

**MINUTES OF THE**  
**SANTA FE COUNTY**  
**WATER POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING**

**August 8, 2024**

**Santa Fe, New Mexico**

1. A. This meeting of the Santa Fe County Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC) was called to order at approximately 4:10 p.m. by Chair Shann Stringer, on the above-cited date in the Plaza Conference Room, 100 Catron Street Santa Fe, New Mexico. The meeting was conducted as a hybrid with people attending in person and on line.

B. A quorum was achieved with the following members present:

**Members Present:**

Shann Stringer, Chair

Peter Gowen

Laird Graeser

James Mike Henry

John Kadlecsek [Webex]

Darrin Muenzberg [Webex]

Stephen Schmelling

Emily Wolf [Webex]

Commissioner Camille Bustamante [non-voting member]

**Member(s) Excused:**

Amy Jordan

Jeff Montoya

**County Staff Present:**

Sara Smith, Manager's Office, Operations Manager

Cristella Valdez, Assistant Attorney

Jacqueline Beam, Sustainability Manager

Hvtce Miller, Intergovernmental Outreach Coordinator

Paul Choman, Utilities Division Director

Leandro Cordova, Deputy Manager

Brett Clavio, Planning Manager

Paul Olafson, Community Development Department Director

Andrew Harnden, Open Space Resources

Travis Soderquist, Water Resources Manager

**Others Present:**

Carl Dickens

Alexandra Ladd, Incoming Growth Management Director

### C. Approval of Agenda

There were no changes and Mr. Gowen moved to approve the agenda as published. Mr. Schmelling seconded and the agenda was unanimously approved.

### D. Introduction of WPAC Guests

The presence of Carl Dickens was recognized.

## 2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

### A. July 25, 2024 Special Meeting

Page 6, paragraph 2: “Mr. Gowen said an ~~in~~ effective tool for GSI would be through the Land Use Code and that should be encouraged.”

With that correction, Mr. Gowen moved approval. Chair Stringer seconded and the motion passed without opposition.

## 3. Discussion Items

### A. Presentation from Subcommittee Members on Draft NPDES Permit No. NM 0031233 for Bishop’s Lodge Resort Wastewater Treatment Facility

[Subcommittee: Chair Stringer, and Members Wolf, Muenzberg and Schmelling]

Chair Stringer said that following this presentation he would make edits/changes and hoped to present to the BCC at its September 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The subcommittee was developed to review the Bishop’s Lodge permit application to discharge its effluent into the Little Tesuque Creek. Currently, the designated uses for Little Tesuque Creek include domestic water supply use, high quality coldwater aquatic life use, irrigation, livestock watering, wildlife habitat and public water supply. Chair Stringer said coldwater high quality is typically a mountain stream with temperature criteria and a cobbled bottomed. The temperature criteria are important because of the state’s anti-degradation policy. The designated uses include primary contact, meaning human contact, is permitted, i.e., swimming. However, ingestion of the water could pose a significant health hazard. In terms of public water supply, it implies it may need to undergo treatment to achieve drinking water quality.

Regarding the temperature criteria, Chair Stringer said the effluent discharge into the creek may degrade and change the temperature. The state has been fairly lax on this policy and it is hard to manage. He reviewed specific criteria of the creek and how the temperature – other than natural causes – shall not be increased more than 3 degrees. Currently, there are no criteria for nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous nor for PFAS and PFOS. While there are recommended criteria by EPA they are not being acted upon. Nitrogen and phosphorus are associated with effluent coming from the Lodge.

The impacts of the wastewater effluent into the creek could increase bank erosion, increase sediment which is detrimental to trout; decrease water clarity also, detrimental to trout as is a

change in the amount of water in the stream and velocity/channelization which have the potential to change the aquatic life and can disconnect a stream from its floodplain. All in all it affects organisms in the creek.

Typically, the temperature of the effluent coming out of a wastewater facility is higher because of the treatment process. A problem with the use of the membrane bio-reactor technology is that temperatures are low which decreases the efficiency of nitrogen and phosphorus removal. Stream flow and nutrients are really at issue, stated the chair. Bishop's Lodge proposes a discharge of 60,000 gpd, the permit maximum, more in the summer and less in the winter. That would increase the flow of Little Tesuque Creek by 7 percent. Typically, taking 10 percent out of the flow produces biological impacts. The creek shows an increase of zinc.

Mr. Schmelling asked whether there were specific comments on the draft permit and what happens when the treatment system fails? Is there a backup plan? Chair Stringer offered to include that within his comments.

