by the Civil Grand Jury, except for **Steve Wittry**, who is a former employee of the San Benito County Water District. This Civil Grand Juror did not participate in any aspect of the investigation, including interviews and deliberations, the preparation and writing of this report, or the approval of the report.