

PUNJAB WATER REGULATION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
SCO No. 149-152, Third Floor, Sector 17C, Chandigarh

Minutes of 80th Meeting of Punjab Water Regulation and Development Authority held on 09.02.2024 at 3.00 pm in the Committee Room of the Authority under the Chairmanship of Sh. Karan Avtar Singh, Chairperson PWRDA.

Present: Sh. Sushil Gupta, Member and Sh. Surinder Singh Kukal, Member.

In attendance: Mr. Chander Gaind, IAS Secretary and Mr. J.K. Jain, Addl. Secretary.

Item No. 80.01: Confirmation of the Minutes of 79th Meeting of PWRDA.

The Minutes of 79th meeting held on 22.01.2024 were circulated to all concerned. No comments received. The Minutes may be confirmed.

Decision: *Confirmed.*

Item No. 80.02: Action Taken Report:

Action Taken Report on the decisions taken in previous Meetings of the Authority is at **Annexure A80.02.01.**

Decision: *Noted.*

All pending ATRs be submitted within 15 days.

Item: 80.03: Application for permission by units granted ad-interim permission under the Draft Guidelines, 2020.

The Punjab Groundwater Extraction and Conservation Directions, 2023 have come into force w.e.f. 1st February, 2023. As per para 8.1 of the Directions, 2023, 'A User who had obtained ad-interim permission under the Draft Guidelines shall apply for permission under the Directions within the time period stipulated for existing Units.'

1. The Authority by Notification dated 31.08.2023, substituted paragraph 4.8(D) of Directions 2023, as reproduced below:

"For the period from the date of commencement of the Directions up to the date of installation of water meters, a User shall pay groundwater charges for the entire volume of groundwater for which Permission is sought. The User shall install the water meters of required specifications within three months of the date of permission as required under paragraph 5.1 C of these Directions. In case the User is granted Permission for a different volume of groundwater than applied for, then the difference

in payment, if any, will be paid by the User or adjusted in future payment cycles, as the case may be.

It is clarified that in case an existing Unit had already installed water meters (even if not of required specifications) on the date of commencement of these Directions, then it shall pay Groundwater extraction charges as per the readings of such water meters for the period from the date of commencement of the Directions to the date of installation of water meters of required specifications, being not beyond a period of three months from the date of permission.”

2. The online permission portal does not currently have a provision for the users to make payment as per water meter readings. Therefore, Users who wish to apply as per actual extraction or groundwater are unable to submit their application online. The Authority in its 74th meeting had defined the date of application as, “The date of payment of applicable Application fees, Charges and Security Deposit”. However, for ad-interim permission holders, this date can’t be defined as they have made these payments before the commencement of the Directions 2023.

3. Further, there are certain ad-interim permission holders who are regularly paying monthly charges but have neither applied for permission nor registered their units online under Directions, 2023 perhaps due to misunderstanding or confusion on their part as the ad-interim permission letter states the Validity period of the Ad-interim Permission is *three months from the date of publication of the final guidelines by the Authority, or for three years from the date of grant of this ad interim permission, whichever is earlier.*

4. For the units having obtained ad-interim permission under the Guidelines, 2020, it is proposed that the Authority may consider:

a. Granting permission to all such units which are regularly paying groundwater charges and there is nothing due against them, *by taking a simple application offline (by email/post) within a time as stipulated by the Authority, stating therein that ‘their ad-interim permission be converted into permission under Directions 2023, as there is no change in the unit’s data submitted with the ad-interim permission application’. Those applying within such stipulated time may be exempted from payment of Non-Compliance Charges.*

b. *Units who have obtained ad-interim permission but did not pay groundwater extraction charges from the date of submission of application till the date of grant of ad-interim permission may be allowed to pay the groundwater extraction charges for this intervening period without payment of any delay charges.*

Placed for the consideration of the Authority.

Decision: *Approved as proposed.*

Item No. 80.04: Installation of Piezometers and water meters by Users under the Directions

A. Piezometers:

Two units namely Tata Steel Ltd., Plot No. A 1 Kadiana Khurd Ludhiana, District Ludhiana and M/s Firozpur Green Energy Pvt. Ltd. Village Lakho K Behram Tehsil Guru Har Sahai District Ferozpur requested for extension of timeline for installation of piezometer. The subject matter was placed before the Authority on 14.12.2023 as agenda item no. 76.04 (**Annexure A80.04.01**). Decision was deferred with the direction to put it up as a fresh item in the next meeting with proposed amendments.

