

**SANTA FE COUNTY
WATER POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2026
240 GRANT AVENUE, PLAZA CONFERENCE ROOM, 4:00 PM
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO**

1. OPENING BUSINESS

A. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Water Policy Advisory Committee was called to order by Peter Gowen, Chair, at 4:00 PM, on Thursday, February 12, 2026, in the Plaza Conference Room, 240 Grant Avenue, Santa Fe, NM.

B. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Peter Gowen, Chair
Shann Stringer
Emily Wolf
Stephen Schmelling
Amy Jordan
John Kadlecek
James Mike Henry
Laird Graeser
Commissioner Camilla Bustamante, ex-officio member

MEMBERS ABSENT

Jeff Montoya
Darrin Muenzberg

OTHERS PRESENT

Andrew Harnden, Santa Fe County Planning Growth Management Department
Michael Carr, Santa Fe County Public Works Environmental Compliance Officer
Herbert Foster, Santa Fe County Planning Team Leader
Leandro Cordova, Santa Fe County Deputy County Manager
Alexandra Ladd, Santa Fe County Director, Growth Management Department
Walker Boyd, Santa Fe County Attorney
Levi Newell, City of Santa Fe Water Resources
William Schneider, City of Santa Fe Water Department
Elizabeth Martin, Stenographer, virtually

Carl Dickens, community member
Nina Rosenberg, Tesuque community member

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Gowen said discussion item B-6 has been moved to item 5-A.

Mr. Harnden said the move to an action item was approved prior to the meeting, but after the agenda was posted.

MOTION A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda as amended.

VOTE The motion passed on a voice vote.

2. MATTERS FROM THE PUBLIC

Nina Rosenberg. Ms. Rosenberg asked for clarity regarding domestic well reporting requirements.

Mr. Carr will contact Ms. Rosenberg with information on the multiple steps involved in reporting.

3. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A. REQUEST APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 11, 2025 WATER POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

MOTION A motion was made by Mr. Graeser, seconded by Mr. Kadlecsek, to approve the minutes as presented.

VOTE The motion passed on a voice vote.

B. REQUEST APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 8, 2026 WATER POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

MOTION A motion was made by Mr. Kadlecsek, seconded by Ms. Wolf, to approve the minutes as presented, with the addition of the 2025 Annual Progress Report.

VOTE The motion passed on a voice vote.

C. INTRODUCTIONS

Necessary introductions were made.

4. MATTERS FROM STAFF

A. UTILITIES

No report was given.

B. SUSTAINABILITY

Ms. Beam was not present. No report was given.

C. PLANNING

No report was given.

D. PUBLIC WORKS

No report was given. This report will be added to the agenda next month.

5. ACTION ITEMS

A. A REVIEW OF RESOLUTION 2016-144 REGARDING THE FEASIBILITY OF A REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY AND DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON THE LETTER OF WPAC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING A SANTA FE COUNTY-CITY OF SANTA FE WATER AUTHORITY.

Chair Gowen presented the Resolution and the WPAC letter of findings and recommendations to the Committee. There was discussion regarding Resolution 2016-144 including its intent and the WPAC letter, including that the letter was drafted by Commissioner Bustamante's office, the findings and recommendations, the number of customers of the County and the City, and the support of WPAC for the County to move forward with the pursuit of a City-County Unified water Authority.

MOTION A motion was made by Chair Gowen, seconded by Mr. Schmelling, to approve the letter of findings and recommendations.

VOTE The motion passed on a roll call vote as follows:

Mr. Stringer, yes; Ms. Wolf, yes; Mr. Schmelling, yes; Ms. Jordan, yes; Mr. Kadlecek, yes; Mr. Henry, yes; Mr. Graeser, yes, Chair Gowen, yes.

B. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF WATER POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (WPAC)

Mr. Graeser was nominated for Vice Chair of WPAC by Mr. Schmelling.

Mr. Graeser declined the nomination.

MOTION A motion was made by Mr. Kadlecek, seconded by Mr. Graeser, to elect Mr. Schmelling as Vice Chair of WPAC.

VOTE The motion passed on a voice vote.

C. CONSIDERATION OF WPAC ELECTING IT'S OFFICERS AT THE JANUARY MEETING OF EVEN NUMBERED YEARS

Chair Gowen presented the change to the Committee's organizing Resolution regarding the election of WPAC's officers.

Mr. Boyd suggested the language that should be added at the beginning of the motion in order to make this change.

MOTION A motion was made by Chair Gowen, seconded by Mr. Kadlecek, that to the extent that this action is not inconsistent with Resolution 2024-038, as passed by the Board of County Commissioners to create the Water Policy Advisory Committee, WPAC will elect it's officers during the January meeting of even numbered years.

VOTE The motion passed on a voice vote.

6. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. REVIEW REVISED WPAC 2026 WORKPLAN WITH AMENDMENTS FROM THE JANUARY 27TH WPAC MEETING

Mr. Harnden presented the revised 2026 workplan that was approved by the Board of the county Commissioners and explained the amendments required by the BCC.

There was discussion including the change to the correct title for the Mutual Domestic Water Consumers Association (MDWCA)

Chair Gowen said the workplan will be brought back to our next meeting to add a work item related to the concept of a Water Authority and for approval and recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.

B. NEXT STEPS FOR STORMWATER MANAGEMENT, WATER AND WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT, AND OUTREACH WORKING

GROUPS

It was stated that the Committee needs more clarification on the workplan as to what work the Committee does, what staff does and what the Chair is authorized to do.

Commissioner Bustamante expressed her concern about following the Resolution that creates this group which specifies that the policy recommendations should be filtered through an accountability-based process. You are here to advise and make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners, like you just did with your letter regarding the Unified Water Authority. Some of these items are not concrete enough to be accountable.

Chair Gowen stated that the language in the workplan, for the most part, came from staff.

Commissioner Bustamante said it is up to you to have conversations with staff as to deliverables. What is it you want us to do.

There was discussion around actionable policy recommendations, staff struggling with time constraints, expertise and insight on big issues, the ability to get timely responses from staff, how the Committee can help staff, working on a policy level and getting out of the weeds.

Chair Gowen said he will work with the working group leaders to look at how we can structure the groups to address policy work.

Commissioner Bustamante expressed her gratitude for all the Committee has done.

7. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

The Legislation introduced at the State Legislature was reviewed and discussed as well as issues related to the Bills.

8. MATTERS FROM THE COMMITTEE

Committee members discussed the Water Operation meetings, the adoption of the ISC rules and the minutes timeline.

9. NEXT WPAC MEETING: MARCH 12, 2026

10. CONCLUDING BUSINESS

A. ADJOURNMENT

Santa Fe County
Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC)
Santa Fe, New Mexico

February 12, 2026

To: Santa Fe County Board of County Commissioners (BCC)

From: Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC)

Re: WPAC Findings and Recommendations Regarding the Pursuit of a Unified Santa Fe County–City of Santa Fe Water Authority

Dear Commissioners,

The Santa Fe County Water Policy Advisory Committee (WPAC) submits this letter memorandum to formally transmit its findings and recommendations regarding the pursuit of a unified water authority between Santa Fe County and the City of Santa Fe.

Record Before the Committee

WPAC received and reviewed presentations from the Albuquerque Bernalillo Water Authority and other water utility and governance experts concerning regional and unified water system models. These presentations addressed governance structures, intergovernmental coordination, operational efficiencies, infrastructure resilience, water conservation, long-term planning, and public accountability.

The Committee considered this information as part of its advisory deliberations.

Findings

Based on the presentations received and discussion among Committee members, WPAC makes the following findings:

1. Santa Fe County and the City of Santa Fe face shared hydrologic constraints, infrastructure demands, and long-term water security challenges that warrant coordinated planning and governance.
2. A unified City–County water authority model provides a viable framework for aligning water rights administration, conservation strategies, capital planning, and operations across jurisdictions.
3. Regional governance structures can improve system resiliency, operational efficiency, and public accountability through consolidated planning and decision-making.
4. The models presented reflect best practices currently operating within New Mexico and other western states facing similar water supply constraints.

SFC CLERK RECORDED 06/04/2026

The New Mexico Regional Water System Resiliency Act, NMSA 1978, §§ 62-20-1 et seq., expressly authorizes counties and municipalities to collaborate in the creation of regional or unified water systems. This authority is supported by the Joint Powers Agreements Act, NMSA 1978, §§ 11-1-1 through 11-1-7, and related water utility statutes, including NMSA 1978, § 72-1-10 and §§ 3-27-1 through 3-27-5.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, WPAC makes the following recommendations to the Board:

1. support for a future resolution to adhere to NMSA 1978, § 62-20-3.C to pursue the establishment of a unified water authority between Santa Fe County and the City of Santa Fe.
2. advance further legal, financial, governance, and operational analysis necessary to evaluate formation of a unified City–County water authority.
3. coordinate engagement with the City of Santa Fe, relevant agencies, and the public to ensure transparency and informed participation.
4. continue WPAC involvement in an advisory capacity as this effort moves forward.

Advisory Statement

These findings and recommendations are advisory in nature and are submitted to assist the Board of County Commissioners in its consideration of next steps toward coordinated water governance and long-term regional water resilience.

WPAC Approval

This letter has been authorized by a majority vote of the quorum present at the WPAC meeting on February 12, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,



Peter Gowen
WPAC Chair



Stephen Schmelling
WPAC Vice Chair