

WATER ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, May 11th 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

Groo called the Meeting to Order at 9:01 AM, and called the roll.

Water Committee Members Present: John Groo, Sue Bellagamba, Bob O'Brien

Water Committee Present on Zoom: Dave Erley, Pam Hackley

Water Committee Absent: Ryan Anderson

Present at the anchor site: Sarah Stock, Colleen Thompson

Present on zoom: Egmont Honer, Dorje Honer, Dana Rogers

REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING

1. Open Public Comment

- None

2. Approval of Minutes

- WAC meeting April 6th, 2026
 - Groo moves to approve, O'Brien seconds. Groo, Erley. Hackley, vote in favor. O'Brien and Bellagamba abstain.

3. Items of Interest

- MAWP Report - Stock/O'Brien
 - Stock reports on the meeting, including Cash Stalling's (UDWRi Regional Engineer) water report. NRCS states it is the worst on record by a long shot. 2015 was 5x better than this year, this was the next worst water year. Reservoirs are okay - at 50%, low natural flow, so okay this year, but not if it continues. He said that negotiations over the Colorado River have essentially ceased. He thinks that BuRec will pick a preferred alternative and run the river to protect power generation as a top priority and that by fall the flow past Lees ferry will drop below 82.5 million over 10 years - which will most likely lead to a Colorado River Compact related lawsuit. He said that from Utah Division of Water Rights perspective, curtailment will not be administered until a seven state agreement is signed or a court order is issued. Colton Lay (MAWP coordinator) also presented an overview of some funding opportunities including Non-Point Source (NPS) funding and Bureau of Reclamation WaterSmart funding which is of interest to Castle Valley for water metering.
 - O'Brien reports that a Nature Conservancy and BLM partnership is looking at watershed work in the Placer Creek and they are waiting on a watershed analysis done by USU to be completed.
 - WAC generally discusses low-tech erosion control (L-TEC), beaver-dam analog (BDA), and planning for Placer Creek work.
- Updates about water related actions taken by the State Legislature (HB 60)
 - O'Brien - Points out that HB 60 now clearly mentions water quality as a consideration in the public welfare.

- Erley points out the burden of proof is now on the developer of the water rights, not the protestee.
- Bellagamba points out that they removed the language “natural stream environment” from the list that could previously be included for consideration by the state engineer, so in some ways it’s a step backwards.
- Water Use and Preservation Element of the Grand County General Plan - Hackley/O’Brien
 - O’Brien introduces the topic and states that he thinks the plan should include mention of climate change and impacts on future water supply, which it does not do now. The plan states that the County can reduce water use per capita in order to create a buffer for growth, but the plan does not factor in decreases in supply due to climate change.
 - Hackley argues that the citizens in the Town of Castle Valley should indeed comment on the plan even though we are incorporated and Castle Valley is not directly included in the plan because we all live in Grand County and the General Plan impacts us all. Hackley thinks that we should provide comments from the Town of Castle Valley about the sole source aquifer.
 - O’Brien, also a member of the Grand County Planning Commission, is hoping to get a section added about protections for the Sole Source Aquifers. He is also encouraging the formation of a Grand County water advisory committee to focus on water issues beyond land use and the perspective of the water suppliers.
 - Groo places priority for action on the Watershed Protection Overlay District and Sole Source Aquifer, not necessarily the Water Use and Preservation Element of the General Plan. He feels that it would be inappropriate for TCV to comment on the Preservation Element because TCV was identified as an autonomous ‘neighboring jurisdiction’ that is not included in the Element.
 - Erley points out that as we get more efficient with water we lose water in the environment that is supporting wildlife and supplying a buffer for our resilience in times of drought.
 - Thompson mentions facebook chatter about “conserved” water from residents that then goes to hotels and other developments or could potentially be later taken by the state.
 - Bellagamba stresses that we are in a different scenario now that Lake Powell is so low. There are exemptions to the “use it or lose it” clause in Utah Water Law. For example, special circumstances such as drought or hardship. . She highlights the need to conserve water in order to meet the Compact requirements for the lower basin. This is the worst water record by far on record, so this is an important year to conserve.
 - O’Brien is very supportive of reducing the amount of water that we use despite the complexity of the issue.
 - Stock is worried about losing all small scale local agriculture by implementing conservation if we don’t prioritize it through planning.
 - Erley points out that cattle and alfalfa use huge amounts of water in the Colorado River Basin.
 - O’Brien brings the discussion back to planning and protecting agriculture through planning and zoning while doing water savings in more densely populated areas.

PRIORITY ACTION REPORTS

4. Water Management Plan Priority Action List

- Water Rights - Groo
 - Groo is working on enforcement of our existing ordinances and bringing people into compliance who are out of it.

- Groo is working on revision for the Water Use Agreement Permit which will likely be before the Town Council in June. This will include some alterations to pave the way for a water metering program.
 - Groo spoke to Cash about our 40 year plan with the Division of Water Rights. Now, future 40 year plans will have to be done by an engineer and a new one should be in place before the expiration of the last 40 year plan. We have a 2049 end date on our 40 year plan. The town has filed change applications (year 2000) on our water rights, moving the points of diversion from the five original ranch wells to a point of diversion on each lot. Currently, when proof comes up, we simply file extensions rather than filing proof of use. The priority dates stay the same as the original rights.
 - Erley asks if our 40 year plan is already obsolete, perhaps we should think of revising it so that it is a functional plan for future governments to reference.
 - Groo says that we have to start moving towards proving our water use, either through metering, or surveying. He thinks a new plan might be a good idea. Cash mentioned a revision of the rules and requirements for the 40 year plan moving through the legislature this coming year.
- Well Metering – Stock/Groo/Honer
 - Stock has reached out to the Bureau of Reclamation Water SMART program. They need a basic cost estimate for a water metering program. She will work with Groo and Honer to come up with some basic program specifics.
 - Erley suggests a tiered roll out for a water metering program, say, start with a pilot program of 50 volunteer wells and try to get that grant funded and move on from there.
 - O’Brien mentions the “small scale, applied science” descriptions for the WaterSMART grant and how this may fit with that sort of program.
 - Bellagamba mentions the mantra “you cannot manage what you cannot measure” that is often mentioned in the Division of Water Rights world. This is very applicable to us.
 - Thompson agrees that the pilot program may be more palatable for folks concerned about being overly managed.
- Castle Creek – Hackley
 - Hackley will reach out to the local USGS people who installed the lower Castle Creek gages for ideas on funding sources.
- Aquifer Monitoring (UGS Program) – Stock/O’Brien
 - O’Brien reports on a field trip with Colton Lay (UDWQ), Greg Gavin (UGS), Sarah Stock, Pam Hackley, and Bob O’Brien. We visited the new monitoring well on Shafer Lane and discussed the state of the creek, diversions, water sampling, etc.
- Non-Potable Water for Cisterns – Groo
 - Groo mentions history related to a potential large capacity well on Shafer Lane and why this may not be a viable option for the Town to pursue.
- Grand County Watershed Protection Overlay District – O’Brien
 - No further updates.
- DRWi Appropriations Policy for CV – Erley
 - Erley is interested in looking at all the private property that could be re-zoned in the valley and what this water use could look like under different scenarios.

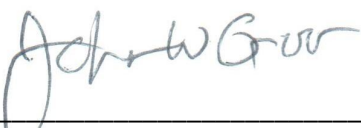
- O'Brien thinks that we are likely to have enough volume of water for a long while because there is so much water leaving the valley, our emphasis should be on having enough flow to preserve water quality.
 - Groo gives an update on a conversation he had with Cash on Ground water management plans. This is typically done after a triggering event or shortage and then UDWRi starts turning off water rights based on priority. If there is no harm being done, no rights get turned off. An appropriations policy is different from a Groundwater Management Plan.
 - Stock will compile some spatial data to try to answer these questions: How much development potential is there on private land outside of the town in Castle Valley? What is the corresponding water use according to current UDWRi policy? How much potential is there on federal lands for increased water use under different privatization scenarios?
 - O'Brien mentions Pitkin County in Colorado that has a plan that anticipates the conversion of federal lands to private and has developed zoning for that scenario.
- Explore options for protection of surplus water- Bellagamba
 - Bellagamba thinks that we are in a good place because we are a public water supplier with municipal rights. These have a 50 year forfeiture. Division of Water Rights cannot do forfeiture any more, it is done through the courts. She believes we have the potential to apply for "non-use," but need more information from Cash.
 - Groo thinks that the current statutory framework is shifting with water shortages coming and we should explore creative options to demonstrate use of our surplus water.
 - WAC has a general discussion of water banking and all of the holes that we have in our knowledge.

ADJOURNMENT

O'Brien moves to adjourn 10:48 AM.

For Meeting Packets go to: <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/index.html> Government: select "Cites"
Entity: select "Castle Valley" Body: select "Town of Castle Valley" Select this meeting and click on "Download attachments"

Contact information: Sarah Stock, wateragent@castlevalleyutah.com



Chair's Signature

June 8th, 2026

Date