

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

**September 5, 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 Commissioner Camille Bustamante, 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:**

Amy Jordan

Peter Gowen

Laird Graeser

James Mike Henry

John Kadlecsek

Darrin Muenzberg

Stephen Schmelling

Commissioner Camille Bustamante [non-voting member]

**Member(s) Excused:**

Shann Stringer, Chair

Jeff Montoya

Emily Wolf

**County Staff Present:**

Sara Smith, Manager's Office, Operations Manager

Cristella Valdez, Assistant Attorney

Jacqueline Beam, Sustainability Manager

Hvtce Miller, Intergovernmental Outreach Coordinator

Michael Carr, Public Works, Compliance Officer

Leandro Cordova, Deputy Manager [Webex]

Brett Clavio, Planning Manager

Alexandra Ladd, Growth Management Director

Paul Olafson, Community Development Department Director

Andrew Harnden, Open Space Resources

Travis Soderquist, Water Resources Manager

**Others Present:**

Carl Dickens

Leslie Bischoff

Casey Cook, Molzen Corbin for Cañada de los Alamos

Chita Gillis, Cañada de los Alamos

Commissioner Bustamante served as temporary chair.

It was noted that Bishop's Lodge withdrew its discharge permit and no future action is required.

**C. Approval of Agenda**

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

**D. Introduction of WPAC Guests**

Chita Gillis and Casey Cook introduced themselves.

**2. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

**A. August 8, 2024 Special Meeting**

Mr. Gowen moved approval. Mr. Graeser seconded and the motion passed without opposition.

**3. Discussion Items**

**A. Presentation and Request for Recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners for Cañada de los Alamos to become a Santa Fe County Utility Customer**

Travis Soderquist, County Water Resources Manager, said Cañada is presenting a preliminary application to become a County utility customer. Infrastructure would be built and water pumped to a tank that would provide enough water to deliver throughout their existing system. Currently, Cañada is using groundwater wells which are going dry and the community is struggling. Cañada has conducted engineering, design and feasibility studies. The County currently lacks infrastructure to facilitate this project. It would be a massive project to get piping from the County's existing system up to Cañada.

In response to a question, Mr. Soderquist said Cañada did present to WPAC in the past but at the time of action, WPAC lacked a quorum. Ms. Gillis said she has presented to WPAC twice in the past. Commissioner Bustamante said she was not aware whether this pipeline project on the current ICIP list.

Chita Gillis said Cañada de los Alamos's Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association was incorporated in 1957 under the Sanitary Projects Act. She provided the following information:

- There are 24 members and 26 connections

- In 1960 an 18-foot well was dug with a backhoe which served the community until June 2020
- The distribution system was upgraded every 20 years
- Residential meters were installed in 1996 and customers billed according to usage in 2002
- During the 1998 drought, the system's infiltration gallery was problematic and the state provided funding to dig two deep wells neither produced enough water to serve the community
- The shallow 1960 alluvial well was continually relied upon
- In 2015 the uranium level was too high in one of the deep wells
- In 2019 the other deep well was shut down due to silt and rust bacteria
- Most wells in the area are referred to as "recharge"
- In 2020 the infiltration gallery went totally dry and the community began buying and trucking water into their 15,000 gallon tank
- A PER was developed and identified two source solutions 1) dig a new deeper well and 2) connect to Santa Fe County water
- Cañada received emergency funding through the state in the amount of \$330,000 – to buy and haul water to their tank
- The preliminary application was submitted to the County in November 2021
- Cañada secured \$566,000 from the Water Trust Board as a loan/grant and a \$750,000 grant from Capital Outlay earmarked for the design of the waterline and infrastructure – which appears to be enough to cover the entire design cost
- The preliminary design plan was done in conjunction with County utility staff
- With County water, Cañada estimates an additional 25 hookups

Ms. Gillis said the community is currently in the engineering and design phase and was in close consultation with former County staff. The community submitted the application as requested by former Utilities Director John Dupuis and required by Resolution 2015-021. In May 2022, former WPAC member Gronning communicated with Ms. Gillis that, following Mr. Dupuis inspection which was completed in October 2022, the application was complete. Momentum on the County's side stopped due to staff turnover. In 2023, Paul Choman requested she submit the final application.

Mr. Muenzberg noted that WPAC was not mentioned in the resolution. Ms. Valdez said the resolution is separate from the adoptions of the procedures governing the acquisition, integration and provisions. WPAC is defined within those procedures and formed under resolution 2013-042. She reviewed the procedures that outline WPAC's role.

Cañada wants to be a wholesale operator of County water and will continue to distribute, budget and bill. All uses are domestic and for individual resident uses, although there is a church that is no longer using water. Ms. Gillis noted that they have groundwater rights and there is an active ICIP request for 15 acre-feet per year of surface water rights as recommended by the County. She recalled that the community currently has 9.7 permitted acre-feet.

