

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

**March 14, 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 4:30 p.m. by Shann Stringer, Chair, on the above-cited date in the Palace Conference Room, 100 Catron Street, Santa Fe, New Mexico. The meeting was conducted as hybrid with people attending in person and on line.

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

**Members Present:**

Shann Stringer, Chair  
Carl Dickens, Vice Chair [virtually]  
Emily Wolf  
J.J. Gonzales

**Member(s) Excused:**

Ken Kirk

Tom Egelhoff, BDD representative – awaiting formal appointment

**County Staff:**

Paul Choman, Utilities Manager Division Director [virtually]

**Others Present:**

Darrin Muenzberg, La Bajada Community Ditch & Mutual Domestic Water Assoc.  
Peter Gowen, Citizen Observer [virtually]  
Tommy Garcia [virtually]  
Ed Epping, Galisteo Resident [virtually]  
Doug Crosby, OSE, Water Resource Manager, Albuquerque [virtually]  
Maya Hilty, *Santa Fe New Mexican* [virtually]  
Ted Alcorn, Galisteo Resident [virtually]

Those present introduced themselves.

Chair Stringer informed the participants interested in serving on WPAC that the first step is sending a letter of interest and a resume to their district commissioner and/or Commissioner Bustamante.

The County is holding a PFAS information session at the Community College tonight and this meeting will adjourn early so participants can attend.

**C. Review of Agenda**

There were no changes and Mr. Dickens moved to approve the agenda and Mr. Gonzales seconded. The agenda was unanimously approved.

**D. Approval of Minutes: February 8, 2024**

The February minutes were not available and action was deferred until April along with the November 2023 minutes which were not yet approved.

**2. Matters from Public**

**A. Christine Chavez – City of Santa Fe Water Conservation Manager**

Chair Stringer said Ms. Chavez has been caring for a family member and he was unsure as to whether Ms. Chavez had been notified the WPAC meeting time changed to 4 p.m. from 5 p.m.

**3. Action Items**

**A. New WPAC Resolution**

The draft resolution has been forwarded to the BCC; however, no action has been taken. Chair Stringer said there was still time for WPAC to make changes. He recalled that the resolution was last updated in 2016. Commissioner Bustamante recently requested the addition of language on stormwater management, climate change and the inclusion of a score sheet regarding accomplishments. The City's Water Conservation Committee has an accomplishment scorecard that is annually presented to the Council which rates the committee and City utility staff.

Ms. Wolf suggested adding "watershed health" to the resolution.

WPAC's information – minutes, draft resolution, etc. – can be found on the County website.

**B. Formation of a Stormwater Subcommittee**

This item is deferred awaiting additional committee member appointments.

**C. Scorecard Similar to City Water Conservation Committee**

Mr. Muenzberg recommended utilizing a RACI card: Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed. He noted that the card assists in tracking accountability throughout the process which could be used before the scorecard.

Chair Stringer said he was present when WCC presented their scorecard and he appreciated how it incorporated staff.

The City has a councilor that chairs their WCC and at this point Commissioner Bustamante prefers citizens lead the process with a commissioner in attendance to relay the information to the BCC.

#### **4. Discussion Items**

Mr. Dickens requested a discussion regarding the Lower Santa Fe River Watershed Planning Process

##### **Lower Santa Fe River Watershed Planning**

Mr. Choman said the County is working to coordinate the planning process with the City. The plans for Water 2100 and Lower Santa Fe River Watershed are being negotiated with the City to be pooled into one MOA. He was hopeful this could be finalized soon. The plan is to use the same sole source contractor the City is using which is Amy Ewing.

