

EAST BAY MUNICIPAL UTILITY DISTRICT

DATE: March 26, 2026
MEMO TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Clifford C. Chan, General Manager *CCC*
SUBJECT: March 10, 2026 Post-Board Retreat Materials

Attached are the post-Board retreat materials prepared by the external facilitator, Equity Through Action (ETA). The first attachment is a summary of pre-retreat interviews conducted by ETA to gather insights on transitions, successful Board interactions, and preliminary relationship building. The second attachment is a list of communication and collaboration agreements prepared by ETA based on the list of Board norms developed during the retreat.

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Attachments: 1. East Bay MUD Board Interview Summary
2. East Bay MUD Board Communication & Collaboration Agreements

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East Bay MUD Board Interview Summary

Post-Retreat Briefing for Board Chair and Core Staff

Interview Synthesis

- 1. Concentrated rather than systemic tension.** Multiple interviewees said they enjoy working with most colleagues and want the Board to move forward, even as prior incidents continue to create noise, interpersonal strains, and distractions. That distinction matters: EBMUD does not start from zero on trust, but it does need mechanisms to keep outlier behavior from setting the tone for the whole Board.
- 2. Communication behavior is the primary governance focus.** Directors repeatedly asked for tools for difficult conversations, constructive feedback, earnest listening, and more respectful disagreement. Several comments also pointed to the need for stronger meeting discipline: staying on agenda, clarifying decision points, and avoiding exchanges that become personal, performative, or detached from the District's business.
- 3. Continue to support Board-Staff connection and working relationship.** Interviewees consistently praised staff professionalism and responsiveness, but some described Board questions or tone as accusatory and said staff can feel nervous or exposed. At the same time, some directors want more transparency, direct learning opportunities with management and facilities, and clearer dialogue on operational issues, labor, and process.
- 4. Norms and accountability now need operational follow-through.** Directors were receptive to Communication & Collaboration Norms because they want shared expectations that apply under pressure, not just when things are calm. The opportunity now is to use the retreat's concepts around communication styles, generative thinking, productive dialogue, and accountability cues as live meeting tools rather than one-time workshop content.
- 5. Post-Retreat implications.** The retreat agenda addressed the right problem set. The risk now is drifting; if agreements are not translated into chair practice, staff protocols, and decision routines, the Board may leave the retreat with shared vocabulary but limited behavioral change.

Recommended Next Steps

- 1. Codify the retreat agreements.** Within 30-60 days, finalize a short set of Board Communication & Collaboration Norms and use them explicitly in agendas, chair facilitation, and post-meeting debriefs.
- 2. Reset Board-Staff protocols.** Create a Board-Staff engagement protocol that sets expectations for tone, information requests, routing, turnaround times, and when to resolve issues offline versus in public sessions.
- 3. Upgrade decision architecture.** For complex items provide clearer pre-reads, explicit tradeoffs, defined decision points, and a clear statement of what additional input is still needed.
- 4. Protect time for relationship-building and operational learning.** Add structured touchpoints outside formal meetings such as facility/site briefings, management roundtables, and, where appropriate, targeted labor dialogue, so relationship-building does not compete with governance time.
- 5. Run a 60-day leadership review.** The President and General Manager will assess adherence, address recurring outlier behaviors early, and determine whether targeted coaching or additional facilitation is warranted.

East Bay MUD Board Communication & Collaboration Agreements

These are working norms for how we communicate, collaborate, and govern together. They are intended to support, not replace, existing legal, ethical, and procedural requirements.

- **Create space so every voice has an opportunity to be heard prior to our decisions.**
Practice: The Chair invites first-round comments before second-round comments.
- **Focus on the issue, not individuals.**
Practice: Any member may request to discuss an “issue, not individual” reminder or a process check.
- **Provide feedback, even when in agreement.**
Practice: State whether you are asking a question, raising a concern, offering input, or making a recommendation. Keep comments brief, relevant, and non-repetitive so the Board can hear all voices and honor the agenda.
- **Commit to truth and accuracy.**
Practice: Clarify before challenging and correct without blame or escalation.
- **Listen to staff from a place of trust and respect, with a presumption of good faith and good intentions.**
Practice: Questions may be rigorous, but tone remains respectful. Concerns about staff actions or requests for operational follow-up go through the General Manager or the appropriate officer, consistent with existing Board roles.
- **Raise significant concerns, questions, or information needs as early as possible.**
Practice: For major items, Directors will flag key questions in advance when feasible
- **Stay generative when tension rises; briefly paraphrase what you heard and ask at least one curiosity question.**
Practice: Use one mic, a shared pause phrase, or a process check when the room tightens.
- **End with owners, next steps, and follow-through.**
Practice: The President, Chair, or General Manager summarizes follow-up actions and timeline.”

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