Mr. Schmelling asked whether there was development in the area and if this request were approved would it bring an increase in development. Ms. Gillis said that is a possibility. There

are individuals who own large tracts of land. She noted that the requests they have received are from current members who want to add another structure and meter. The majority of those requesting service are private well users whose wells are failing. The County confirmed the water is available.

Ms. Valdez said the resolution indicates that any funding necessary for the project shall be considered and budgeted during the County's annual budgeting process.

Casey Cook, project engineer, said Molzen Corbin started working with Cañada in 2019 and prepared a preliminary engineering report to address their water shortage. The two solutions were 1) drill a shallow well, and 2) take water from the County. Advancing with solution two, the idea was to take water from the Hondo #2 fire station; however, there were rights-of-way issues. Originally, Mr. Dupuis proposed a water line from the Rancho Viejo tank, along the railroad tracks, to Sunlit Hills water and up Old Santa Fe Trail. Current staff determined that the multi-party negotiation would be too difficult and a single water line was recommended. Leroy Alvarez, County Operator, proposed running the line in a manner to eventually offer to the 600 (developed and undeveloped lots) private well-users in the south zone utility water. Part of Cañada's conceptual scheme includes sizing the water lines for the County to service well-users in the future.

The funding allows for designing a water line 6 to 8 inches in diameter, 7.5 miles long and with two booster stations to address elevation. The booster stations could be designed to serve Cañada or larger with the possibility of future enlargement. Mr. Cook said those decisions will need to be worked out with the County.

As far as ownership, the County would own everything up to Cañada's tank and the master meter. Anything beyond the tank would belong to the mutual domestic.

Mr. Cook noted that an MOU establishes who pays for what, amount of water to be delivered, flow rate, volume per year and cost. These items and more need further clarification. Cañada has secured the funds needed for the design of phase 1 but none for construction. Mr. Cook noted that it would be a shame to have completed the design before the MOU is signed.

Ms. Valdez stated that the MOU is contemplated within the process whether they are wholesale customers of or acquired by the County. The terms of the MOU would come back to WPAC. Timing wise, the preliminary application with recommendations should be presented to the BCC before March and finances would be budgeted during the budgeting process.

Ms. Gillis raised a concern that one of Cañada's funding sources was in jeopardy if progress is not shown and having a signed MOU would diminish that concern.

Mr. Clavio said at this time Cañada de los Alamos does not have a community plan and the zoning is SDA-2.

Mr. Gowen advocated for WPAC to move quickly on this project. It was unclear what stage the application was in adding it was not the fault of the applicant that the project has not moved

through the process.

Mr. Gowen moved that WPAC request that the Cañada application be moved forward with the recommendation they become a County customer. Mr. Graeser seconded. [motion amended below]

Ms. Valdez pointed out that the BCC has never taken action on a preliminary application. The resolution contemplates that WPAC prepare a report. In order to comply with the resolution, WPAC should prepare that report and then approve it for recommendation to the BCC.

Ms. Gillis recalled that WPAC never wrote a report in support of the application.

**ACTION:** Mr. Gowen amended his motion that WPAC with staff support writes a report supporting the application and following WPAC's approval of that report, forwards it to the BCC for approval. Mr. Graeser accepted and seconded. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Gowen and Mr. Graeser offered to assist with utilities and legal staff to develop the recommendation. Consistent with staff resources, Mr. Gowen asked that this process begin as quickly as possible without delay. Commissioner Bustamante envisioned the drafting of the recommendation would be a joint effort with WPAC and staff.

## **B. Presentation on Domestic Wells Monitoring Program, Phase 2 Contract and Recommendations**

Jacqueline Beam, Sustainability Manager, said originally Sustainability was in charge of the domestic well monitoring program that has now been moved to Public Works. She provided an overview of the project and general information:

- DBS&A was retained to document current conditions of La Cienega/La Cieneguilla (LCLC) and determine ways to advance the County's domestic well monitoring program that was more effective
- The SLDC requires .25 acre-feet per year for any new construction
- There are 1,341 parcels in the LCLC planning area with 934 permitted wells
- Demand is anticipated to increase substantially
- All new residential lots created as part of residential land divisions and subdivisions and all new nonresidential development are required to connect to the County water utility when service is available within 200 feet of the property line of a lot, unless previously connected to a community water system that has adequate capacity to supply the new demand
- All new wells were to be metered and annual submittals of meter reading
- Wells shall be capable of providing the water requirements of the proposed development for up to 99 years
- Very few domestic well meter reading reports are received annually
- These data are inadequate to accurately estimate current water demand
- Better tracking of the water metering, meter reading, and pumping limitation requirements are needed going forward

Ms. Beam reviewed the process to notify the area residents of the metering and desired results. The public meetings brought up a great deal of “anger and passion.”

