



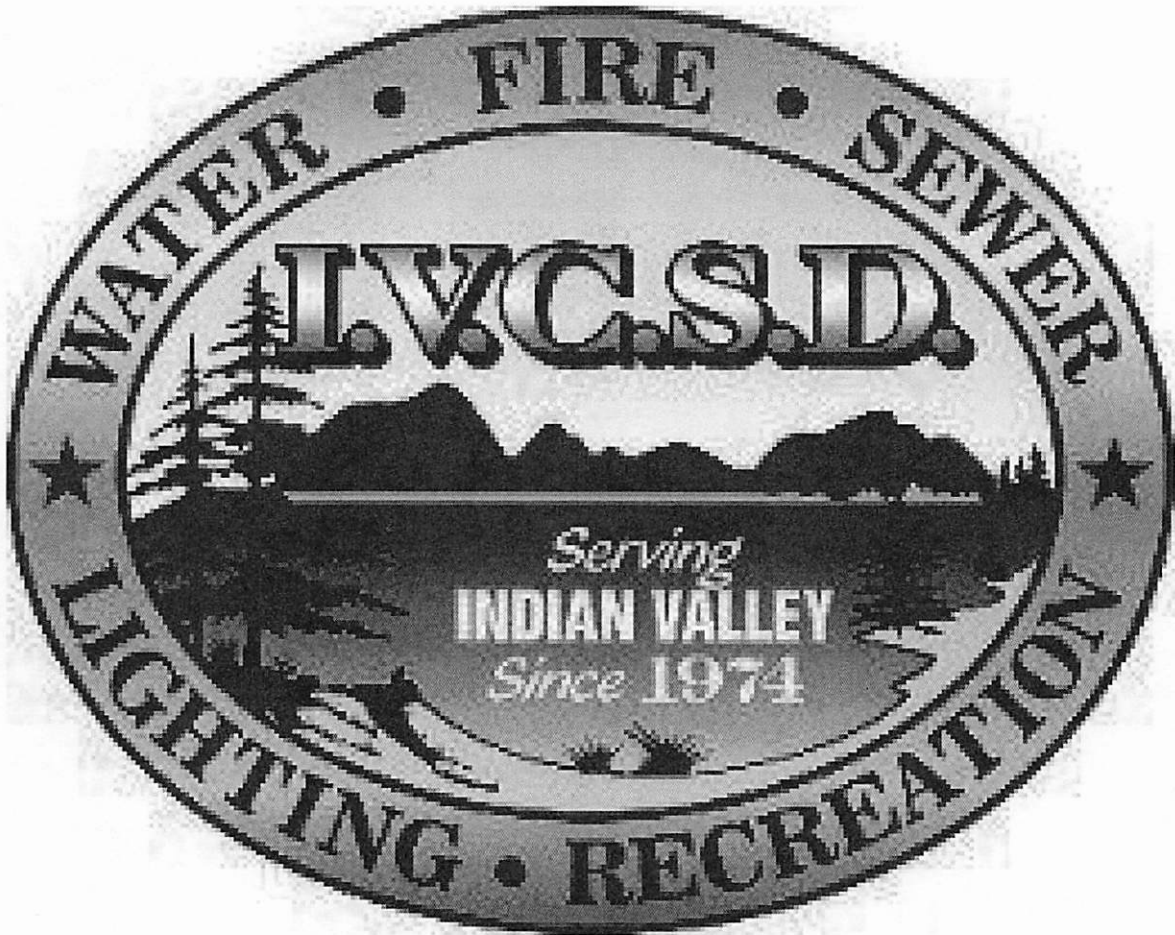
The Plumas Sun

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News

Indian Valley district embraces basic services

September 6, 2025 | Jane Braxton Little



The Indian Valley Community Service District is in the midst of change. After three months of turmoil, exacerbated by a revolving door of employees and board members, district governance has settled into orderly meetings focused on the nuts and bolts of providing water, sewer, street lights and fire protection services.

