

# **SANTA FE CITY & COUNTY 5-YEAR PLANNING CYCLE WATER PLAN**

Summary of Process Recommendations from Public Outreach, 2020

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*“Water is an emergency of the slow-moving kind.”*

- Session participant, 2020

## **I. BACKGROUND**

The City of Santa Fe Water Division (City) and Santa Fe County Utilities (County) have initiated a science-based, community informed, five year planning cycle to develop long range water resource management plans. This five year planning process will culminate with a water resource plan extending as far as 2100.

In September and October 2020, following the completion of a public engagement plan by the authors of this report, the City and County collaborated to conduct joint public outreach to better understand the needs and preferences of City and County residents with respect to the water planning process.

The goals of public engagement were:

1. To offer information on water use, supply, and challenges in the Santa Fe watershed.
2. To understand the values and priorities of citizens with regard to water.
3. To gather general input, reactions, and recommendations specific to the City and County’s process of implementing the 5-year water resources planning cycle.

Two informational webinars were held October 19 and 20, followed by three public input sessions with breakouts held October 25, 26 and 29. The days and times of all meetings varied to accommodate those who prefer weekdays or weekends, daytime or evening times.

Forty-two (42) City and County residents participated in the webinars, and eighteen (18) participated in the public input sessions. Those who attended included elected officials, hydrologists and other technical experts, local government staff, citizens and representatives from non-profits, environmental organizations, and neighborhood associations.

This report provides a brief overview of public engagement outcomes and summarizes public input and recommendations specific to the City and County planning process offered by participants during the two webinars and the three breakout sessions listed above. Responses to other outreach efforts (described below) are only included and discussed in this document if they pertain explicitly to the planning process, i.e., responses focused on public values, priorities, and perspectives regarding water supply and demand, water sources, etc. are not included in this report.

## **II. PUBLIC OUTREACH METHODS**

Substantial efforts were made to engage the full range of water users in the area through a variety of different mechanisms, including informational inserts and postage-paid short-survey postcards distributed inside monthly city utility bills, a widely distributed electronic survey, and a series of two informational webinars and three in-depth breakout sessions designed to focus on the proposed planning process.

Due to necessary public health restrictions associated with the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, all public meetings were conducted virtually as online webinars and video conferences. While all events were accessible by phone, this may have created unintentional barriers to participation for some city and county residents who can more easily—or simply prefer to—attend in-person meetings.

The City and County announced the planning process and opportunities for public engagement through ads placed in local newspapers, social media posts, and email outreach to partners and stakeholders in the region. A press release was submitted to City and County media outlets but, to our knowledge, was not published.

Despite limitations associated with the pandemic, there was an overall high level of engagement with the City and County's combined outreach efforts:

- 1,931 individuals completed and returned the short-survey postcard.
- 678 individuals completed and submitted the online survey.
- 42 individuals attended the introductory webinars.
- 18 individuals participated in the in-depth breakout sessions.

*“We need a more nerdy group to talk through these issues.”*

- Session participant, 2020

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

We would like to commend the City and County for hosting public meetings that were informative, transparent, and welcoming. It was clear to us that City and County staff involved in this process are genuinely interested in stakeholder perspectives and input and deeply committed to developing a well-considered long-term water resource plan for the community.

We would also like to acknowledge the unusual circumstances in which this work is being undertaken. This is no small task under normal circumstances. Add to the expected list of challenges (funding, staff capacity, etc.) a full-blown pandemic and associated public health restrictions on activities such as in-person meetings, and the goal of creating a stakeholder-informed water resource plan suddenly becomes exponentially more complex. Our results in 2020 were impressive given the restrictions, but perhaps the greatest challenge was achieving a broad representation of the demographics in the area. We will discuss this below. Further, if restrictions continue into 2021, limitations on public gatherings will undoubtedly increase the challenge of (1) engaging a high number of stakeholders; (2) achieving a level of diverse engagement that feels fully representative of the community (e.g., diversity in race, age, income, gender, district, etc.); and (3) keeping those who show up consistently engaged throughout the process.

We kept these considerations top of mind as we drafted the general process recommendations below. The following recommendations are based on public input and shared perspectives during both webinar and breakout sessions, as well as on our own experience throughout this initial stage of the process. *[Note: See section V, “Next Steps,” below for our suggestions on how to prioritize public engagement activities in the coming year.]*

**Aspirations:** We recommend the City and County consider the five-year planning document a “living document” that is regularly consulted rather than left sitting on a shelf. The water resources plan that ultimately emerges from this process will ideally be reviewed and updated on a regular basis (e.g., quarterly or bi-annually), with content that:

- Is factual, science-based and clear in its presentation.
- Tells the story, including the history and arc of water planning in the area that illustrates the commitment and achievement in the mid-90s to reduce per capita consumption, etc.
- Engages full demographics of area, including students.
- Bases the plan on expressed public values.

**Early, effective, committed engagement:** We commend the City and County for ensuring public engagement early in the process, and urge you to continue engaging stakeholders at regular intervals throughout the five year planning period so that they can track progress, seek out responses to questions or concerns, and contribute to plan design, parameters, etc.

- Offer clear, relevant information in a variety of formats and forums
- Listen and learn from public perspectives and input.
- Create a dialogue to the extent possible between City/County and citizens so that understanding and trust is fostered
- Be open to public concerns and possible criticism as the process continues to unfold; take the time to respond to concerns.
- Create an opportunity for those with expertise or interest in a particular topic to contribute—e.g., through a workgroup, an expert panel, advisory committee, public outreach volunteer, etc.: “We need a more nerdy group to talk through these issues.”

**Partners:** We urge the City and County to partner with those who can multiply outreach and help advocate for the planning process. We suggest that the City and County maintain and regularly update an email list of local partners and send out regular updates (e.g. monthly) that include any specific needs or requests—for example, including the link to the electronic survey in their own organizational newsletters and other communication channels. Whenever possible City and County staff can attend partner events to build relationships and show support and respect for the work they are doing. Mutuality is key in nurturing partnerships. Potential partners might include, among others:

- Local, state, possibly federal agencies.
- Non-profits and other local organizations.
- Churches and religious or faith-based organizations (e.g. the Interfaith Alliance).
- Educational institutions including public and private institutions (e.g., Santa Fe Community College, the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), St. Johns’ College, etc.).
- Local business community.
- Neighborhood groups, specifically HOAs.

**Diverse and Inclusive Representation:** The City and County have expressed the goal of developing a planning process that is informed by the community and representative of the full spectrum of diversity, including race, gender, income, age, district, etc. As we expressed above, the current public health crisis and associated restrictions on public gatherings complicate this goal. Being limited to online video conferencing for public discussions means that participation will inevitably be focused on a limited subset of residents. Beyond these (temporary) limitations, however, we should note that regardless of diverse participation associated with race, income, or district, younger people (under the age of 50) were notably missing in all public meetings. With these considerations in mind, we make the following recommendations:

- Recognize that video conference events are not easily accessible to all residents, and that, as such, input gathered during these sessions is only as representative of the population as the subset of participants who join the call.
- Brainstorm new and innovative outreach methods that specifically target younger age groups. This may require different methods for different age groups, e.g., 18-30 versus 31-40, and 40-50.
- Continue to seek out new avenues that provide a wide range of public engagement options.
- Focus outreach efforts on reaching those diverse communities, through regular outreach channels and with particular emphasis on those partners (churches, non-profits, community groups, etc.) that already have connections with those diverse communities.

- Track public engagement by district and demographics to help ensure the City and County understand how to redirect or better target outreach efforts to ensure public input is fully representative of all City and County residents.