Mr. Choman said the Lodge's current system has failed and they are trucking the waste like any other septic system hauler, to the Paseo Real Plant. Mr. Graeser calculated that the Lodge is sending 10 to 15 truckloads daily to the Paseo Real plant.

Mr. Muenzberg expressed concern about jeopardizing the already delicate riparian balance in the creek. He favored taking the waste to an existing facility and returning it to a stream already impacted.

Mr. Choman said the Lodge recently went through bankruptcy and apparently what contributed to the bankruptcy was the need to upgrade the plant and other factors so they walked away. The new owners have determined releasing the effluent into the creek is the most effective method.

Mr. Gowen said he reviewed the draft permit and it is what is called a "water quality limited segment." The analysis from EPA and the DOH is that all of the criteria designated in the permit will protect the designated uses of the creek. In that sense, the analysis meets legal requirements.

Ms. Valdez said the County would be considered a general commenter on the permit.

Chair Stringer expressed his disappointment that the Pojoaque Basin Regional Water System project did not include a return flow pipe to a treatment facility. Buffalo Thunder's treatment plant was mentioned.

The BCC would need to determine whether they want to provide a general comment to the EPA or consultation. Chair Stringer offered to develop a document for presentation to the BCC.

Mr. Muenzberg said the County can amplify the public's comments and perhaps serve in a consultative role. There are a lot of pipelines being proposed and a pipeline from the Lodge to a County or City facility would be warranted. He championed reducing/mitigating harm to the

lower Santa Fe River. Mr. Gowen said this discharge will not reach the Santa Fe River, rather enters a tributary that goes into the Rio Grande.

In response to Commissioner Bustamante's question, Ms. Valdez said a resolution could be introduced and/or separate comments could go the BCC for approval in a written form similar to the letter approved by the BCC requesting the extension of the comment period.

Mr. Schmelling noted one of the Commissioners met with affected landowners. Commissioner Bustamante recommended that WPAC present its recommendations to Commissioner Greene. Chair Stringer said he'd reach out to Commissioner Greene but understood there may be concurrence with the permit since it adds more water to the creek.

Mr. Miller said he has not reached out to pueblos and will discuss it with the County Manager and report back to WPAC.

Recognizing the BCC meeting date and the end of the comment period, a special WPAC meeting should be considered to develop a clear recommendation. Ms. Valdez said an agenda caption as an action item requesting approval of a recommendation would be the appropriate way forward.

To avoid a rolling quorum, recommendations should be emailed to Chair Stringer and not copied to other members.

**B. Overview of Water Policy Advisory Committee's Role in Evaluating Regional Partnerships and Projects [Presentation on BoardDocs]**

Using a power point presentation, Ms. Smith identified the support team for WPAC: Public Works Department/Utilities Division, Community Development/Sustainability Division and Growth Management/Planning Division.

Mr. Choman reviewed the different categories of water utility services: domestic water supply, water conservation, wastewater management and reclamation, irrigation, drought management, flood prevention and control, and water reuse. Questions addressed under each of these categories included: How are we doing? What is the proposed action plan to turn the curve with sustainability and planning? Who are the partners?

In regard to the water systems throughout the county, Mr. Choman said it was impractical for the County to connect all of those systems. New developments within the south sector and Community College District will be tied into the County's system. The County is willing to support small water systems as best it can. Meeting with water system representatives to ascertain their needs and help develop a grant was mentioned. Currently, there is money available at very low interest.

Mr. Choman reviewed the Cañoncito project which gets its water through a pipe from BDD to Eldorado to Cañoncito. Chupadero had contaminated well water with a radioactive substance. The County stepped in to remediate the issue, spent \$1 million on a project that included a new

well and remediation of the water. The County also worked with the community of Glorieta with block grants for a new well and storage tank.

Mr. Choman said limited staffing and coordination challenges with the OSE had been an issue. Utilities needs to be more pro-active on the reporting side. The new staff at Utilities is a helpful asset. He noted that the Aamodt Settlement/Pojoaque Basin Regional Water System is the largest infrastructure project in the history of the state at \$750 billion.

Ms. Beam noted that Sustainability cannot scope or track water supply; however, they can assist in conservation by getting information and providing education to the public. Sustainability conducted the recent domestic well monitoring program and the report contains a lot of information, recommendations and a call for volunteer wells. A new FTE will be working with Utilities as an environmental compliance specialist.

Mr. Choman said incentives are being developed. The key to providing water long term is educating the residential user and updating the SLDC.

Commissioner Bustamante noted that WPAC has recommended that the County hire an educator for water conservation and perhaps that should be a priority recommendation. Santa Fe public school kids are receiving water conservation education and Mr. Choman offered to have the new FTE research the inclusion of the county public schools.

