

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

**November 12, 2020**

**Santa Fe, New Mexico**

**I.** This Santa Fe County Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC) meeting was called to order by Chair Bryan Romero at approximately 5:00 p.m. on the above-cited date.

In accordance with the Public Health Emergency Order issued by the State of New Mexico, this meeting was conducted via WebEx.

**II.** The following members were present:

**Members Present:**

Bryan Romero  
Mary Helen Follingstad  
Ken Kirk  
Shann Stringer  
Steve Rudnick

**Member(s) Excused:**

Emily Wolf

**County Staff Present:**

Anjali Bean, Utilities Department  
John Dupuis, Utilities Director

**Other(s) Present:**

Anna Hamilton, County Commissioner

Due to insufficient public notice for this meeting, no action would be taken.

**III. Approval of Agenda**

**IV. Approval of Minutes**

**A. October 2020**

A correction was offered having to do with the County's jurisdiction on wells:

- Determine whether and to what degree the County has jurisdiction over wells, excluding those on sovereign land

SFC CLERK RECORDED 02/25/2021

- V. **Introductions** - Deemed unnecessary  
VI. **Matters from the Public** – None were present

**VII. Action Items**

**A. Discussion and Approval of Drought Trigger Recommendations**

Ms. Follingstad reviewed a table that the subcommittee developed identifying the drought intensities as: watch, warning/dry, moderate drought, severe drought and extreme. The table was shared on the screen and showed triggers, short-term actions and long-term actions for each of the drought intensities.

The idea of the Utilities Department implementing special drought tiers with a new set of rates was discussed. ABCWUA has three drought advisories with different charges and they implement conservation measures that are intended to provide up to 31 percent water savings.

Education was emphasized throughout the table as well as a metering program. Customers on the County's water system are metered. Meters are favored by the Water Trust Board when issuing grants or loans.

Mr. Rudnick mentioned that New Mexico Tech has a metering program for municipal domestics as well as other wells. Tech has indicated a willingness to work with the County.

The County does not have a metering program that tracks data, although, data is collected through the County's Sustainability Division. Newer domestic wells that go through the County development review process have a metering requirement on the plat. Metering may need to be a separate project.

During a discussion about long-term planning it was noted that watershed management should be implemented. Mr. Stringer mentioned that the City of Santa Fe has watershed management plans in place. The Upper Rio Grande Watershed has a long-term management plan for forest thinning and how to deal with catastrophic flows of ash within the river. He noted that communities should develop disaster relief plans. Other aspects of watershed management have to do with reclaiming soil quality. Watershed management indirectly serves to reduce bad fires and water infiltration. At this point, watershed protection has not been addressed by the County. The City may have a source water protection plan. NM ED strongly advocates these plans. The BDD is currently working on a source water protection plan.

If the drought intensity is severe, which may be the current status, the idea is to add more restrictions, i.e., double fees for wasting water and promote water use reduction. Referring to the emergency level, which does not differ that much from US Drought Measure of Extreme – where streams are dry and reservoirs at minimum pool which can't be pumped – more restrictions would be added including a declaration of an emergency.

Declaration of an emergency may require an ordinance to outline the process. Commissioner Hamilton noted that the County declared an emergency with the pandemic so the power is there.

Mr. Stringer said NM cities have declared emergencies in the past. South Africa, communities in India, as well as Melbourne, Australia were cited as examples of severe drought.

It was suggested that Emergency (D3) and Exceptional (D4) be compressed into one level. Mr. Rudnick said D3 Emergency is used at a national level.

Commissioner Hamilton congratulated the committee on the triggers and associated actions.

Rather than “sewage” or “treated wastewater reuse” the term “effluent” was recommended.

The City wants the County to work with them on the pipeline and Commissioner Hamilton clarified that her support of the pipeline was that the wastewater would be piped up towards the Buckman wells where an aquifer recharge or aquifer storage and recovery type program could be implemented. She wants to see that effluent stay in the basin and does not support putting it directly back in the river. The City wanted to obtain return flow credits.

Mr. Stringer supported implementing stages for returning the water to the river. Chair Romero said the consumer does not appear ready for wastewater pumped into the diversion and Mr. Stringer said he was not ready for direct potable reuse. Ms. Follingstad said it’s a hard sell. At this point, Cloudcroft is the only place in the state reusing effluent as potable. There was support to reuse, just not as drinking water.

Mr. Dupuis supported that each drought level includes a water reduction use.