**Seek Out Diverse Community Values:** Understanding that decisions about water supply and management need to be based on a variety of data, projections, and models, participants asked that community values in all their diversity be given high priority:

- Public values shared through City and County public engagement opportunities should inform the planning process.
- Because no single public engagement event is likely to attract attendees who are fully representative of every affected City and County district and wide-ranging demographics, the planning process would ideally conduct continuous, extensive outreach throughout the 5-year planning period to accurately and fully identify priority values throughout the planning area.
- Understanding that Santa Fe City and County residents represent a wide range of interests, priorities, and values, it will be important for planners to provide context when inviting participants to identify values that are at the core of their vision for a healthy water future for the area. Although all interests cannot be equally satisfied in a water planning process, it is critical that all values be respected and included in discussions and decision-making.

**Communication Methods:** In order to ensure successful outreach to the full range of locations and demographics represented in the City and County—including race and ethnicity, age, income, etc.—and per our Public Engagement Plan (submitted August 2020), we recommend implementing a comprehensive and cohesive public outreach campaign that utilizes the full range of communications tools and channels available to the City and County and funnels traffic to a central information hub—ideally, a website that is regularly updated. This recommendation is also reflected in several comments from public input session participants. Communications tools and channels include:

- Traditional print as well as electronic media outlets.
- Radio.
- Printed materials sent through the USPS, including utility bill inserts, postcards, etc.
- Email updates (see “Partners” above).
- Social media—City, County, and partner channels including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.
- Websites, including both City and County “information hub” websites and possibly partner websites (see “Partners” above).
- Bilingual media outlets, as available.
- Church bulletins and newsletters.
- Teachers and other education professionals associated with local public grade schools as well as higher learning institutions (e.g., colleges).

**Engagement ideas:** As part of a comprehensive outreach plan (mentioned above), we recommend the City and County plan a wide variety of regularly scheduled public engagement opportunities, including the following:

- Regular information public meetings to provide project updates and answer questions.
- Surveys, both electronic and printed as funding allows.
- Facebook Live link to interactive webinar with charismatic spokesperson.
- Field trips, ideally in-person—depending on public health restrictions linked to the pandemic. Otherwise, “virtual” field trips with a presenter on-site and attendees via webinar should be explored as a possibility.

- Challenges, contests, and other creative incentives for public participation.
- Small, short-term goals to show accomplishments on a consistent and regular basis.
- Special outreach to schools, with educational opportunities to incentivize teacher and student engagement.
- Special outreach to newcomers.
- City and County attendance and participation in meetings, webinars, and other events hosted by local organizations, especially those that are partnering with the City and County in outreach efforts. Don't simply expect others to come to yours.

*“What is the plan? How much does it cost? What are the benefits? What are the associated co-benefits? If I can answer those questions at the end of the planning process and explain them to my neighbors, that’s my definition of success.”*

- Session participant, 2020

#### IV. BREAKOUT POLL RESULTS

During each of the three breakout sessions, a short poll was conducted that sought information on how attendees consume news and acquire information within their community. Eighteen (18) total attendees attended sessions and took the poll. We have included a list of poll questions and a brief analysis of responses below, followed by a few graphs to illustrate responses to select questions.

As discussed above, the input gathered during these sessions can only be as representative of the population as the subset of participants who join the call. Given the limited number of participants representing only a subset of Santa Fe City and County diversity, we would caution against making future outreach decisions based only on these polling data. While we do not have income or district location for participants who participated in these polls, it is notable that the average age of participants was likely well over 50. Subsequently, the responses below regarding how residents acquire news, from what sources, how often, etc., do not necessarily reflect the habits and preferences of younger people, perhaps especially those in the 18-30 age group who will be most impacted by this work.

1. **How often do you read the newspaper?**

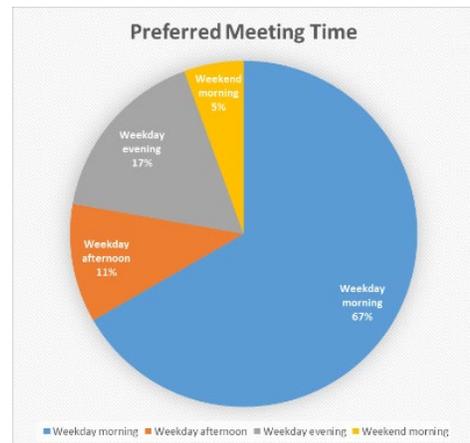
*Response:* Of the 18 responses to this question, 12 indicated they read the newspaper every day, 1 indicated 4-6 times a week, and 5 indicated 1-3 times a week.