DBS&A provided the following recommendations to the County:

- Make the report available to the WPAC, La Cienega Valley Association, City/County Water
- Conservation Committee, and public for review
- Move the program under the Public Works Department due to subject matter expertise
- Dedicate staffing and resources to implement the existing program
- Create a new full-time position to lead the effort - Ms. Beam noted that Michael Carr was hired to fill the full-time position as recommended
- Staff from Public Works, Growth Management, and Sustainability should collaborate on a 6-month work planning process to identify the program’s next steps
- Expand the water level monitoring network to better assess trends over time
- Increase monitoring from 10 to 50 wells
- Coordinate with the OSE about the County’s domestic well requirements
- Implement a volunteer metering program, installing new meters with advanced metering infrastructure capability, and collect meter readings monthly – This will require consideration of the Anti-Donation Clause
- Add a field inspection requirement for all new domestic wells in the LCLC planning area to ensure meters are installed, and add all new domestic wells to the monitoring program
- Coordinate with NMED Drinking Water Bureau to hold water fairs in the area, analyzing domestic well water quality samples
- Reassess the program annually, evaluating the number of participants and the data that are collected

As the Environmental Compliance Officer, Mr. Carr said he will be working on the domestic wells monitoring program and conducting a detailed look through the DBS&A recommendations. He is also working on the stormwater program and general permit compliance across Public Works. The well monitoring program will require buy-in from the participants.

Mr. Schmelling recommended the well drilling companies be aware of the meter requirement. Ms. Beam said most of the wells are already installed. Mr. Carr offered to check with OSE and said it is going to be a lot of work to obtain and review documents/applications. GPS coordinates information is also required.

Referred to the hydro-political context in the LCLC area, Mr. Muenzberg said this follows a century of water rights issues. It is important that the metering project purpose is out front and clarified that it is to gather the necessary data to preserve and protect the water in that area while emphasizing this is not an enforcement issue.

In response to Commissioner Bustamante’s question of why the well monitoring program should be considered a priority, Ms. Beam said wells are running dry and the County needs to be prepared to provide water to communities that are running low on water. Further, it was LCLC who requested this of the County.

Commissioner Bustamante noted that LCLC has historic water rights and suggested the term “compliance” be eliminated from the conversation and the County clarify why this is a priority. Residents of San Marcos have been very vocal that wells are going dry in their area.

Mr. Dickens said the missing piece is education for the public and he must be bilingual. In the past, LCLC had a newsletter and he volunteered to restart that effort. Acequia de la Cienega has seen a 60 percent reduction in its water resources of the last 40 years and is now dependent on an undependable well. Presenting the program as an opportunity to get water back into the river would be beneficial. The return-flow credit in the Santa Fe River may also be beneficial. The approach should motivate the community to get involved.

Ms. Jordan suggested the County develop a screening level urgency across the County to identify what area will be coming to the County asking for water.

Ms. Beam said this monitoring program was conducted based on the community’s request. A lot of work has already been done in the LCLC area, recommendations developed and staff is ready to move forward with the volunteer program. WPAC has been recommended as the committee to review and assist in the project. Mr. Carr added that the state has been doing water sampling in that area for a long time and there is a detailed record of water level and makes sense to continue working in that area.

As an anecdote, Commissioner Bustamante said as a teenager she dug a hole in her La Cienega backyard to bury a chicken and ran into water. Today, with a backhoe digging in the same area she doesn’t hit water.

**4. Miscellaneous Action Items**

**A. Discussion and Finalization of the Water Policy Advisory Committee’s 2025 Work Plan for Presentation to the Board of County Commissioners**  
[List available on Boarddocs]

Commissioner Bustamante noted that Madrid’s test wells could be added to the list. She asked the committee to rank the items as suggested by staff.

Acknowledging that Bishop’s Lodge is no longer an issue, Mr. Muenzberg extended his thanks to Chair Stringer and the expertise he provided regarding criteria, especially New Mexico’s antidegradation policies.

Ms. Smith said the list is divided by departments and the Committee’s priorities.

For efficient organization, Mr. Clavio recommended the committee prioritize the items, categorize them and consider how the items will be discussed throughout the year.

Members were encouraged to review and prioritize the listed items as well as including any other items for consideration.

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

6. **Matters from Staff** - None were presented.

7. **Matters from the Committee**


Mr. Graeser noted that WPAC has not been reflecting on the results based accountability training they received. He has a list that he was willing to share with the committee to help connect the priorities.

8. **Next WPAC Meeting: October 10, 2024**

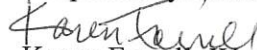
9. **Adjournment**

Following a motion by Mr. Gowen and second by Mr. Graeser, Commissioner Bustamante declared this meeting adjourned at approximately 6:00 p.m.

Approved by:

  
Camille Bustamante, Acting Chair

Respectfully submitted by:

  
Karen Farrell, Wordswork