

**WATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**MONDAY, August 10<sup>th</sup> 2026. AT 9:00 A.M.**  
**CASTLE VALLEY TOWN BUILDING - 2 CASTLE VALLEY DRIVE**

\*\*This meeting is 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 9:02 AM, and Stock called the roll.

Water Committee Members Present: John Groo, Sue Bellagamba, Ryan Anderson

Water Committee Present on Zoom:

Water Committee Absent: Pam Hackley, Dave Erley, Bob O'Brien,

Present at the anchor site: Sarah Stock, Egmont Honer, Laura Cameron, Don Montoya, Faylene Roth

Present on zoom: Harry Holland, Kinde Nebeker, David Berrey, Laurel Wright, Emily Lewis

**REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING**

1. Open Public Comment

- Harry Holland reports that the Utah Division of Wildlife and SITLA are negotiating a land sale on some big parcels of land just east of the watershed up in the La Sals.
- Laura Cameron brings up questions about a possible water rights exchange with those SITLA parcels.

2. Approval of Minutes

- WAC meeting June 8th, 2026
  - Belagamba highlights a statement summarizing what Groo discussed in the last meeting, "Our water rights are perfected and under current water law, cannot be taken away." Bellagamba wants to clarify that *Town* Water Rights are not subjected to forfeiture in this circumstance because we are municipal water supplier and subject to a 40 year plan.
  - Postponed vote for approval until a quorum is present

**NEW BUSINESS**

3. Appoint a co-chair for the WAC

- Postponed until next meeting

4. Presentation by Emily Lewis on Water Marketing Strategies

- Starts at 9:14
- Lewis, water attorney working with Culp and Kelley LLP & CK BlueShift
- The Town of Castle Valley is in a unique position of having more water than we need.
  - Utah's Water Banking framework- 2020 Utah Law - Sunsets in 2030
    - Goal 1: Lessen administrative load for change applications with the State Engineer
    - Goal 2: Facilitate in-stream flows and allow greater flexibility for this (additionally a new 2022 in-stream flow statute)
    - Two models:
      - Statutory Water Bank - can work well where there is a lot of activity moving water around each year. Large administrative burden, broader pool of potential applicants

- Contract Water Banking - Leases between 2 and 5 parties, may be more applicable for Castle Valley to explore
- Utah generally administers surface and groundwater rights separately. Conjunctive management (combining the two) is only used in a few places in the State.
  - Currently, you cannot mix surface and groundwater in a bank
- A groundwater bank could hold or lease groundwater rights, but protecting Castle Creek's surface runoff would likely require the surface right holders to participate directly, or a separate surface-water bank or instream flow filing
- Options for protecting unused water
  - Change application on water rights to a water-banking use
  - 40 year Public Water Supplier Protections (Lewis says this is probably our best way of protecting our water)
    - We need to show a need for all of the water rights based on growth protections.
    - There are laws that allow for "surplus exchanges" of surplus rights (according to the 40 year plan).
  - Filing non-use applications. These last 5-7 years, you can apply to extend. You can still use this water under certain circumstances
    - This may be good if we have more water rights in our portfolio than our 40 year plan projects.
  - "Global Change Applications" have been used in irrigation companies for some time, the state engineer is beginning to use these for municipalities
  - Instream flow protections
- If we don't have the right mix of supply and demand, the water banking tools may not serve us. Our municipal structure allows for flexible use in the valley, which is one benefit of water banking. To make this worth our time, we would need to bring in more players.
- Well Metering and Funding:
  - Individual well metering provides the usage data underlying both water-banking accounting and instream-flow administration
  - As required by state law, we should have a meter on each point of diversion (including wells)
  - Weber Basin Conservancy District has a "pinging" system for secondary meters (irrigation canals), which collects radio signals from meters intermittently and broadcasts them to the hub (Contact: John Perry, Weber Basin)
- Instream Flow: new legislation in 2022, with updates in 2023, and additional legislation in 2026
  - You can file to have a water right protected for instream flow purposes.
  - Water rights operate on a priority date, including for instream flows.
  - The vast majority of these have been used for storage - so bringing flows to the Great Salt Lake or Lake Powell. Instream flows for storage might run in October, whereas instream flows for environmental purposes might run in August.
  - It is much more common to change water rights from a surface point of diversion to groundwater diversion. The reverse, groundwater to surface, isn't common (though perhaps this is what TCV could try for instream flows).
- Are we interested in piloting a groundwater conservation easement? These exist in Southern Colorado (San Luis Valley) and New Mexico. These might be an interesting way to keep our aquifer in safe yield. There would be potential for a state-based tax credit.
  - Roth: Could residential lots without wells, or unused water rights, be a source for conservation easements?