2. **What newspapers do you read?**

*Response:* The Santa Fe New Mexican received 18 votes, the Santa Fe Reporter 10, and the Albuquerque Journal 3. Other selections included non-local, national newspapers.

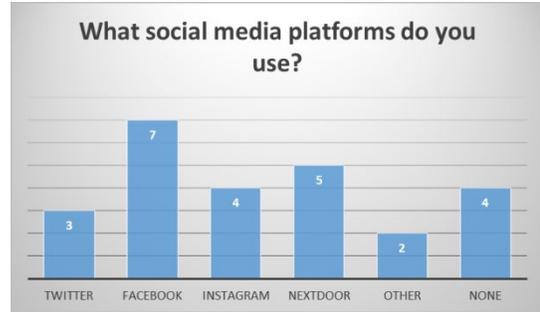
3. **What days and times would you prefer to attend meetings?**

*Response:* In terms of first choice selections, 12 out of 18 indicated weekday mornings were their preferred times, 2 selected weekday afternoons, 3 selected weekday evenings, and 1 selected weekend mornings.



**What social media platforms do you use?**

*Response:* Of the 18 responses, 4 indicated no use of social media. Among the 14 attendees who do use social media, Facebook emerged as the top choice (7), followed by NextDoor (5), then Instagram (4), Twitter (3), and other platforms (2).

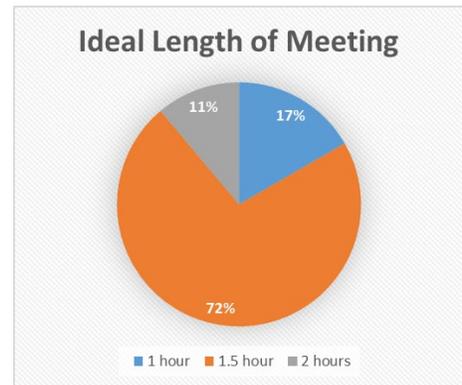


**4. How often are you on social media?**

*Response:* Responses here ranged from daily to never.

**5. Which City or County social media channels do you follow?**

*Response:* 13 responded none, while 3 follow a City channel and 2 follow a County channel.



**6. What length of meeting feels right for in-depth discussion?**

*Response:* Of the 18 who responded to this question, 13 selected 1.5 hours, 3 selected 1 hour, and 2 selected 2 hours.

**7. Are you enrolled in Alert Santa Fe?**

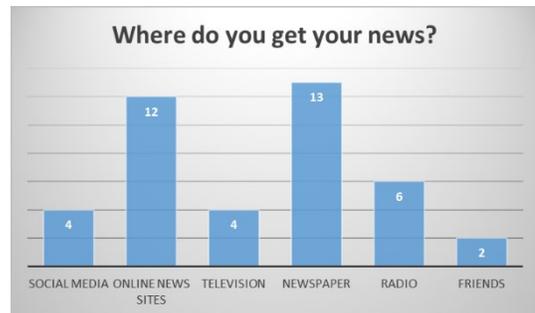
*Response:* Of the 18 who responded to this question, 10 said “yes,” 1 said “no,” and 7 said “Never heard of it.”

**8. How did you hear about the breakout sessions?**

*Response:* Among the 16 responses to this questions, email emerged as the top choice (9), followed by “other” (5), utility bill insert (3), “friend” (2), and newspaper ad (1).

**9. Where do you get your news?**

*Response:* Among the 18 people who responded to this question, “Newspaper” emerged as the top choice (13), followed by online news sites (12), radio (6), television (4), social media (4), friends (2), and “other” (1).