Mr. Dickens said when the return-flow pipeline concept surfaced concerns heightened among water related non-profits, organizations and individuals along the river. This resulted in the Pipeline Coalition composed of 21 organizations, farmers, ranchers, and associations. The Coalition worked with the City and County to write an agreement which obtained funding to create the Lower Santa Fe River planning process. The Coalition created a subcommittee that developed an RFP to hire a facilitator. There was a shift in focus and Hazen & Sawyer have taken over many of the RFP-related tasks. The planning process is going forward and he suggested it may be a good thing for WPAC to be involved in. The City is interested in developing a team which will be led by Francesca Shirley. The people along the river are involved. This is an opportunity for the City and County to work on joint issues.

Mr. Dickens said he sees this joint effort as a breakthrough and WPAC can have a major role in terms of informing the effort. The Coalition has developed subcommittees who bring suggestions back to the full membership where everything is decided by consensus.

Chair Springer thanked Mr. Dickens for the recap and encouraged Mr. Choman to get the MOA in place as soon as possible.

Mr. Gonzales noted that roughly 50 percent of what is drawn from the BDD can be returned downstream of the intake and credit received.

Mr. Muenzberg said he understood the City viewed this project as an increase to their SJ-C water and asked whether that is still the City's position. Chair Stringer suggested addressing the question of how much can the City actually return to the river. People downstream of the reclamation plant want water in the river to maintain a healthy-eco system.

It was noted that the City has to go before the State Engineer where public hearings will be required.

It was clarified that WPAC provides policy guidance and advises the BCC on policy matters. While WPAC can support regionalization they are not the policymakers. That is why having a commissioner attend WPAC will be important.

Mr. Dickens noted that it would be ideal if return-flow credits for releasing water into the Santa Fe River were gained. It would take a significant amount of scientific research to substantiate the questions of how much water and how quickly the water flows into the Santa Fe River. The Coalition requested this research and the installation of test wells. Some of the test wells will have to be located on Cochiti Pueblo land and this complicates the issue requesting their necessary approval.

Mr. Dickens said that with the recent detection of PFAS contamination in La Cieneguilla and La Cienega, WPAC should push for County water in those two communities. That would relieve pressure on the springs and improve the river. He acknowledged these are complicated, long-term ideas but he expressed his passion to move on them.

Mr. Dickens proposed that Santa Fe County become the conservation water-saving capital of New Mexico. The first step could be the County imposing the practices the City has established.

Chair Springer said he has made the biological connection with historical fish species found in the Rio Grande and the Santa Fe River. WPAC should encourage the BCC to talk to the State Engineer about the return-flow credits before more money is spent.

Mr. Crosby said the way return flows work most effectively is at Rio Rancho. The water Rio Rancho treats is returned to the river. They measure what they put back in the river so they can divert that water or it comes off their diversion so their diversion drops because they are putting it back into the river. Measurement is an important aspect to calculate return-flow credits.

Chair Stringer appreciated the concept of measuring the water coming out of pipes for return-flow; however, the healthy eco-system is being impacted.

Mr. Dickens noted that “paper-water rights” is a New Mexico phenomenon.

Regarding paper rights, Mr. Crosby said once surface rights are transferred the land that had been irrigated by that water can no longer be irrigated. So it is actually wet water which is being relocated. Acknowledging it was not a perfect system, he said that water is not being used to irrigate what it had been used for in the past.

Mr. Egelhoff noted that there are only three diverters at Buckman: County, City and the Club at Las Campanas. The County’s water is native and the Club leases from the Jicarilla Apache.

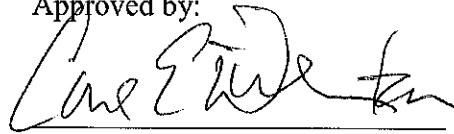
4. C. PFAS Update

Shelly Moeller is working with the County as the coordinator in these efforts and the meeting this evening at the Community College should be very informative.

7. Adjournment

In order to attend the County's PFAS meeting, Mr. Gonzales moved to adjourn and Chair Stringer declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 5:15 p.m.

Approved by:



Shann Stringer, Chair

Respectfully submitted by:



Karen Farrell, Wordswork

# DRAFT

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL