

**MINUTES OF THE**  
**SANTA FE COUNTY**  
**WATER POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**STUDY SESSION**

**October 13, 2022**

**Santa Fe, New Mexico**

This study session of the Santa Fe County Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC) commenced at approximately 5:00 p.m. on the above-cited date. This meeting was conducted via Webex.

The committee lacked a quorum with the following members present:

**Members Present:**

Carl Dickens  
J.J. Gonzales  
Ken Kirk

**Member(s) Excused:**

Shann Stringer, Chair  
Lloyd Gronning  
Steve Rudnick  
Emily Wolf

**Others Present:**

John Dupuis, County Utilities Director  
Deborah Leyba, County Utilities Division Staff  
Michelle Hunter, County Water Resource Manager  
Christine Chavez, City Water Conservation Manager  
Maryhelen Follingstad, Former WPAC member  
Chita Gillis, Cañada de Los Alamos Mutual Domestic, Secretary/Treasurer

**Review of Agenda**  
**Approval of Minutes**

Lacking a quorum no action was taken on these items.

Mr. Gonzales mentioned that he heard Ms. Hunter and Ms. Chavez interviewed this morning on the radio and he found it very informative.

SFC CLERK RECORDED 01/10/2023

## **Introductions**

Chita Gillis introduced herself as the secretary/treasurer of the Cañada de los Alamos Mutual Domestic. They are in the process of developing a project to connect Santa Fe County water to Cañada's system. Currently, because they have no water, they are purchasing and hauling it. There is a short-term solution with a shallow well because deep wells are compromised with uranium and have poor water producing granite. According to the community's hydrologist, the shallow well may sustain the community for up to eight years. Because of this the community is seeking a more sustainable water source. They have moved forward on design and funding for sustainable water.

## **City Water Conservation Manager Update**

Ms. Chavez said she and Ms. Hunter discussed joint collaborations and set the stage for the joint City-County committee. There are four vacancies on the City's Water Conservation Committee (WCC). Interviews are underway and she was confident the positions would be filled by January. She and Ms. Hunter are developing a plan for the joint committee. She recommended that WPAC select a representative for the joint committee. A joint green stormwater infrastructure project may be considered.

## **County Staff Updates**

Ms. Hunter said she and Mr. Dupuis have been discussing the importance of having a position at the County similar to the position held by Ms. Chavez at the City. Mr. Dupuis said another staff person is well warranted and a job description will be developed. Ms. Chavez offered to forward her job description to the County.

Ms. Hunter said she and Ms. Chavez would be meeting regularly to stay abreast of each other's projects.

## **Cañada de los Alamos**

Ms. Gillis located Cañada southeast of Santa Fe about 9 miles up Old Santa Fe Trail from the plaza. Their mutual domestic was incorporated in 1957 and had a 20-foot deep backhoe dug well at the lowest point in the village. That infiltration gallery served the community until July 2020 when it went totally dry. In 2003 and 2004, with a grant from NMDFA, the community dug two deep wells – 780 and 650 feet deep – and both were poor producers so the infiltration gallery continued as the community's water source. The two deep wells were retired for uranium, rust, bacteria and silt problems. The community has tried its best to deal with drought. Their 2021 geohydrologist from Shomaker & Associates advised them to drill a deeper well in the same bed of alluvium where the current infiltration gallery is located which is the temporary solution for five to eight years. The geohydrologist advised the community to find an external source of water.

A long-term goal was developed with Mr. Dupuis and Mr. Vale of the Sunlit Hills Water System. The notion is to bring County water to the west side of Sunlit Hills via CR 60 and use the Sunlit Hills water tank to hold and meter County water that will be pumped up at Two Trails and Old Las Vegas Highway. A booster pump will be used to wheel water out of Sunlit Hills system up a 3.5-mile new water line to Cañada's 50,000 gallon tank. That would create a sustainable source of water for the community.

Ms. Gillis said with the funding the community received last year they were able to design the system. They received \$682,000 from the Water Trust Board and \$750,000 from a capital outlay grant which will design the connection from the Rancho Viejo storage tank to the Sunlit Hills water system. The money is ready and available and the design needs to be firmed up to proceed with the project. The responsibilities for the different parties involved will need to be clearly identified. Cañada has made an application under the County's Resolution 2015-121 which is how one applies to become a wholesale member of the County water system. Once the project is completed and up to County standards, the plan is that the County will acquire the project. She understood interacting with WPAC was the next step in the process.

Mr. Dupuis said the site inspection is confirmation that the application is correct which is then forwarded to the County Manager. Following the Manager's approval, WPAC will review the application with that verification.

Ms. Follingstad noted that she and Mr. Gronning were previously appointed as the subcommittee to review the application. They completed that task a few months back. Ms. Hunter said now that she has joined staff, she is working to complete these tasks and understood the approval cannot be complete without the site verification and Manager's review. She hoped to bring the materials to WPAC in November.

Ms. Gillis said Cañada has 9.47 acre-feet of water rights.

Mr. Dickens said he and Chair Stringer discussed developing a list of County communities that may be in need of County water in an anticipatory manner to avoid emergency reactions to water shortages. He requested adding the development of that list to WPAC's agenda.

Mr. Gonzales said he was interested in Santa Fe County's water rights portfolio. He understood transferring water rights is a lengthy process open to protests. Mr. Dupuis said he recently presented this topic to the County Commission and offered to email that information. [That information was emailed to the WPAC 10/13]

Regarding communities that may need water support, Mr. Dupuis noted that the NMED had been instructed by the governor to contact all community water systems within the state and ask them to identify their emergency backup systems. A multitude of them responded that Santa Fe County was their emergency backup plan. He recommended obtaining the list and responses from NMED. As a regional water system the County has been successful without having an identified legal system. This information will be utilized to justify the need of legislation for regional water system capabilities and would allow for small systems to combine and make it easier governmental entity to work with. There may be bonding capabilities with these

combined systems. He mentioned that former ISC director and County Manager Estevan Lopez serves as the president of Peñasco's mutual domestic. Mr. Lopez has explained how the debt of a mutual domestic makes it difficult for the domestics to unite.

With the extreme drought that is being experienced, Mr. Gonzales said his concern is where the County will obtain water rights to serve the mutual domestics that are having trouble maintaining their customer supply of water. New developments have money and can purchase water rights but the existing mutual domestics, which typically serve low-income people, lack the funds to pay connection fees, etc. He supported the extension of Santa Fe County waterlines to connect residents to the system when within a few hundred feet, i.e., by the racetrack in La Cienega. Tying into the County system would help La Cienega aquifers as well as sustaining the agricultural of the area.

Mr. Dupuis noted there is a distinction between existing groundwater users that are not part of a mutual domestic and may connect to the County system and existing groundwater users that are part of a mutual domestic and might connect to the system. The County has found a very successful path connecting mutual domestics to the utility by providing support in acquiring funds. It is more problematic for a single well owner to obtain funding assistance.

Mr. Dupuis said the regionalization plan that he presented will be introduced by Senator Peter Wirth with RCAC's (Rural Community Assistance Corporation) support. Mr. Dickens said he hoped the plan was science-driven with good information about water availability.

### **Matters from the Committee**

Mr. Dickens, co-chair of the Santa Fe Rivers Traditional Communities Collaborative, said they have been discussing Tucson's stormwater retention program. He stressed the importance of understanding the value of rainwater. Ms. Chavez and Ms. Hunter will be reviewing the program and present ideas that can be supported by the Collaborative.

Ms. Hunter said the City has a purchase order to consult with Tucson about corralling stormwater. Tucson has been successful in recharging the aquifer and developing rain gardens. Tucson's program may be used as a template and the County can help with the initiative. Ms. Chavez agreed and said there is a great deal of funding around these types of projects and it could serve as a good pilot for a joint effort in obtaining funding.

Mr. Dickens said the stormwater retention program is another example of how important an outreach program is within the County's utilities department.

### **Santa Fe 2100 Plan**

Ms. Chavez said she is part of the team which includes Jesse Roach, Steve Schultz and Bill Schneider on this project. The team developed a technical presentation to educate the community on the water system and technical terms which went before the WCC this week. Catastrophic events are part of the modeling. The technical presentation will go before the City Council late October and will be available on the City's website as well as a FAQs document.

The team is setting the groundwork to ensure the public can be involved and come forward with adaptation strategies for implementation as part of the plan.

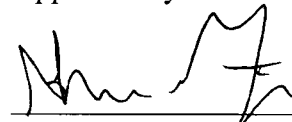
**RFP for Lower Santa Fe River**

Ms. Hunter said she received instructions from the County’s Administrative Services Division outlining the steps for advertising the RFP. It could take a month to get the PO for the advertisement although she hopes to get that accomplished sooner. Mr. Dickens asked that Pipeline Coalition have an opportunity for a final review of the RFP prior to posting.

**Adjournment**

This meeting was declared adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Approved by:

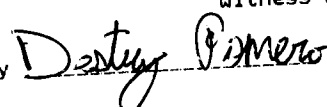
  
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Carl Dickens, Vice Chair

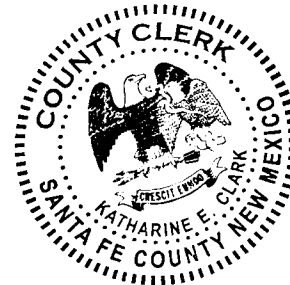
Respectfully submitted by:

  
Karen Farrell, Wordswork

COUNTY OF SANTA FE            )  
STATE OF NEW MEXICO        ) ss  
WATER POLICY ADVISORY  
PAGES: 5

I Hereby Certify That This Instrument Was Filed for  
Record On The 10TH Day Of January, 2023 at 05:16:04 PM  
And Was Duly Recorded as Instrument # 2004627  
Of The Records Of Santa Fe County

Deputy  County Clerk, Santa Fe, NM  
Witness My Hand And Seal Of Office  
Katharine E. Clark



SFC CLERK RECORDED 01/10/2023