- Groo asks if there could be a path towards considering this area with conjunctive management.
  - Lewis states that there are tools for us to do this. We can ask for a distribution order area from the State Engineer (different from a Groundwater Management Plan). A distribution order comes up in areas with discord to come to clarity on who gets shut off and when, and can look at the systems as a whole.
  - Stock mentions that the creek water rights tend to have significantly older priority than the town's groundwater rights.
  - Presentation ends at 10:09
- WAC discusses the presentation:
  - Montoya brings up all the private rights in the valley and looks to Boulder, Colorado who is implementing conservation easements for riparian recovery. Mentions the potential for Castle Creek to thrive as a riparian corridor
  - Cameron asks for clarity about "water speculation."
  - Belagamba states that we have to consider if we are working with our water attorney or hiring Culp and Kelly on this.
  - Belagamba highlights the potential for using the "dedicated water" statute for instream flows for storage, which may be helpful since we have Lake Powell downstream.

## **PRIORITY ACTION REPORTS**

### **5. Water Management Plan Priority Action List**

- Water Rights - Groo
  - No updates
- Well Metering – Stock/Groo/Honer
  - Stock reiterates that it is state law to meter all diversions (wells) in the State.
  - Wright asks if users would have to pay for the water if such a program came into existence.
  - Groo answers no, it's simply for information on how much water is used.
- Castle Creek – Hackley
  - No updates
- Aquifer Monitoring (UGS Program) – Stock/O'Brien
  - No updates
- Non-Potable Water for Cisterns – Groo
  - No updates
- Grand County Watershed Protection Overlay District – O'Brien
  - No updates
- DRWi Appropriations Policy for CV – Stock
  - Stock presents on findings from research exploring water rights and private land parcels in the Castle Valley watershed and outside of the Town boundary. She is trying to answer the question: given current UDWRi appropriation policies, how much water could be appropriated if all the parcels of land in the watershed were subdivided. How does this compare to current water use? Are there any avenues that the Town of Castle Valley can take to protect our water from overuse?
  - She describes the current appropriation policy, where each lot, regardless of size, has a maximum appropriation potential, which varies based on area and elevation (6.73 AF in

the lower and mid valley, 4.73 AF in Castleton and up, 2 AF in Willow Basin). There is also the potential for fixed time applications for larger water rights.

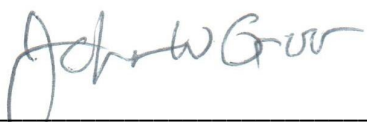
- Water in Mason Draw is being diverted over to Wilson Mesa and out of the watershed (209 AF), we would want to work to avoid other transbasin diversions like this in the future.
  - There are large chunks of private land in Castleton (Doles Ranch) which could be subdivided and increase water allocations and use.
  - Groo highlights the current policy from UDWRi, which states that all new water users in the Town should seek water rights from the Town.
  - Stock highlights the concern that the surface rights to the creek are much older than the town's groundwater rights. Potential solutions to the problem could include securing old water rights or working on some sort of aquifer recharge project to protect against a future where there is less infiltration through the losing stretch of Castle Creek. This could use high flows, but would perhaps have to be located outside of the creek channel since the creek is essentially a ditch connecting parties who hold the water rights.
  - Belagamba expresses interest in finding existing old impoundments to use for this purpose.
  - Groo, the WAC, and Montoya continue to discuss
- Explore options for protection of surplus water- Bellagamba
    - Bellagamba asks what the next steps are
    - Groo responds that we should answer the questions that Emily asked of us, get a sense of priorities in this regard
    - Belagamba will reach out to Lewis for the presentation to share
    - Stock asks about demand management and if the state would be interested in using or accounting for our surplus ground water.
    - Bellagamba responds that it is likely that the state would want to see actual cuts to water use, not just paper water rights accounting, since the water is currently unused, but that accounting is important.
  - Anderson mentions that he will be gone for three months, asks if we should get someone else on for the PLUC.
  - Groo responds that if there is someone with interest, it would be great to keep the PLUC in the loop on our conversations.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Groo moves to adjourn at 10:54 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](mailto:wateragent@castlevalleyutah.com)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair's Signature

September 14, 2026

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date