Ms. Beam said the SLDC update recommendations regarding water harvesting were brought to the BCC and will be included in the update.

Alexandra Ladd, the County's new Growth Management Director, was introduced to the committee. Mr. Graeser announced that Ms. Ladd is his daughter in-law.

The concern that trenches are being dug for the Pojoaque regional water system and pipes are not planned to address wastewater was repeated. The dig once policy was mentioned.

Mr. Choman mentioned that GIS is a big thing for Utilities. Although the division knows basically what's where, by law they are required to site it within 18 inches. A storm can make it difficult to locate a manhole so these things need to be clearly identified on a GIS map. Funding has been included in the budget to address this deficiency.

The irrigation portion includes support for the Water Smart Grant for Santa Cruz and Santa Fe County Sustainability staff is working on the technical advisory group.

Mr. Harnden mentioned the changes contemplated within the SLDC to better address catchment and rain gardens be appropriately scaled to the development size.

One of the main focus areas of the County's climate action plan is on nature based climate solutions and programming around that, stated Ms. Beam. Implementing the plan will assist in creating healthier corridors and provide education. A County website link is expected within the next couple of months.

The County continues to purchase water rights. Mr. Choman offered to email the City's Water Conservation Committee's presentation on water rights. The City is not currently purchasing water rights.

Rancho Viejo has County water and a local sewage treatment plant that uses the effluent for the subdivision's irrigation. That should be a requirement of all development with sewage treatment plant.

Commissioner Bustamante recommended that WPAC review and make recommendations regarding the SLDC updates. Ms. Beam said the update priorities will be emailed to each of the members. Mr. Cordova said the updates may take a couple of years to formalize with input from the existing Commissioners as well as the incoming Commissioners.

Chair Stringer said the work plan will include "other issues" to ensure things like the Lodge's effluent discharge can be addressed.

**4. Miscellaneous Action Items**

Chair Stringer noted that at the next meeting recommendations for Bishop's Lodge and formalization of the work plan for presentation to the BCC could be discussed.

**A. Finalize Draft Outline for WPAC's 2025 Work Plan**

To be discussed at the special meeting.

**5. Matters from the Public – None were presented.**

**6. Matters from Staff**

**A. Overview of Request from Cañada de los Alamos to Become a Bulk Water Customer**

Mr. Choman said the Cañada project raised \$1.4 million and Molzen Corbin put together a general design of the system. It will piggyback off the Cañoncito/Eldorado connection with an additional tank and gravity feed pump to the 60 to 80 customers in Cañada. Cañada wants to be a bulk water customer. Chita Gillis, secretary-treasurer of Cañada de los Alamos' community water system, will come to speak to WPAC and she is anxious to get the project going.

Mr. Gowen asked about the criteria the County uses to assist or take over a system and Mr. Choman said it has been first come, first served. The County would like to tie in the mutual domestics, where possible, to the system. Chair Stringer said the water associations are required to present their information to WPAC. WPAC did review Cañada's plans after they had secured \$1.4 million.

Ms. Valdez said the County has a resolution outlining the procedures and it will be sent out to the committee.

**B. Overview of the FY2026-2030 Capital Budget Requests Related to the WPAC's Work**

Mr. Cordova provided a list of projects that have been funded noting the different color designations. Also provided were the ICIP projects that have not yet been funded or where there is a large gap in funding. He said it was important that WPAC, with their expertise, has input in the capital budgeting process. He offered to come back to discuss FY26 budget and the budget process.

In regards to cross-pollination among the County's volunteer committees, Mr. Clavio offered to discuss the situation with Sara Smith and work on an informational tool. Mr. Cordova said the expertise on these committees needs to be better utilized by the County and he thanked the members for their efforts.

**7. Matters from the Committee**

It was requested that whenever possible staff provide presentations prior to the meeting. Ms. Smith demonstrated how to review supporting packet material via the County's homepage online agenda.

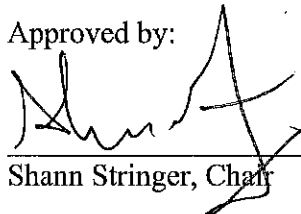
**8. Next WPAC Meeting: September 5, 2024**

Following discussion on the importance of formalizing a recommendation before the next BCC meeting, Mr. Gowen moved to hold a special meeting on Thursday, September 5<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m. Mr. Henry seconded and the motion passed without opposition.

**9. Adjournment**

Following a motion and second and upon unanimous voice vote, Chair Stringer declared this meeting adjourned at approximately 6:05 p.m.

Approved by:



Shann Stringer, Chair

Respectfully submitted by:

Karen Farrell, Wordswork

# DRAFT

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL