

Greetings Burton Water Cooperative Community!

We have several important updates to share with you.

USDA Loan: At the last community meeting on January 9th, we reported that we expected to get a decision from the USDA "before the end of January". Well, here we are in early March. What's up?

Over the intervening weeks we have received periodic requests for clarifications and additional information from the USDA. We have responded as promptly as possible. Their questions have all been toward better understanding and not critical in any way.

We should note that typically loan requests to the USDA are for single system improvements from entities that already own their systems so our request is a little different and more complicated. This plus actual and threatened staff furloughs due to the federal budget impasse are likely factors for this extended review.

Where are we now?

1. We are advised that our loan is in the last stage of the approval process. We expect word any day now.
2. We have received a draft Letter of Conditions confirming our loan amount and key terms. On first read there are no big surprises. The USDA hastens to add it is not yet final.
3. The USDA has confirmed they have budget capacity for our loan under the current Continuing Resolution and it does not need full Federal Budget approval.
4. While they have funds for our loan in hand, if Congress does not pass the 2024 federal budget or another Continuing Resolution, then all USDA staff is on furlough and will not be available to continue processing.

We are in regular, active engagement with the USDA toward the goal of a final Letter of Conditions with terms we can meet consistent with our stated plans as soon as humanly possible. We have stayed in regular communication with the Sellers as well. They remain supportive and understanding. We will communicate to all immediately upon resolution of this final step in the USDA process. At the same time, we remain in communication with our anticipated construction lender, Heritage Bank, as well. With these two items in hand we will start the decision process with the Cooperative membership.

Timing of the Ballot: As discussed in the January 9th community meeting, the ballot package will be sent out, by email, to all Coop members upon receiving the financing commitment from the USDA and Heritage Bank. The ballot is a simple single yes/no vote and includes approval of these elements as a package:

- USDA and Heritage Bank required resolutions/authorizations to empower the Board to act
- Purchase of the Burton Water Company Assets
- USDA Loan and related funding elements
- Bylaws for the operation of the Cooperative
- Amended Articles of Incorporation

There will be a community meeting, on ZOOM, to respond to questions. The meeting notice will come with the ballot package.

Cooperative Affordability From the beginning, we have chosen to take a cooperative path to ownership of our water system. For the Board, the working committees, and many in our community, this means caring about every one of us who relies on Burton Water, including those who may experience financial challenges in taking on the additional costs associated with this transition. A group of community volunteers has come together to further explore affordability and will continue to work on tools and methods to address the issue.

Our first step is a community survey. Please take a few moments and respond to 4 questions.

[Click HERE for survey.](#)

Last Chance for Joining Agreements: Here is a reminder that you need to be a member to vote. If you have paid \$5 already but not signed an agreement, or yours is still lingering on your desk, please take a moment to fill it out and return to us, along with your \$5 joining fee in one of three ways: ([Click here for a fresh copy of the JA](#)).

- Regular mail to 20211 Vashon Hwy SW, #29, Vashon, WA 98070 or
- Drop off at the Burton Store (there's a collection box there or
- Scan/send to info@burtonwater.org
- You can pay the fee online, with Paypal or enclose a check or \$5 in cash.

We need **BOTH** your \$5 fee AND your completed and signed form. Thanks!