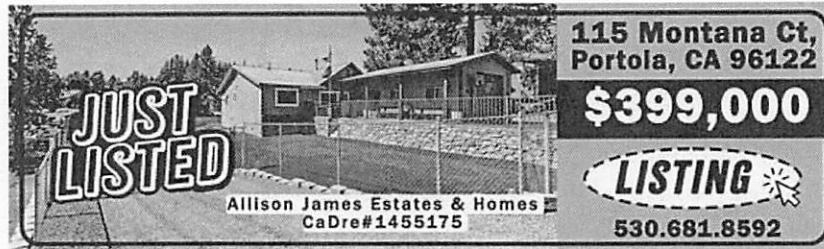
At the board's Sept. 4 special meeting, the agenda included a park renovation and landscaping project, a fencing contract, groundwater testing and review of the 2024 audit.

"We're just starting with the basics," said Director Roger Cherry, the most recent addition to the five-member district board.

Interim general managers

Since Aug. 15 the board meetings have included Interim General Manager Jamie Little, who also serves as administrative manager of the Weott Community Services District in Weott, a Humboldt County community 226 miles north of San Francisco. At the Indian Valley district's Sept. 4 special meeting, the board approved a contract with Little, which it had discussed in closed session at its Aug. 28 regular meeting.

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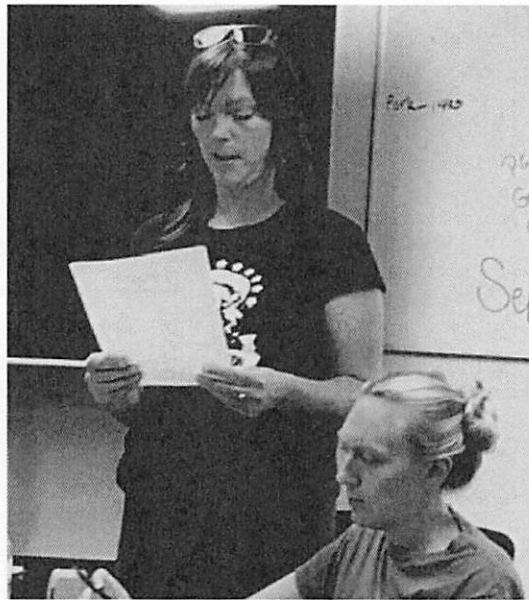
Little (no relation to the writer) will receive \$75 an hour up to \$10,000 a month as interim general manager. The contract specifies her term of service span Aug. 12 to Oct. 31.

Despite the dates of her contract, it did not appear on a board agenda until Aug. 18, when the district directors held a special meeting on a Monday at 8 a.m. Noting the discrepancy between the contract's start date and her actual start date, Little said "that needs to be amended."

"IF WE ALL WORK TOGETHER WE WILL GET THERE."

Jamie Little, IVCS D interim general manager

She participated in person at an Aug. 22 special meeting and at the board's regularly scheduled monthly meeting, held Aug. 28. She was present by telephone Sept. 4. Her contract calls for her to "work in person" in Indian Valley two weeks a month.



IVCS D Interim General Manager Jamie Little with Jessica Johnson, administrative assistant. Photo by Jane Braxton Little

Little replaces Board Chair Wanda Carpenter as interim general manager. Carpenter was appointed at a special meeting June 19 to replace Adam Cox, who was hired as IVCS D's general manager in 2022. The decision to appoint Carpenter was unanimous by the then three-member board, which included Carpenter as chair.

At Little's first regular board meeting Aug. 28, she expressed optimism about the Indian Valley district: "It's going to take some time and patience to get IVCSD back on track. I think the employees that currently work for IVCSD are very valuable, and if we all work together we will get there," Little said in her manager's report.

Back to basics

One of the get-back-to-basics issues Little addressed Aug. 28 was whether to continue using CivAssist, a software program adopted by former Plumas County Supervisor Jon Kennedy and designed to help local government agencies with agendas, minutes and other documents. IVCSD discontinued using the program in August, which ended providing supporting information with publicly posted agendas.

Little recommended returning to CivAssist. "It would be helpful to use it," she said. Jessica Johnson, the newly appointed administrative assistant, said it helps keep meetings on track.

Director Dan Kearns, the second newest member of the board, agreed: "We need as much transparency as possible." He seconded Cherry's motion, which passed unanimously.

In August, the directors appointed an ad hoc committee to review all of the district's grants. Led by Chrystal Leninger, the committee's five members are working directly with grant managers to understand the terms of each grant and its benefits to the district. In its brief tenure, the ad hoc committee has produced a volume of information designed to document the financial impact of each grant on the district and how it is being administered.

"We are trying hard to be transparent... so the community can trust this board," Leninger said at the committee's Aug. 28 meeting.

Also before the board is a 2023-2024 audit of the district's finances. At its Sept. 4 meeting, the directors tabled all decisions on the audit they had just received. "I would like more time to go over it," said Director Susan Doran.

The district's last approved audit was for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. A current audit is a requisite of most grant applications, said Leninger.

Public Safety Center

Among the district's largest undertakings is construction of a Public Safety Center. The 11,200-square-foot complex, to be built on State Route 89 near the Wolf Creek Bridge in Greenville, is designed to house headquarters for the Indian Valley Fire Department, a Plumas County Sheriff's Office substation and ambulance service quarters.

The Plumas County Board of Supervisors committed \$1.5 million to the \$6 million project. The funding agreement, approved Dec. 17, 2024, included a pre-development and construction agreement between the county and IVCSD. Also in the agreement package is a special use permit, to be issued by the county, and IVCSD's commitment to regularly update county officials on funding sources and the progress of construction.

Progress on this major post-fire infrastructure has proceeded slowly and with little fanfare. IVCSD Operations Manager Charles Slagher reported Aug. 28 that the area planned for the safety center is "ready to go — ready to break ground." A white board in the district's conference room announced groundbreaking Sept. 5.

There was some confusion at the board's Sept. 4 special meeting over a \$925,818 contract, negotiated with Dig It Construction, to provide grading and drainage at the construction site. Although it was signed by Dig It July



20, it was apparently not signed by the district, Little said. The directors accepted the contract and signed it Sept. 24, allowing work to begin.



IVCSD Ad hoc grant committee: Susan Neer, Chrystal Leninger, Wanda Carpenter, Dan Kearns and Brandy Cedillos. Photo by Jane Braxton Little



IVCSD Board of Directors: Susan Doran, Wanda Carpenter, Andy Meyers, Dan KEarns and Roger Cherry. Photo by Jane Braxton Little

Order after chaos

The orderly, congenial manner of the IVCSD's recent meetings comes after months of turmoil for the district. From mid-May through the end of July the district held 14 public meetings; 11 of them were special meetings, which require notification just 24 hours in advance of the scheduled time. The plethora of meetings, with only a day's public notice to most of them, has made following district decisions challenging for the public.

Nearly back-to-back meetings were held June 2 and 4, June 17 and 18, and June 25 and 27. In August alone three special meetings were held in addition to the regular meeting Aug. 28. Notice was not provided to people who requested it, a Brown Act violation.

Because the district disconnected its Zoom equipment Aug. 1, the meetings have been accessible only in person. And while several citizens have recorded and posted meeting videos on social media, they have not been officially recorded since July 23.

The composition of the board itself has also revolved. Board Chair Krisi Gorbet and Director Mary Cronin resigned May 23 after a tumultuous meeting May 21 involving the termination of Cox. Kearns, a self-described "long-time critic of this organization," was appointed June 27 to fill one of the vacancies. "I believe it is time for me to step up and be a part of the solution," he said in his application letter.

Roger Cherry, a former board member, was appointed at a special meeting July 1. Neither of the vacancies was advertised publicly, a Brown Act violation.

At the board's Aug. 22 special meeting, Kearns acknowledged the recent confusion. "We are struggling with command and control," he said. The board needs to "get all our ducks in a row" and "improve our habits," Kearns added.

Employment confusion

Among the issues of recent confusion is the composition of the district's staff. Cox, who has not appeared at an IVCSD meeting since mid-May, was the focus of an acrimonious debate at meetings held in May and June. Although three board members held a May 17 meeting to terminate him, it was improperly noticed and held. Cox did not attend. That meeting, recorded and widely distributed on social media by Kearns before his appointment to the board, does not appear in the board's agenda schedule or minutes.

Cox's termination appeared on subsequent agendas through July, but with no formal announcement of the outcome. Asked about his status Sept. 4, Carpenter said the district has "a separation agreement and it's

done.”

Cox disagreed. In a telephone conversation with *The Plumas Sun*, Cox said he, Carpenter and Margaret Long, the district’s attorney, signed a separation and settlement agreement June 18 that protected the district from litigation he might file against it. In late July he received a partial payment of \$122,000. Then the 12 months of payment stipulated in the agreement stopped, Cox said. He made several efforts to contact the directors in writing, but the response was “crickets,” he said. “So I was forced to hire my own legal counsel,” said Cox.

Little declined to comment on the separation agreement, noting negotiations with Cox were before her employment with IVCSD. She announced Aug. 28 that the board has one applicant for general manager and was checking references before scheduling an interview.

The status of two office employees is also in limbo. Neither Financial Controller Patti Nordt nor Administrative Supervisor Keegin Lee has worked in the district office since Aug. 1. Both have taken family medical leaves of absence, said Little. Lee filed a hostile workplace environment complaint May 22, amending it June 30. In it she said Carpenter and Doran “undermined personal boundaries, exposed her to public harassment and personal distress.”

At the board’s Aug. 28 meeting, during a discussion about removing Nordt and Lee from credit cards or bank accounts, Kearns said they were “not technically removed” from the district.

In addition to turnovers in the office staff, the Indian Valley Fire Department has been operating with an interim fire chief since June 25. Long-time volunteer fireman Denny Wright was appointed to replace Bob Orange, who voluntarily resigned from the fire chief position. John Hunter and Frank Hanson, both veteran volunteer firefighters, are working with Wright.

Priorities

Underlying the controversies over the last several months is a fundamental disagreement over the IVCSD district’s priorities. The 2021 Dixie Fire saddled the district – along with the rest of Indian Valley – with enormous losses, which include the Greenville water treatment plant, several fire trucks, melted water lines and an almost complete lack of water and sewer customers.

A segment of the public has consistently lobbied for the district to take the lead in rebuilding the community. As the only Indian Valley-based form of local government, the district should guide the community’s recovery beyond the fundamental services, they say. Cox led planning and funding the public safety center. He also advocated for a town center which, with the safety center, would establish anchors in Greenville that provide public services and allow people to envision a future town.

Recently another segment of the community has lobbied for a focus on providing the basic services of sewer, water, street lights and fire protection. Residents will not return to rebuild their homes after the Dixie Fire without assurance that potable water will flow from their faucets and their toilets will flush, they argue.

The current district board has made it clear through its agendas and public discussions that its focus is on restoring basic services. Recent meetings have been well attended by members of the public who support them. Hunter put it simply Sept. 4: “Thank you for all your hard work,” he said at the end of the meeting.

Plumas County Supervisors Kevin Goss, who represents Indian Valley, said getting basic services to run smoothly is “a great idea right now.” He is confident that the Public Safety Center will proceed, Goss said, but added that the county will require regular updates more frequently due to the many changes on the district board and staff.



He was alarmed, Goss said, when he read on the district's Aug. 1 agenda a discussion and possible action on the sale of properties owned by the IVCSO. The agenda listed parcels that include the proposed site of a town center. The district directors tabled the sale discussion.

Goss cited that issue as one basis for questioning the district's management capacity. The sale of government property requires several steps that did not seem to be included in the district's proposed discussion, he said. County officials need to know whether they can rely on the IVCSO as a partner in rebuilding the public infrastructure of Greenville.

Little said construction of a Public Safety Center is "brand new" to her as she gets to know the Indian Valley community. All of the district's projects are her priority, she told *The Plumas Sun*.

Goss and other county officials are waiting on selection of a general manager and the results of the Nov. 4 election, when four of the five director positions are up for grabs. "Then we'll know who we're going to be dealing with over the next year or so," Goss said.

Four candidates are running for three four-year terms, according to the Plumas County Elections Office. Two people are running for a single two-year term.

Board members Cherry, Doran, Kearns and Andy Meyers are all vying to retain their seats. David Preston, a Greenville resident, and Joshua Dunnington, an equipment operator, are running to replace two of them.

Board Chair Carpenter has two years left in her term, which expires in 2027.