

MINUTES OF THE
SANTA FE COUNTY
WATER POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING

July 25, 2024

1. A. This meeting of the Santa Fe County Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC) was called to order at approximately 4:00 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

Amy Jordan

John Kadlecek

Darrin Muenzberg

Stephen Schmelling

Emily Wolf

Commissioner Camille Bustamante [non-voting member – via Webex]

Member(s) Excused:

Jeff Montoya

County Staff Present:

Sara Smith, Manager's Office, Operations Manager [Webex]

Jacqueline Beam, Sustainability Manager

Cristella Valdez, Assistant Attorney

Leandro Cordova, Deputy Manager

Brittney Montoya, Constituent Liaison

Hvtce Miller, Intergovernmental Outreach Coordinator

Paul Choman, Utilities Division Director

Brett Clavio, Planning Manager

Paul Olafson, Community Development Department

Andrew Harnden, Open Space Resources

Others Present:

Michael J. Carr, Incoming Environmental Compliance Officer [Webex]

Carl Dickens, Former WPAC member, Santa Fe River Traditional Community Collaborative and the Pipeline Coalition

C. Approval of Agenda

There were no changes and Mr. Gowen moved to approve the agenda as published. Ms. Wolf seconded and the agenda was unanimously approved. [Mr. Graeser was not present for this action.]

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

A. Request Approval of the June 13, 2024 WPAC Minutes

Mr. Gowen moved to approve and Mr. Muenzberg seconded. The motion passed without opposition. [Mr. Graeser was not present for this action and arrived shortly thereafter.]

3. Discussion Items

A. Develop a Draft Outline for WPAC's 2025 Workplan

Ms. Beam served as facilitator in the physical absence of Ms. Smith. She reviewed via power point a spreadsheet delineating the three supporting departments – Public Works, Growth Management and Sustainability – and how they relate to the eight focus items contained in the enabling resolution. The departments filled in information using the RBA (results-based accountability).

The eight sections are:

- Adopt and use the Results-Based Accountability Framework for addressing water issues in the County and develop Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART) objectives for all its work
- Develop a workplan to ensure adequate water quality and quantity for seven-generations ahead water plan for the County
- Analyze and make recommendations concerning wastewater, including, but not limited to, County wastewater service options for rural and non-densely populated areas of the county, such as distributed wastewater treatment
- Make recommendations on water issues to the BCC
- Provide recommendations for new, and updates to existing policies, ordinances, and plans related to subject matters within its scope of responsibility, including, but not limited to:
 - Drought management and aquifer recharge
 - Incentivization of large- and small-scale water collection and pollutant reduction activities, such as rain gardens and water catchment systems
 - Provision of water and resources for abnormal events, such as flooding, water contamination, or other unplanned water loss

It was noted that point people and a timeline would be valuable for each of the department items.

Impact and feasibility of projects should be considered as well what can be accomplished with the most impact. According to the resolution, the workplan is based on the calendar year.

Andrew Harnden noted that Growth Management has three divisions – Planning, GIS and Development Review Services. The information supplied relates to the Code and water utility services. He said the department was ready to assist in any way.

Paul Choman, Public Works, explained how the County is structured organizationally under the five County Commissioners and the County Manager's Office. Utilities is a division of Public Works and he offered tours of the booster stations, pump stations and wastewater stations.

There are areas interested in bulk water connections as well as systems that want the County to take over – of which some are practical and some are not. Mr. Choman provided the following:

- Cañada de los Alamos wants to be a bulk water customer
- Mutual domestics may present an informal request for assistance while others may have a PER, professional engineering report
- Cañada has raised \$1.4 million and has submitted a request for bulk water. Following approval from WPAC, the request will be forwarded to the BCC
- Primary partners include the City of Santa Fe where all of the County's water is wheeled through, OSE, NMED, mutual domestics and secondary acequias
- Eldorado is a County customer

At this point it is not practical for Santa Fe County to extend a line to Edgewood. Commissioner Bustamante said the County has been in conversations with Edgewood regarding water, wastewater planning, etc.

Mr. Choman said Utilities would like WPAC to identify which water systems could qualify for County takeover. Utilities is willing to engage with any groups regarding water delivery service.

In response to a question regarding Water Plan 2100, Mr. Choman said it is a strategic water plan that extends out to 2100. The plan works with models and the possibility that the Rio Grande goes dry. It's a five-year plan that has been stalled in year three.

Mr. Muenzberg suggested that WPAC may want to define a limit to growth within the next 80 years.

Mr. Choman said Utilities has projected demand out to 2045 and he offered to email that noting it includes return-flow credits, pipeline, Aamodt, etc. He asked that WPAC review it and provide feedback. The 2100 Plan recognizes the growth in Santa Fe and the growth may come faster or slower than the 80 year projection. Mr. Choman said that he is growth agnostic and his division needs to be ready to provide water where required.

Mr. Choman confirmed that the County does have an inventory of its available water rights. Developers can either bring their own water rights or buy them from the County. The County's water is paper that can be moved and traded. The County's price per acre-foot was recently increased to \$36,000 from \$19,400. A ULEDA – Utility Line Extension Development Agreement – is prepared by County Legal and outside legal counsel John Utton and it is determined by the number of and type of units. Currently, the County holds just under 2,000 acre-feet per year available. Upon a member's request, Mr. Choman offered to provide the number of acre-feet currently being used out of the County's inventory.

The goal in Utilities is to eliminate as many wells as possible, use surface water and allow the aquifer to recharge.

Mr. Muenzberg noted that the senior water rights holders – pueblos, traditional communities, etc. – will be at a loss when the tributaries to the Rio Grande go dry. The City has failed to recognize any obligation to downstream users and with the County participating in the return-flow pipeline project it appears not even the County will support the downstream users. Continuing, Mr. Muenzberg said it will be detrimental to the cultural water users if development is allowed to continue without consideration of the unserved and underserved parts of the county reliant on surface water-based systems.

Commissioner Bustamante said a southern Santa Fe County ranch will be selling a portion of their water rights some of which are being used for dust suppression. The County is in active discussion about these water rights. She suggested WPAC consider appropriate uses for potable water. Chair Stringer noted that source does matter.

Mr. Dickens explained that the Pipeline Coalition was formed with 20 organizations, associations and individuals in response to the proposed return-flow pipeline which would reduce the water in the river by 50 percent. The Coalition's purpose is to mitigate the impact of that reduction of water in the river. The Coalition was involved in the agreement development and contributed to that and the writing of the RFP for the contractor for the planning process, although that consultant did not pan out. The Coalition works through subcommittees and he proposed working with WPAC on the lower Rio Grande watershed.

Chair Stringer said the County has not submitted an application to the State Engineer for return-flow credit and that should be included on WPAC's workplan.

Mr. Dickens said there is water that flows from the Santa Fe River into the Rio Grande; however, how much and how quickly is an unknown. The Coalition would like that study conducted.

Acknowledging that he works for the City's Water Department, Mr. Dickens explained that the pipeline is proposed to go from the Wastewater Treatment Plant up to the BDD and below the water source, putting that water back into the river and get return-flow credit to extract more water out of the river for the residents. That will reduce the river's flow which will be "absolutely devastating on many levels..."

Mr. Choman stated that water conservation is a priority in his division and education of the individual residential user is important but difficult to achieve.

Wastewater: Mr. Choman said there are several initiatives underway including REMP, the regional effluent management plan. Mozen Corbin was contracted as consultant and engineer of this plan. The report will be completed August 4th. The south sector is where most of the development is occurring and there are sewer operations underway in that area. Even though the Quill plant is less than three years old, it needs to be expanded to meet anticipated growth. The Abajo is a lift station and the idea is to redirect that waste to the Quill plant. Effluent bulk

water stations are planned for the Quill plant, Eldorado and further south on NM 14. A bulk water station could be located in the La Cienega area.

Currently, the City does not have any bulk water available and it is possible the County could sell bulk water at the City's plant. The City's effluent has *E.coli* and cannot be used for parks.

An ASR (aquifer storage and recovery) grant project in Rancho Viejo/Quill is moving along.

The County is seeking to acquire land where the Quill plant is located and currently leased from the state.

Mr. Muenzberg said local irrigation should be considered the top irrigation priority as it is in state water law.

Opportunities exist in the future for direct and indirect potable reuse, stated Mr. Choman.

Firefighting requires a certain pipe size which creates a need for bigger pipes. Where there is a County water line a hydrant will be installed.

Ms. Beam recommended focusing on the workplan list and returning to sustainability at a future meeting.

B. Develop a Draft Outline for Water Policy Advisory Committee's 2025 Workplan

Ms. Wolf noted that primacy/surface water permitting, happening at a state level does impact the County.

The previous WPAC workplan included:

- Develop a JPA with the City to address stormwater management
- Develop a JPA with the City to address the wastewater treatment plant
- BCC support letter on primacy for the State of New Mexico for surface waters
- Address PFAS contamination – a treatment is necessary
- Petition for return-flow credits down the Santa Fe River

A recommendation should be developed for educational outreach on water conservation tools and work with the City – the idea included reaching out to real estate brokers to educate newcomers to Santa Fe.

WPAC did develop a drought management plan that had triggers for identifying different degrees of drought. That can be circulated via email. It has been stalled until the City begins to work on its drought management plan.

Commissioner Bustamante preferred relying on sustainability facets to protect the aquifer. Rain gardens need to be considered. She said the committee needs to focus on actionable items. While lauding John Dupuis, waiting for the City to partner on a project may not be feasible.

The GSI (green stormwater infrastructure) master plan that sustainability is supporting is focused on County facilities and not a countywide solution. It could dovetail another incentive plan or maybe mapping out high risk flood areas. This would increase soil health, prevent flooding and increase agricultural output. Chair Stringer suggested reviewing the Healthy Soils Initiative which the Soil & Water Conservation Districts is involved in.

Mr. Gowen said an ineffective tool for GSI would be through the Land Use Code and that should be encouraged.

Another subject is Bishop's Lodge discharge into Tesuque Creek. The EPA has extended the comment period until September 30th on the NPDES permit. Perhaps the Pojoaque Regional Water System could comment on this and maybe a treatment plant is needed in that area. Commissioner Bustamante said the group could work on this and write a resolution/recommendations for presentation to the BCC.

Several items were identified as follows:

- Petition for return-flow credit
- JPA with City for stormwater management including GSI as an elemental component
- JPA with City for wastewater management
- Promotion of the ASR at the Quill plant
- Codifying stormwater management in the SLDC – additional review of the SLDC to understand the gaps
- Bishop's Lodge, re: NPDES permit

Mr. Graeser said working on the Bishop's Lodge permit should be addressed quickly.

Mr. Dickens recommended mapping every arroyo in Santa Fe County along with discussing berms and water conservation education. There is federal money available. He mentioned the stormwater that ripped through La Cienega a few years ago and suggested purchasing land from Peter Komis by I-25 and 599 to remedy that issue.

In regards to mapping the arroyos, Chair Stringer said the National Hydrography Dataset should have a blue line on the arroyos.

Ms. Wolf said there is a study reviewing the impact of the Sackett ruling.

Avoiding duplication was mentioned as well as creating a project using OSE data in a functional collaborative manner. This could come up at OSE's regional water planning meetings.

Mr. Graeser noted a deadline on Mainstreamm.org which includes a survey that Santa Fe County residents should take. Following the survey, Santa Fe County could obtain the responses that relate and use them.

How should WPAC collaborate with OSE staff?. Mr. Kadlec indicated that he often works

with the Nambe-Pojoaque-Tesuque Watermaster and she is a very helpful person. He offered to reach out to her about attending a meeting.

ACTION: Mr. Henry introduced a motion that a subcommittee work on the Bishop's Lodge NPDES comment and Mr. Muenzberg seconded. The motion passed without opposition.

To facilitate the subcommittee a briefing packet to include BCC minutes discussing the matter and a copy of the permit application should be made available. The subcommittee is composed of Chair Stringer, Ms. Wolf, Mr. Muenzberg and Mr. Henry. Their comments will be presented at the August WPAC meeting.

The workplan list was agreed upon as:

- Bishop's Lodge discharge
- Petition return-flow credit application
- JPA agreements: stormwater and wastewater
- ASR
- Education

Staff was requested to send informational material links to improve understanding of the issues.

Also, further discussion is needed to develop a recommendation regarding Utilities getting a water line down to La Cienega. The PER which is in the procurement process takes up to three months. WPAC requested review of the RFP for the PER.

The extension of the waterline to the fire station on 14 is shy of \$1 million in funding. The committee may want to recommend securing those funds.

Commissioner Bustamante commented staff has workplans of their own and it's important that WPAC's priorities are reviewed and incorporated within those. She suggested putting the mapping of arroyos and rain garden/catchment areas together as one item to ensure the BCC sees that as one project.

Ms. Jordan asked whether domestic well metering and the 100-year supply for a domestic and small domestic systems should be considered. Chair Stringer supported this topic stating it has been a concern of his that users are unaware that their well is about to go dry. He supported monthly meter reporting. Ms. Beam said phase 2 of the domestic well monitoring program recommended by the consultant and for , which there is funding, will go to the water resources management and the environmental compliance officer as their project. The tracks are down for this. The SLDC does call for metering and reporting. The consultant recommended an incentive program for metering and education outreach. The metering project was added to agenda items.

To access reports referred to by Sustainability, Ms. Beam advised going on the County website/ Sustainability and tag the bird icon which has topic areas.

Acknowledging the Anti-Donation Clause issues, Chair Stringer said that Soil & Water Conservation may be able to assist the County in obtaining Smart Meters. Mr. Olafson remarked

that this could be a contentious issue to many well users.

ACTION: Mr.Kadlecek moved to accept the priority list and Mr. Muenzberg seconded, as follows:

- Bishop’s Lodge discharge resolution – to BCC
- La Cienega/Cieneguilla drinking water pipeline recommendation to BCC
- Pursue petition return-flow credit application
- JPA agreements: stormwater (map arroyos) and wastewater
- ASR for the Quill Plant
- Education Outreach

The motion passed without opposition.

Regarding metering, Commissioner Bustamante said sensitivity and awareness of water rights in La Cienega is important. Chair Stringer mentioned that the water reclamation has been ongoing at Kirkland for over 20 years and is still not cleaned up.

Possible Agenda Items:

Updates on the metering project, Aamodt, and the Pipeline Coalition

Funding Opportunities: Deputy Manager Cordova to present the pertinent capital projects within the budget to the committee

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

6. **Matters from the Committee**

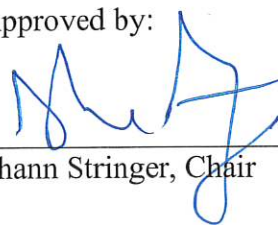
Commissioner Bustamante thanked the committee members for their service.

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

8. **Adjournment**

Upon motion and second and having completed the agenda, 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