*“I can’t understand all this technical aquifer talk. Ordinary people understand ‘water myroses vs. take a shower.’”*

- Session participant, 2020

## V. NEXT STEPS

This first year of the 5-year planning cycle was a challenging one. The COVID virus drove all public engagement online, seriously restricting options and accessibility for all citizens to engage in the process. In spite of these challenges, the City and County rolled out their planning process in an open, respectful, and welcoming spirit. Although the numbers of people who participated in the City/County virtual public events were relatively low, those who participated were energetic and passionate. They offered a comprehensive and wide-ranging menu of options for the City and County to pursue as City and County officials implement the 5-Year Water Planning Cycle and develop a Water Resources Plan for the next 80+ years. Many participants offered their expertise and services as volunteers to advocate for and contribute to the planning process. It will be important to follow through with these participants as the City and County move through the stages of planning.

We understand that limitations of staff, funding, and time, as well as COVID restrictions, make adopting all these suggestions impossible. We also believe that a top priority in future years needs to focus on targeting certain demographics in order to equitably represent the diversity of the area. In this section, we suggest ways to prioritize some of the activities to bring the greatest benefit to the City-County efforts and maximize participation.

**We believe the action items listed below are both feasible in the coming year, and critical for continued public support:**

1. **Continue cooperation and coordination between City and County:** One of the most successful aspects of this first year's effort has been the development of a productive, mutually supportive relationship between the City and the County. This should be a top priority for implementing next steps.
2. **Compile comprehensive email lists of participants in past and present water planning efforts:** It is critical that City and County compile and maintain accurate, up to date lists from 2020 survey responses, online meeting attendees, and those who have participated in past events. This can be the basis for regular updates on water planning. Collect names and expertise of those offering services in the planning effort and reach out to them.
3. **Establish City-County website for one-stop information on water resources, planning and engagement opportunities.** Participants asked for a site where they could see updates, links to relevant information, announcements of upcoming events, etc. City and County websites would include links to this water resources and planning website.
4. **Develop graphics and maps:** Participants asked for more graphic presentation of water resource facts, conditions, forecasts, etc. in the area. These could be included in the website, in newsletters, presentations, etc., and would be particularly useful for those new to the water planning landscape, including youth and newcomers.
5. **Target and connect with partners:** Community partnership offers a way to maximize outreach with limited resources and increase the engagement of those populations, including youth, Spanish speakers, mid and lower income, Southside district, and others who were not represented adequately in the 2020 effort. Partners such as those below can disseminate information, surveys, and event announcements, and can host City-County staff to bring the reality of water issues to a wider range of demographics. Suggested partners for this first year of outreach can include:

- Santa Fe Community College (communications department and maybe others).
  - High schools (teachers of relevant science classes).
  - Santa Fe Indian School (for outreach to Native populations and input on particular needs).
  - Non-profits and community organizations (focus on Interfaith Alliance, Earth Care, Chainbreaker, Santa Fe Watershed Association, La Cienega Association, and others as time and resources allow).
  - City Councilors and County Commissioners (can include water planning updates in their newsletters).
6. **Conduct regular media outreach:** Begin to establish a water resource and planning presence on various media.
- Radio show “Eye on Water:” give regular updates, including early in 2021 a summary of year one public engagement.
  - “My View” for New Mexican: Write a piece summarizing year one public engagement (The New Mexican received top ranking when participants were asked how they received their news).
  - Facebook page and other social media (this may be something that high school or college students could help with).
7. **Update the public engagement plan:** Prior to beginning each year of the 5-year planning cycle, update the public engagement plan to maximize participation by a full representation of the area’s demographics.