2. Accordingly, the proposal is that the paragraph 5.2 (f) of the Directions may be amended as under:

Existing Provision	Proposal
<i>The piezometer shall be installed within a period of three months from the date of Permission.</i>	<i>“In the paragraph 5.2 sub-paragraph (f), the words “of three months from the date of permission” be substituted with the words “as stipulated by the Authority”.</i>

3. Subsequent to the above amendment, the following timeline for installation of piezometer may be stipulated:

- a. *The piezometer shall be installed within six months of the date of permission or the date of commencement of groundwater extraction, whichever is later.*
- b. *Units which are already granted permission but have not installed piezometer shall install piezometers within six months from the date of this order.*

B. Water Meters:

The Authority in its 72nd meeting while considering the Representations regarding compliance of water meter specification timeline given in the Groundwater Directions, 2023, decided as under:

A. To facilitate applicants, the following procedural amendments to the Punjab Directions for Groundwater Extraction and Conservation, 2023 were approved.

i. In first paragraph of sub-paragraph D of paragraph 4.8, the words ‘within three months of the date of permission’ wherever occurring be deleted.

ii. In second paragraph of sub-paragraph D of paragraph 4.8, the words 'of three months from the date of permission' be substituted with 'as stipulated by the Authority in paragraph 5.1 C'.

iii. In Paragraph 5.1, for sub-paragraph C, the following be substituted: 'A User shall install the required water meters within such time period as stipulated by the Authority.'

B. Consequent to the above amendments the following timeline is stipulated:

A user shall install the required water meters within three months of the date of permission or by 31st March, 2024, whichever is later.

C. Accordingly, condition number 2 of the Permission Letter be amended and the revised timeline be reflected on the website of the Authority.

D. Secretary to notify amendments made in the Directions, 2023 in the Official Gazette of the State of Punjab. The gazette notification be uploaded on the website of the Authority."

2. It has been noticed that the above decision does not cover the Units where extraction structures are proposed to be constructed.

3. Therefore, it is proposed that the timeline approved in the 72nd meeting may be replaced as follows:

Existing Timeline	Proposed Timeline
<i>A user shall install the required water meters within three months of the date of permission or by 31st March, 2024, whichever is later.</i>	<i>a. Unit having existing extraction structure/(s), shall install required water meter on each existing extraction structure within six months of the date of permission or by 31st July, 2024, whichever is later.</i> <i>b. Unit proposing to construct extraction structure/(s), shall install required water meter on each of the proposed extraction structure within six months from the date of installation of the extraction structure/(s).</i>

Placed before the Authority for consideration.

Decision: *Proposal paragraph A 2, A 3 and B 3 approved as proposed.*

Secretary to notify the amendment in the Groundwater Directions, 2023 in the official gazette of the State of Punjab.

The timelines be published in 3 news papers having wide circulation in the State of Punjab for information of the public, and uploaded on the website of the Authority.

Item No: 80.05: Clarifications regarding Timelines for permission applications.

Provision related to the Processing of applications as contained in paragraph 3.5 of the Groundwater Directions, 2023 is as under:

“PROCESSING OF APPLICATIONS

- A. *On receipt of an application complete in all respects seeking Permission to extract groundwater, the Authority may after examining the application and the accompanying documents, and conducting on-site inspection if required, grant Permission for extraction of groundwater subject to such conditions and restrictions as it may impose.*
- B. *It shall be the endeavour of the Authority that Users who are found to be eligible for grant of Permission be granted the Permission within three months from the date of receipt of an application complete in all respects.*
- C. *In case the application is found to be incomplete, or in case any clarification, information or document is required, then the Authority shall inform the Applicant within a period of three months to complete the application or to provide such clarification, information, document etc. as may be required.*
- D. *The procedure for processing an application for Permission shall also apply to applications for renewal, revocation, extension, amendment or modification of Permission.”*

2. To ensure that the Users provide required clarification, information, document etc., without excessive delay and to ensure timely processing of the Permission applications, it is proposed that the following clarification with respect to Paragraph 3.5 (C) may be given:

In case the application is found to be incomplete, or in case any clarification, information or document is required, the Authority shall inform the Applicant (by email/post) to complete the application or to provide such clarification, information, document etc. as may be required within a period of one month. In case the applicant fails to do so within the stipulated period, charges as given at Sr. No. 5 of Table 6.2 of the Directions will be applicable. For delay beyond two months, the Authority may refuse permission for groundwater extraction on account of failure to supply the required information as provided under paragraph 3.8(ii) of the Directions, 2023.

Placed before the Authority for consideration.

Decision: *In case the application is found to be incomplete, or in case any clarification, information or document is required, the Authority shall inform the Applicant (by email/post) to complete the application or to provide such clarification, information, document etc. as may be required within a period of one month. In case the applicant fails to do so within the stipulated period, charges as given at Sr. No. 5 of Table*

6.2 of the Directions will be applicable. For delay beyond two months, the Authority may refuse permission for groundwater extraction on account of failure to supply the required information and the User shall be liable for action on account of non-compliance of the Directions, 2023 without prejudice to any proceedings that the Authority may initiate in accordance with the provisions of the law.

Item No. 80.06: Quarterly statement of Receipts and Payment for the quarter ending 31.12.2023.

Quarterly statement of Receipts and Payments for the 3rd quarter ending 31.12.2023 is at **Annexure A80.06.01** for information of the Authority.

Decision: *Noted.*

Item No.80.07: Quarterly statement of PWRDA Fund placed in Fixed Deposit for the quarter ending on 31.12.2023.

Quarterly statement of PWRDA Fund placed in Fixed Deposit during 3rd quarter ending on 31.12.2023 is at **Annexure A80.07.01** for information of Authority.

In the investment procedure approved by the Authority, it is provided that receipts from groundwater charges be kept in term deposits of shorter period of around one year (11 to 13 months). However, in the month of October and November 2023, the receipts from groundwater charges were placed in FD for 18 months instead of 12 months and few days because the ROI available for 12 months was 7.75% (non-callable) and for 18 months ROI was 7.85% (callable).

This deviation from approved investment procedure was done in the interest of the Authority. Therefore, Authority is requested to ratify the same.

Placed before the Authority for approval.

Decision: *Approved as proposed.*

Item No. 80.08: Report regarding pending dues/ excess payments of GWE Charges by 509 ad-interim permission holders as on 31.12.2023.

The Authority in its 74th meeting held on 07.11.2023 while considering the report on pending dues/access payment of GWE charges by 509 ad-interim permission holders made the following decision:

“Details of notices already sent to defaulting/non-compliant units and next steps proposed to be taken in such cases be put up to the Authority in its next meeting.”

Report regarding outstanding dues and excess payments made by Users granted ad interim Permissions as on 31.12.2023 is at **Annexure A80.08.01**.

The details of notices already sent to defaulting/non-compliant units is at **Annexure A80.08.02**.

The standard operating procedure (SOP) for action against units defaulting in regular payment of groundwater charges and notices to be issued will be put up in the next meeting.

Placed before the Authority for information.

Decision: a) *Noted.*

b) *Further action against the units defaulting in payment of Groundwater Charges be taken after finalization of the SOP and Notices.*

Item No. 80.09: Audited Balance Sheets of PWRDA Fund for FY 2022-23.

1. The work to prepare Audited Balance Sheet for FY 2022-23 was assigned to Mehan Associates Chartered Accountants, #27, basement, Sector-19A Chandigarh (herein after to be referred as CA) as per approval granted by Authority by Resolution No. 67.05 dated 06.07.2023.

3. Balance Sheet for the Financial Year 2022-23 (**AnnexureA80.09.01**) has been received on December 28, 2023.

4. Manager Accounts has verified the Balance Sheet and requested that this may be approved by the Authority.

5. Audited Balance Sheets for the Financial Year 2022-23 (Annexure A80.09.01) is placed before the Authority for consideration & approval.

Decision: *Approved as proposed.*

Item No. 80.10: Status of applications received for Permission of Groundwater Extraction as on 31.12.2023.

The status of applications received offline for permission of groundwater extraction and permissions granted as on 31.12.2023 is as under:

Report on the Status of Ground Water Extraction Permissions		Upto 31.10.2023 (offline only)	Upto 30.11.2023 (offline only)	Upto 31.12.2023 (offline only)
Sr No.	Details	Number	Number	Number
1	Applications received up till previous month	431	434	464
2	Applications received during this month	3	30	30
3	Total Applications received till end of this month	434	464	494
4	Permission Granted up till previous month	137	194	226
5	Permission Granted during this month	57	32	12
6	Total Permissions Granted till end of this month	194	226	238
7	Exempted Application	5	5	5
8	Total Balance Applications	235	233	251
a	Applications referred back for Queries	169	179	180
b	Application referred back due to incomplete payment	18	17	24
c	Applications Pending for Scrutiny	48	37	47
i	<i>Applications Pending for Scrutiny for less than 1 month</i>	3	30	18
ii	<i>Applications Pending for Scrutiny for more than 1 month</i>	20	0	22
iii	<i>Applications Pending for Scrutiny for more than 2 months</i>	25	7	7

3. Online permission portal was launched on 06.09.2023. The status of applications received online for permission of groundwater extraction and permissions granted as on 31.12.2023 is as under:

Report on the Status of Ground Water Extraction Permissions (online)				
Sr.no.	Description	October 2023	November 2023	December 2023
1	Applications received up till previous month	60	80	141
2	Applications received during this month	20	61	98
3	Total Applications received till end of this month	80	141	239
4	Permission Granted up till previous month	0	0	2
5	Permission Granted during this month	0	2	2
6	Total Permissions Granted till end of this month	0	2	4
7	Exempted Application	0	0	0
8	Total Balance Applications	80	139	235
9	Applications referred back for Queries	0	2	42
10	Application referred back due to incomplete payment	0	0	0
11	Applications Pending for Scrutiny	6	88	86
12	Applications Pending for Scrutiny for less than 1 month	4	87	84
13	Applications Pending for Scrutiny for more than 1 month	2	0	1
14	Applications Pending for Scrutiny for more than 2 months	0	1	1

Placed before the Authority for information.

Decision: *Noted.*

Item No.80.11: Recruitment to one post of Private Secretary.

As per decision of the Authority in its 76th meeting held on 14.12.2023 one post of Private Secretary was advertised. The detailed advertisement is placed at **Annexure A 80.11.01**. Till the last date total seven applications were received via email.

2. ADO assisted by office staff prepared the list of eligible and non-eligible candidates (**Annexure A 80.11.02**). Four candidates were found to be eligible. The eligible candidates were asked to appear in the computer proficiency and Shorthand test. The following four tests were conducted to assess the computer proficiency.

- a. Translation (Both English and Punjabi)
- b. Word Processing (including preparing tables and basic formatting etc.)
- c. Noting/Letter and DO drafting
- d. Shorthand test (both Punjabi & English).

3. Only one candidate Mr. Roop Singh appeared in Computer Proficiency Test (CPT). The attendance cum marks report is as under:

Sr. No.	Name of Applicant	Test					Remarks
		Test-1 (Max Marks-10) Translation for both Eng. & Pb.	Test-2 (Max Marks-25) Word Processing	Test-3 (Max Marks-25+15+15=55) Noting+DO+ Letter	Test-4 (Max Marks-10) Shorthand (Pb. & Eng.)	Total out of 100	
1.	Roop Singh	6	2	32	0	40	-
2.	Nirmal Singh	Absent					-
3.	Pushap Kumar Bali	Absent					Requested for exemption from the test vide email dated 29.01.2024.
4.	Tarsem Kaur	Absent					Refused to appear in the test vide email dated 27.01.2024.

4. In view of the functions to be performed by the Private Secretary, the Committee constituted by office order no. 44593: PWRDA-PWRD0MISC/14/2020-PWRDA/BR/I/81224 dated 25.01.2024 decided that educational qualification and experience should also be given due weightage in addition to the performance in the Test.

For educational qualification and experience the marking criteria adopted is as below:

- a. Marks out of 10 are to be granted on the basis of the marks obtained in Bachelor's Degree.
- b. Marks out of 5 are to be granted on the basis of the marks obtained in Post Graduate Degree.
- c. 0.5 mark for every year of service experience for the post of Private Secretary/Superintendent for one-year, Personal Assistant for 3 years or Senior Assistant for 5 years, one mark for every year of service experience on post higher than Private Secretary/Superintendent, Personal Assistant or Senior Assistant, with combined Maximum 10 marks.

5. In accordance with the above criteria, the overall marks obtained by Mr. Roop Singh are as under:

Sr. No.	Name of Applicant	Degree (out of 10)	Post Graduation (Out of 5)	Experience (Max 10)	Computer Proficiency Test (Max 100)	Total Marks (Max 125)
1.	Roop Singh	5.70	2.44	10.00	40.00	58.14

6. Mr. Roop Singh did not attempt letter writing and got zero mark in shorthand.

7. Keeping in view all relevant factors including the indicative Roles and Functions of Private Secretary as detailed in the Advertisement, the Committee did not find Mr. Roop Singh fit for this post.

Placed before the Authority for consideration.

Decision: *Noted.*

The post of Private Secretary be readvertised. The mode of recruitment, qualification, experience, monthly remuneration and period of contract shall be the same as approved by the Authority in the 76th meeting. However, the test in shorthand is exempted.

Meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.