

MINUTES OF THE
SANTA FE COUNTY
WATER POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

May 10, 2018

Santa Fe, New Mexico

I. Lacking a quorum, this meeting of the Santa Fe County Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC) study session was called to order at approximately 5:00 p.m. by Mary Helen Follingstad, Chair, on the above-cited date at the Santa Fe County Projects Complex, 901 W. Alameda, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

II. The following members were present:

Members Present:

Mary Helen Follingstad, Chair
Ken Kirk, District 2
Shann Stringer, Soil & Water Conservation District
Martha Trujillo, Acequia Association

Member(s) Excused:

Steve Rudnick, District 5
Bryan Romero, District 1
Denise Fort, BDD Board
JC Helms (BDD Alternate)
[Five vacancies]

Staff Present:

Sandra Ely, Hydrologist
John Dupuis, Utilities Director
Rita Bates, Utilities, Project Manager

Guest(s):

Beth Stephens, President-elect, Santa Fe Association of Realtors

Lacking a quorum no action could be taken.

III. **Approval of Agenda**

Chair Follingstad said she and Mr. Rudnick met and discussed future agendas and determined there were two items of priority: drought management and regionalization of various water systems.

The ongoing quorum problem could be solved by changing the definition of "quorum" to mean a "majority of appointed members" in the enabling resolution.

SFC CLERK RECORDED 07/16/2019

To accommodate his schedule, Mr. Dupuis requested that County Staff items B, Update on community systems and D, County water/wastewater master plan rate study update, be heard first.

There was consensus to accept the agenda.

IV. Approval of Minutes: March 8, 2018 and April 12, 2018

Postponed pending quorum.

V. Introduction of WPAC members, staff and guests

Rita Bates was introduced as a newly-hired County Projects Manager, and will be replacing Ms. Ely who is retiring this month. Ms. Bates worked for New Mexico Environment Department in the planning group of the Air Quality Bureau. She said she enjoys large complex projects of which Aamodt is a worthy example.

Those present introduced themselves.

VI. Matter from the Public

None were offered.

VII. Action Items

A. Resolution on WPAC Membership - change wording to "a quorum is a majority of appointed members: Resolution to be presented at BCC June 12th meeting

The latest draft of the resolution, having been reviewed by County Legal, was made available and Mr. Dupuis said it was revised to address the committee's quorum issues.

Chair Follingstad said the quorum issue has been very difficult on the committee and pointed out that, again, the committee lacks a quorum as defined in the current resolution. She recommended that staff forward the resolution to the BCC. The fact it lacks formal action from the committee demonstrates the very issue it is meant to address.

Mr. Stringer noted that the revised resolution lacks any reference to the minimum number of appointed members and that too should be addressed. Mr. Dupuis said he would bring that back to the Legal Department. He suggested committee members be present at the BCC meeting when the resolution is presented. Chair Follingstad said the BCC is aware of the quorum issue and they need to determine whether they want the committee in place.

X. Matters from County Staff

B. Update on Community Systems

Mr. Dupuis provided the following updates:

Hyde Park Estates – There are 76 customers on the system. The County added a consumer surcharge (\$54.38) to the contract which requires the consumers' sign-off/approval; any infrastructure that the County does not need, the Estates can retain according to the new contract. The County has not assumed ownership of the system and the City supplies water. A topographic map of the Estates was shown to demonstrate the difficult terrain.

Cañoncito – Received notification from the Water Trust Board that they received \$1.6 million for internal system improvements. The County will serve as fiduciary agent. Following completion of the improvements, the County will provide and convey water. There are approximately 77 customers.

In this drought environment, concern was expressed about the County expanding its customer base. Mr. Dupuis said the County strategic plan has established a goal to widen its backup sources in addition to the City's sources. He offered to keep WPAC informed of initiatives from the strategic plan. Currently, the County is at 115 percent capacity. The County's utility does not cover its expenses.

Mr. Stringer said most small water systems do not want to take on loans and instead get what they consider free funding from the legislature. Chair Follingstad said that's the myth – it is not free; it's taxpayer money.

Chupadero – The County is working with the residents to obtain an easement for a well.

D. County Water/Wastewater Master Plan Rate Study update

Mr. Dupuis said he has met with three of the five County Commissioners and shared the results of the revenue requirements analysis. The BCC recently approved the publication of title and general summary of an ordinance on the proposed rate increase. The first public hearing is slated for May 29th when the consultant will make a presentation on the rate study. For the utility to be an enterprise fund, rate increases are necessary. The County needs to determine how much usage and revenues will be go down if the rates are increased. Comparison wise, Española and Taos are the highest in sewer rates and Eldorado is the highest in water. A link to the rate study is available on the County website.

Mr. Dupuis said the study is still under staff review and data being used is from the billing system. The Utility Department has a new administrative manager who is a tremendous asset for the department.

Chair Follingstad recalled that many years ago when the City installed a new sewer system and implemented a conservation program it was so effective that the sewer lacked the necessary flow and the system suffered.

Mr. Dupuis said the proposed increase is less than what is needed.

Mr. Dupuis said he looked forward to providing WPAC with a positive report on the negotiations with Eldorado and Las Campanas in the near future.

VIII. Discussion Items

A. Drought Management

1. **Approve framework for discussion of drought management trigger options**
2. **Review options for drought triggers: City of Santa Fe, Eldorado area Water Utility, etc.**
3. **Develop recommendations for the BCC**
4. **Present recommendations to BCC – June 12, 2018 meeting**

Mr. Dupuis said as co-owner of the BDD, it is prudent for the County to have a voice in calling for drought management. Defining the triggers beyond “as determined by the City Manager,” seems prudent. The County clearly needs to expand/diversify its water sources in location as well as source.

Chair Follingstad recalled that the County conducted a study years ago to investigate additional backup water sources via wells.

In the context of its financial constraints, Mr. Dupuis said the department is investigating reducing expenses of non-revenue generating needs. Backup supply, which is extremely important, is a tremendous financial drain because the intent is not to use it. The ideal case would be partnering with a potential or current customer who is also a large well-user and the well-user would continue to maintain that well. This would be beyond the agreement with the City. Currently, the BDD system allows the City to rest its wells. The County is seeking an additional source where the wells are being rested and maintained by the consumer who is supplied surface water.

Chair Follingstad requested a list of the potential well-owners using surface water and resting their wells.

Mr. Dupuis said the number one directive derived from the BCC strategic workshops was for internal staff to review and develop the concept of a well-owner partnership, present it to the WPAC to use this group’s resources, follow up with recommendations to BCC, and then implement the plan.

Mr. Kirk said Las Campanas Homeowners Association will be revegetating the subdivision’s entrances with drought tolerant plants and redesigning the irrigation systems. The work will cost \$1+ million and is expected to provide significant water savings. Las Campanas Water and Sewer Co-op has established a sustainability committee that will produce a quarterly newsletter to the area residents advising ways to conserve water. The golf course is managed by the Club and the wastewater treatment plant provides 15 percent to 20 percent of the needed irrigation for the courses. In the past, the Club cut back on its irrigated area by 30 percent.

Mr. Kirk said he serves as the County’s representative on the City’s Water Conservation Committee where a great deal of concern has been raised regarding drought-related issues. The

City is working on a sustainability plan and reviewing stormwater issues. He added that the City is very interested in working with the County.

Mr. Stringer said developing a joint drought management plan with the City would be beneficial. Chair Follingstad agreed adding that a joint task force would be a good idea. Ms. Trujillo advocated working with the City's new administration.

Mr. Kirk lauded Mr. Dupuis's willingness to reach out to Las Campanas.

Mr. Stringer said he was pleased the County has begun the conversation about backup water supplies. Mr. Kirk said the City is also engaged in the discussion. Ms. Trujillo said Mr. Dupuis will be instrumental in this process with his innate grasp of the big picture.

Chair Follingstad said the four items listed under this drought management as well regionalization require fleshing out a framework by staff. She said as this drought progresses – the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District may alter their call and thus not coincide with Santa Fe's needs. In that case there would not be sufficient depth in which to extract water.

Mr. Stringer offered the following grim information: A segment of the Rio Grande below Isleta went dry in March which has never happened in recorded history. The historic records show the Rio Grande has gone dry by White Rock and Española. The Rio Grande is dry from south of Isleta through Bosque del Apache. Typically, in the past 12 years there is 90 to 120 miles of dry Rio Grande. A call on the river is expected.

Ms. Ely asked about the framework WPAC expected regarding drought management and regionalization and Chair Follingstad said previous WPAC discussions and staff knowledge could be pulled together to create a framework to develop a plan involving the regional project in Pojoaque Valley, the tentacles of the City serving County areas, the County water system, etc. Maps could then be integrated to develop a decision tree, condensing the information to better understand how it all ties together. She acknowledged that without a quorum it was difficult to make progress.

The question of whether the Aamodt/Pojoaque water system could be seen as a backup to the County water system was mentioned.

There was agreement to maintain drought management and regionalization issues on the agenda with a directive that staff develop a framework to facilitate development of recommendations.

The following ideas surfaced:

- How to use stormwater as a resource – avoiding the toxic metals
- Add "Alternate Water Supply" to the agenda as its own topic
- Rather than a drought this could be considered a return to historical norms

SFC CLERK RECORDED 07/16/2019

Update on Pojoaque Regional Water System

Ms. Ely said design and costs are being reviewed: Is a design change necessary. Is going back to Congress necessary? Both? Lacking a final design, it is difficult to determine funding issues. Phasing the infrastructure within the system will provide a cost savings, i.e., provide the space only for the pumps that will be needed in the future to move more water.

The County is working to identify customers through an outreach plan that may include a mail-out survey to the residents within the service area. The survey is to determine how many residents are interested in accessing state dollars to make the connections. The County had originally relied on the court regarding the well election form sent out in 2014, but the court now appears less interested.

There is discussion about bringing water into the City of Santa Fe and sizing with that in mind. At this time there is no well election.

VIII. Discussion Items – to remain on the agenda

IX. Matters from the Committee

None were presented.

X. Adjournment

Having completed the agenda and with no further business to come before this Committee, this meeting adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Approved by:



Mary Helen Follingstad, Chair

Respectfully submitted by:

Karen Farrell, Wordswork



COUNTY OF SANTA FE)
STATE OF NEW MEXICO) ss

WATER POLICY ADVISORY
PAGES: 6

I Hereby Certify That This Instrument Was Filed for
Record On The 16TH Day Of July, 2019 at 01:34:51 PM
And Was Duly Recorded as Instrument # 1891354
Of The Records Of Santa Fe County

Deputy  Witness My Hand And Seal Of Office
Geraldine Salazar
County Clerk, Santa Fe, NM