Chair Romero reviewed a proposed executive summary he developed that outlined the drought management document providing guidance and tools to consider for implementation and incorporation into an ordinance and policies. The tools are intended to meet increasing major scarcity challenges, resiliency and sustainability through drought planning which includes planning, education, legislation, partnerships, and water resource investments. The County has the ability to implement more direct measures for Santa Fe County residents whether water utility customers, domestic well users, etc. The summary said it is WPAC’s recommendation that County staff review the drought management plan to determine where the efforts are occurring and where opportunities for improvement exist, and determine where action is required.

The Chair said he reviewed past WPAC notes and included a section on drought planning assessment and vulnerabilities. His document was shared on the screen and emailed to the members. The triggers, education and outreach were expanded with recommendations to update all associated ordinances and policies to reflect measures taken in a drought emergency. The document discussed the importance of best practices in managing the basin water to ensure water needs are met. Collaborations and resource/data sharing were emphasized.

The members thanked the Chair for his efforts noting they provide an inventory of tools to assist the County. The plan expands beyond the triggers and the hope was that the plan document could serve as Cliff Notes.

The jurisdictional issues and how to target public education were discussed. The notion of PNM and electric co-ops inserting fliers in bills, as well as school fliers, signage and social media were recommended as outreach. The County Assessor may be useful. Shared on the screen was an Excel spreadsheet list developed by the NMED Drinking Water Bureau of 181 different water systems. The spreadsheet included hookups and population estimates.

Ms. Follingstad said there were some glaring errors on the list but it provides useful information. The commercial and institutional uses are large water consumers. Commissioner Hansen said it has been frustrating to make corrections via the bureau. The list is for the committee to use for public outreach. The Chair commented that the information provides a view of how many people are not influenced by ordinance or policies.

There was agreement to refine the document at the next meeting with Ms. Follingstad and the Chair speaking in the interim.

[Commissioner Hansen excused herself from the remainder of the meeting.]

**B. Follow-up discussion related to primacy authorization/primacy from United States Environment Protection Agency to administer the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program.**

Mr. Stringer said the documentation has not been amended since previously presented.

According to Mr. Rudnick, State Representative Matt McQueen is interested and perhaps WPAC could begin informational conversations with other legislators.

**IX. Matters from the Committee**

None were presented.

**X. Matters from County Staff**

**A. Aamodt Regional Water System**

Ms. Bean said there was nothing new to report. Limited construction continues and there is hope that a new federal authorization will come through before the end of December.

**B. 40-, 80-Year Water Planning Process**

A successful series of Webinars was hosted with the City. The participation was good.

Ms. Follingstad said she took the survey which she found too lengthy and relied on a certain level of water knowledge.

Ms. Bean said the facilitators are synthesizing the information received from this first process and will be finalizing the format of the planning process structure and releasing a summary of the feedback.

C. City WCC

Mr. Kirk stated that the committee will be meeting in December.

D. Status of Member Vacancies

Ms. Bean reported that the paperwork for WPAC candidate J.J. Gonzales was submitted and there has been a pause placed on advancing it. There are no issues with the candidate, rather broader questions regarding the makeup of the committee, its expertise and what purpose WPAC will serve in the future. The County Manager and Public Works Director wanted questions answered before appointing additional members.

Mr. Dupuis said he will be presenting to the BCC at the last meeting of this year on the following issues: What is the role of the WPAC?; who is a member?; how do they interact with the Commission?; and how do they act as a resource to the Commission? He invited feedback from the committee and wanted to make sure he captured all thoughts.

Ms. Follingstad offered that staff would benefit from reviewing the body of WPAC minutes on file, the annual work plan presented to the BCC and the recently amended enabling resolution that established the committee.

Regarding the role of the WPAC, Chair Romero said as a retired water professional, he signed up to provide staff with technical support and assistance. Speaking as a former public servant, he said he was always pleased to have community input. Membership-wise, the committee discussed this in great detail a few years ago to increase participation. The drought management plan is a major task that the committee works on.

The point was made that a few years ago WPAC reaching out to the BCC asking what specifically they wanted to see on the work plan; there was no response. Mention was also made that Public Works appears to lack adequate personnel to dedicate staff to the committee.

IX. Adjournment

Having completed the agenda, Chair Romero declared this meeting adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.

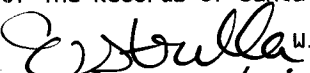
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Approved by:

  
Bryan Romero, Chair

COUNTY OF SANTA FE )  
STATE OF NEW MEXICO ) ss

I Hereby Certify That This Instrument Was Filed for  
Record On The 25TH Day Of February, 2021 at 02:44:46 PM  
And Was Duly Recorded as Instrument # 1944714  
Of The Records Of Santa Fe County

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

Respectfully submitted by:

  
Karen Farrell, Wordswork