

AUSTIN CREEK MUTUAL WATER COMPANY

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Board of Directors

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## Annual Letter February 1, 2022

Dear Members,

The annual member's meeting of the Austin Creek Mutual Water Company (ACMWC) will be held on Saturday, February 19 at 11 AM via ZOOM. Please contact the Board of Directors at [water@acmwc.net](mailto:water@acmwc.net) if you would like to attend.

### NEW BUSINESS

1. **ELECTIONS:** **This is our most urgent new business.** There will be two vacancies on the Board of Directors after February 19, 2022, as Mary Anne Sobieraj and Laura Martin end their terms. If you are interested in being on the Board, please email us at [water@acmwc.net](mailto:water@acmwc.net). Board members are elected for two-year terms to decide policy and perform some administrative tasks. No special skills are needed. Board members pay for the units of water they use, but their maintenance fee is waived. Our bylaws require that we have five board members, so please step up, we need you! Without a Board of Directors, we cannot continue to operate as a mutual water company.
2. **REGULATORY AGENCIES:** Our operations are regulated and monitored by divisions of the California Water Boards. The Division of Drinking Water works to ensure that we provide everyone with a safe and reliable source of drinking water, while the Division of Water Rights determines how much water we can legally use under our permit. This year's drought led to greater oversight by both divisions. For example, since September 1, we have been required to report our water usage weekly – previously we reported annually. It is important that we follow their directives, if we fail to do so the State will take control of the company away from us and turn it over to a for-profit company that would raise our rates. This has happened to several of our neighboring water companies.
3. **MAJOR REPAIRS:** Last March, the pump in our main well, the water line that carries water to the lower storage tank, and the wireless system that controls the

pump all failed in the same week. With lots of help, hard work, and luck we were able to get our backup well running within a few hours and the burst water main repaired within 24 hours. While the wireless system was out, we operated the pumps manually round-the-clock. Special thanks to our neighbors Bill Frantz, Vince Fuesz, Caryl Chlan, and Leslie Kirkwood who stepped up and played critical roles in getting us through the crisis.

4. ROUTINE PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE:

- **Booster Pump:** We use a “booster” pump to send water from our lower storage tank to our upper storage tank. From there, water is fed by gravity to homes at higher elevations on Sequoia Ridge and Silvia Drive. The upper tank is inaccessible to water trucks and the lead time for replacing a pump is over a month, so we have two booster pumps for redundancy. The older of these pumps has failed and will soon be replaced.
- **Electrical Systems:** We have electrical service at both the well site on Austin Creek Road and the site of the lower storage tank and booster pumps on Sequoia Ridge Road. Electrical work is needed at both sites to reduce fire risks, make our system reliable, and comply with regulations and PG&E requirements. The pace of this work has been limited by the permitting process, it began in 2021 and will continue into 2022.
- **Generator:** We have a large generator that can power our 3-phase well pumps in the event of an extended power outage. Ron Morgan, one of our members, has been faithfully maintaining, running, and testing the generator to make sure it can be used. Tim Martin has been there for us too, using his truck to get the generator to where it is needed.
- **Leaks:** We have found and repaired several leaks in lines between water mains and our household water meters. Although not very noticeable (one was found only because it made a faint hissing sound), about half of our water has been lost from such leaks. If you see or hear something that could possibly be a leak, please let us know immediately!

5. RUSSIAN RIVER UTILITY: The challenges we faced this past year became compelling arguments to have professionals operate our water system. After much deliberation, we contracted Russian River Utility to maintain our equipment, perform water quality testing, handle meter reading and billing, and submit annual reports to the State. ACMWC members still own the water company, and the elected Board of Directors still governs it. You can find our contract with RRU on our website. The transition has gone very smoothly.

6. MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS: Meetings of the Board of Directors are held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of every month at 6:30 pm and are open to all members. Agendas are posted 3 days in advance on our website [water.acmwc.net](http://water.acmwc.net). At present, these meetings are conducted over the internet on Zoom. If you would like to attend a meeting send an email to [pres@acmwc.net](mailto:pres@acmwc.net) two days in advance to receive a Zoom invite. Minutes of every meeting are available to members and can be requested by emailing or phoning the secretary.
7. ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA: The agenda for the annual member's meeting will be finalized at the Board meeting on February 9, 2022, and placed on our website [water.acmwc.net](http://water.acmwc.net) the following day. If you have items you would like placed on the agenda, please submit them to the Board at [water@acmwc.net](mailto:water@acmwc.net) (or phone us).
8. SPECIAL THANKS: We thank those of you who volunteered your time and skills to help us keep ACMWC running smoothly this past year. In addition to those mentioned elsewhere in this letter, special thanks to our meter readers Judith Heinemann, John McCarthy, and Edy Morgan, and to Alex Kopp for brush clearing and tree trimming.

Thank you,

The ACMWC Board of Directors