

WATER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16th 2026. AT 9:00 A.M.
CASTLE VALLEY TOWN BUILDING - 2 CASTLE VALLEY DRIVE

**This meeting was a hybrid meeting held electronically by Zoom and also in person at the anchor site of the Town Building.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Water Committee Members Present:, Pam Hackley, Sue Bellagamba

Water Committee Present on Zoom: John Groo, Dave Erley, Ryan Anderson

Absent: Bob O'Brien,

Present at the anchor site: Jocelyn Buck, Sarah Stock, Faylene Roth, Egmont Honer, Susan Aur, Michael Carlyle

Groo called the Meeting to Order at 9:00 AM, Stock called the roll.

REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING

1. Open Public Comment

- Read comment from David Harris outlining concerns over water banking/ leasing options. Stated concerns over discrepancies between “paper” rights and actual volumes and pumping water from the aquifer. Emphasized the need to protect our water resources.
- Bellagamba: Stated that any action taken towards use of surplus water e.g. water banking would be very carefully considered with an eye towards protection our water rights and water source
- Groo: Clarified that we would pursue this option in order to prevent the loss of water rights.
- Erley: Mentioned that the banked water would not be pumped, rather would be accounted for downstream of Castle Valley.

2. Approval of Minutes

- WAC meeting January 12th, 2026
 - Hackley: Moves to approve the January 12th WAC meeting minutes
 - Erley: Seconds the motion
 - Votes in favor: Anderson, Groo, Erley, Hackley
 - Abstaining: Bellagamba

3. Items of Interest

- MAWP report - **(go through recording and take better notes)**
 - Stock reported on the February MAWP meeting. Lower Castle Creek is out of attainment for E. Coli total maximum daily load (TMDL). This stretch was first out of attainment in 2020. The upper section is in attainment. There needs to be a 4% reduction in E.Coli TMDL to achieve attainment. The source assessment pointed to the likely interaction of septic systems and irrigation recharge during the growing season as cause of being out of attainment. ~~Cache~~ **Cash** Stallings from UDWRi presented on the UGS study of Castle Valley water budget. He emphasized that UDWRi was not a partner to the study, but they did provide comments on the scope and final draft. He said that UDWRi did not have specific questions to be informed by the study. Also mentioned that Castle Valley has many appropriations policies on the books with UDWRi and isn't likely to get more.

- Erley: Says his distancing of UDWRi from the study is frustrating because we've been working with them all along.
- Bellagamba: Says in retrospect an MOU with the UDWRi would have served us
- Groo: Gave context of a timeline: first we hired Kolm to do a watershed study, Stilson (then Southeast Regional Engineer for UDWRi) had questions about the report and suggested we have a peer review done. We then did this, which pointed out more questions and gaps in knowledge, that then informed what went into the UGS scope of study. Emphasized that the UDWRi was at the table developing scope of study.
- Stock continues reporting on the MAWP meeting: Amy Dickey UDWRQ presented on funding opportunities for non-point source pollution (Utah NPS grants and EPA Section 319 grants), the Nature Conservancy and BLM presented on LT-PBR (low tech process based restoration) work done near La Sal.
- Water supply outlook report
 - Hackley: reports on snowpack statewide, which is in a dire situation. It is generally below 40% of normal, some places are 30% or less, like in the La Sals.
 - Groo: Points out some folks in Colorado are talking about it as being worse than '77, but points out that the pressures on the river are greater than they were then.
- Legislative updates:
 - Anderson: Reports that the 5 year survey responses from Castle Valley residents point out a great concern about water supply. He has been attending the legislative sessions. Has been making contact with legislators. Senator Hinkins sends his recommendations to talk to Marissa Eggbert, who is involved in water metering funding (Colorado River Authority of Utah). There is unallocated money for metering.
 - Groo: Stilson, now with the Colorado River Authority of Utah, has a desire to mandate metering on all diversions in the Colorado River system.
 - Erley: Asks Groo or Bellagamba to call and talk to Marc Stilson about CV metering plans.
 - Anderson: Hinkins is a good contact for this, and he meters his own water on his ranch and may like to highlight projects in his district.

NEW BUSINESS

4. Scheduling of meetings for the calendar year - discussion and action
 - Currently, we are scheduled for the third Monday of every month, but this does facilitate sharing the draft meetings with the Town Council, which they would like to have. In order to make this happen, we need to move the WAC meetings to the second Monday of every month (except April, July and December, which will be on the first Monday of the month). Stock will send out a list of dates and post them on the Town website.
5. General WAC protocols and open meetings requirements - discussion
 - Stock, Buck, and the WAC discuss basic requirements for open meetings, the Open Meetings course offered by the state, and emails.
6. TCV General Plan Section 5 update - discussion and possible action
 - Roth: Would like updates to the old general plan by the next Planning Commission meeting on March 5th. The WAC members will each read through the document and make suggestions to be submitted.
7. Water Management Plan Priority Action List (attached)- discussion
 - Explore options for use of surplus water (banking or leasing water options)
 - Groo: Introduces the issue
 - Bellagamba: Our language should use "options for protection" rather than "options for use" to be more clear.

- Hackley: Putting it into protection makes it more clear. This is not high on the priority list of things that we are working on.
- Groo: Counters that we would be advised to be prepared on this issue.
- Bellagamba: Under Utah's water law: if you bank your water, it is protected from forfeiture. Another reason that people might bank their water is to make a little extra money.
- Anderson: Stresses that protection is in our top three goals.
- Erley: Mentions that this is a shifting topic in the legislature.
- Bellagamba: States that we need to better understand the goals of the community, then we can explore specific options. It is legal now to keep your water in the river, a little different with an aquifer. Suggested next steps would be to invite a water attorney to give us some advice.
- WAC discusses Emily Lewis, who worked with Castle Valley during her tenure with Clyde and Snow. Emily Lewis has given multiple presentations on water banking available on the Division of Water Resources website. It is suggested that we put links on our website of experts discussing these water banking options.
- Bellagamba will send out links to the WAC.

EXECUTIVE REPORTS

8. Water Management Plan Priority Action List (attached); strategies for implementation

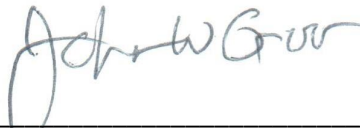
- Work with DWRI to develop an appropriation policy for the CV aquifer - Erley
 - No comments
- Work with DWRI to improve water rights management - Groo
 - No Comments
- Water Rights - Groo
 - Groo: His intention is to focus on water rights, particularly enforcement. The Town's water rights are delivered through independent wells and we can't just lock up people's wells. Groo will start by informing those not in compliance and meeting with UDWRI to talk about streamlining our work together on enforcement.
- Well Metering – Stock/Groo/Honer
 - Groo: States that we need to know the cost of implementing metering in order to establish a timeline goal. It is a chicken and the egg scenario.
 - Honer: There are many options out there. Doesn't see any technical problems, there are solutions out there. The question is, how do we convince people to get their water metered. Not everyone will sign up for this. The system must be easy to implement, without major hurdles for the homeowners. Our "homebrew" electrical current system provides the least impact on existing systems.
 - Groo: With an amendment to the WAUP we could require all new permittees to meter. He emphasizes that the implementation would be simple and uninvasive.
 - Erley: Adds that it is beneficial to water rights in the long run.
 - Bellagamba: Mentions that it is required to have a meter on all diversions in Utah, but it is not enforced. We might have a partner with the Division of Water Rights because of this.
 - Erley: It would be good to know the funding opportunities.
 - Anderson: It might be worthwhile to build connections with our Legislators. Mentions Representative Logan Monson, Representative Carl Albrecht, and Senator Hinkins .
 - Bellagamba: Colorado River Authority of Utah website explains this program. We should educate ourselves before approaching folks. They hired an engineering firm to do a gap analysis on where metering should be present in the state.
 - Hackley: Mentions to Honer that it would be helpful to lay out metering options for discussion.

- Honer: Responds that we would have to narrow it down to what is possible or suitable to Castle Valley, because there are so many possibilities.
- Bellagamba: Mentions that UWDRi has certain mechanism for working with metering data that should inform our system
- Groo: Stiltson said they would accept data that has pump time and pump flow data.
- Castle Creek – Hackley
 - Hackley: Reached out to Stiltson to see if there was funding for reestablishing a USGS gauge about half mile downstream of the Castleton cemetery. She hasn't heard back yet.
 - Groo: In the 90s there was a gauge at this site.
 - Hackley: There's about 20 years of data from the site
 - Hackley: Both the irrigation companies have installed meters on their two flumes. They also installed a remote gauge on the pipe that delivers water from the Quakey Shake to the Daystar fields. All this data is available online. In February, the two companies decided to dissolve the distribution system agreement put in place to address conflicts. They are happy with the system now. Because of our low snow pack, there is no reason to adjust the water.
 - Erley: The monitoring of these diversion is very good for filling gaps in our knowledge about water use in the valley.
 - Hackley: Colton Lay (of MAWP) is continuing to take the samples on Castle Creek.
 - Groo: Brings up the need for the town to continue to have access to the data.
- Aquifer Monitoring (UGS Program) – Stock/O'Brien
 - Groo: The town council must renew the contract every year. There was a time when there was a pause in the agreement and monitoring stopped for a few years.
 - Question from the audience: do you know how much that contract is?
 - Groo: Around \$3000. But the town only pays half.
- Aquifer Monitoring (additional well) - Groo
 - Groo: The Kolm study identified an ideal place for an additional monitoring well, near where Shafer Lane crosses Castleton Creek. It seems unlikely the town will have the funds to drill a new well, but Lot 194 has an abandoned well with sanding issues. Groo is going to approach the land owner about the use of this well and access to the property for twice a year sampling. The well would need to be retrofitted for chemical sampling. Asks if it would it be worth it if we could only measure the static water level.
 - Erley: Stressed that this would still be valuable information.
 - Groo: The lot owner has been cooperative and helpful. Groo will contact the owner.
- Non-Potable Water for Cisterns – Groo
 - Groo: Reports that this is the idea of being able to provide water to people who have poor quality wells or don't want to drill a poor quality well. He shares a photo of an example system in Coburn, CO system. People show up with containers and hoses or choice (garden hose or 2"), they log in and pay for the water. This is a potable water system. There are many options for this, including delivery, but his thinking has moved away from exploring delivery options for simplicity.
 - Erley: Mancos Springs has a similar example, that doesn't include delivery. Financially, delivery may make it infeasible.
 - Groo: We need to find a place to site this and develop a well. It would simplify it to take delivery out of the mix of explored options.
 - Bellagamba: Asked if there is an example of this in Utah since we have different laws than Colorado.
 - Groo: Both these example systems are treated systems. It is still an open question if the town will be able to develop a system that is not for treated water.

- Anderson: Draws attention to the results of question B5 on the 2025 Castle Valley Survey. 60% of residents support the Town continuing research on options to provide residents whose lots produce little or no water and/or poor quality water with *non-potable* water. And 67% of residents support the Town continuing research on options to provide residents whose lots produce little or no water and/or poor quality water with *potable* water. Anderson indicates that this supports our work to research this further.
- Groo: Anything we propose will go through the Town Council for approval and action.
- Honer: Asks about the water source of such a project.
- Groo: Outlines options: We've considered lot 13, the fire district well, which is silty. Lot 117, has a well, but is unoccupied, this could be an option, but no conversations have happened with the owner beyond his mentioning the fire department could use it.
- Erley: Mentions the possibility of drilling on BLM land near his lot where the water is excellent. Local drawdown is a concern for a huge well.
- Grand County Watershed Protection Overlay District – O'Brien
 - Groo: The county created this district for protection. When first created, Castle Valley was not included, but was added later with O'Brien's work. The details of how this applies are still being worked out.
- DRWi Appropriations Policy for CV – Erley
 - Groo introduces the topic.
 - Erley: First thing we should do is identify the development potential for the watershed outside of the Town of Castle Valley. How much threat do we face to our water? A two acre-feet limit per lot outside of the town is discussed. Federal lands outside of the Colorado River Corridor should also be considered as potential for future development given uncertainties in management.
 - Groo: Stallings pointed out that we already have appropriation policies in place, more than any other place in Utah. No more appropriations in Willow Basin. Only small appropriations in other places. In town, all seeking new appropriations must go through the Town.
 - Erley: UDWRi website has good information.
 - Bellagamba: It's hard to imagine, but sometimes growing alfalfa can actually recharge the aquifer, so it's important to protect our agricultural lands. Conservation easements could also prohibit development.
 - Groo: We need to sharpen our understanding of how much water could be used. Residential use of water in Castle Valley will never come close to using what the historic ranches here have used.
 - Bellagamba: City of Moab, County is looking at how to recharge the aquifer. In the future we should consider this.
 - Erley: Smaller scale work in Castle Creek and Placer Creek could come into play with aquifer recharge.

ADJOURNMENT

Erley makes a motion to adjourn. Bellagamba seconds. All approve. Adjourned at 10:59 AM.



 Chair's Signature

March 9th, 2026

 Date