*“What happens when my well is contaminated with sewage?  
That’s why I’m here.”*  
- Session participant, 2020

## VI. APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT INPUT & SUGGESTIONS

To insure that the voices of those who participated in the public engagement process are captured in detail, we offer below a compilation of comments taken from the recordings and summaries of the online meetings, organized by theme:

**Participants urged for greater outreach and provided the following ideas about how to communicate with the public:**

- Local newspapers, both in-print and online.
- Posted mail: participants noted that materials sent through the mail tend to reach a much more diverse audience: “Postal mail is probably the only medium that would reach every address in the City and County.”
- Radio is important, with bilingual stations a great tool to reach Spanish-speaking residents.
- Email emerged as a preferred means of communication; City and County need to maintain a current list, update regularly and communicate often.
- Create a single website with all information about the water planning process.
  - City and County websites should include water planning pages;
  - Website can include archives, upcoming events, video links, etc.
  - “I can subscribe to a website, and can find others with the same interest I have.”

- Water bill inserts are a sure way to reach most water customers in the area (with the exception of those who opt out of printed utility bills).
- Social media channels including Facebook, Nextdoor, Instagram.
- The Santa Fe Bulletin Board.
- Facebook live enables email links so that people interested in water planning can tune in, hear updates, ask questions (refer to the Forest Service model for live forest fire updates, with a personable presenter, engaging, able to create a following). Have a trusted credible spokesperson for water planning, someone who can build a following, such as the fireman who spoke for the Forest Service in wildfire crisis.
- “Eye on Water” weekly radio show, Christine Chavez, give regular updates/outreach.

**Participants identified many potential partners and strategies for increasing outreach:**

- Churches and other faith communities.
  - The Interfaith Leadership Alliance was established in 2007 to address social and economic injustice in our community. The ILA partners with schools, community agencies and social service organizations to bring greater resources and support to the Santa Fe community. <https://ilasantafe.org>
  - Church electronic newsletters and bulletins.
- Non-profits: use their public information people as partners to disseminate info in their newsletters, through social media, etc.
- All who purchased city business licenses (contact Rich Brown for the list).
- County commissioners and City Councilors often maintain good email lists and send out regular newsletters to their constituents.
- Neighborhood associations and HOAs.
- Individual organizations: consider inviting organizations to each provide input as a group:
  - William Mee, Agua Fria Village
  - Wildearth Guardians
  - Sierra Club
  - Old Santa Fe Association
  - Santa Fe Watershed Association (Andy Otto indicated he had a good outreach list and was happy to share/collaborate)
  - Water Coalition
- Consider two audiences:
  - General public
  - Those with relevant special interests, expert knowledge, or professional skills who can contribute at a technical level, through work groups or as individual volunteers.
- Local government internal channels
  - County, City, other agencies can spread word internally among staff
- SF County Community Services dept
  - Joshua Anzures – Chimayo Senior Center – 505-351-4686
  - Josie Atilano – Santa Cruz Senior Center – 505-753-8598
  - Ida Lucero – Edgewood Senior Center – 550-281-2515
  - Lula Wilson – El Rancho Senior Center – 505-455-2195
  - Esperanza Salazar – Eldorado Senior Center – 505-466-1039
- Local high schools and colleges.
- Contractors and builders associations.
- Annual or semi-annual community meetings, through NGOs, neighborhood orgs, etc.
- Tribes need personal contact by City and County and development of processes for their involvement that are respectful and appropriate.

**Participants provided the following suggestions when asked how the City and County could sustain meaningful public involvement and avoid planning fatigue:**

- Promise the public that this plan will not sit on the shelf, like so many that came before, and that it will be implemented; make it a living document.
- Be sure the plan is factual and believable; based on science.
- Be sure to involve both citizens and experts up front before you have set parameters that may exclude particular interests.
- Use maps and pictures, not just graphs and charts. For example, a map of aquifers would help.
- Offer info in simple terms, for example: Do residents have to choose between watering their rose bushes or taking two showers a week?
- Stay in close touch, educate, remind residents frequently of the big picture and scope of plan.
- Following a public engagement event, follow up with those who participated. Show them you care and that they were heard.
- Find creative ways to educate different groups, such as youth (“x percentage of your body is water,” etc.—example for educational opportunity provided by one participant).
- Set smaller goals that you can accomplish on a shorter timeframe, and communicate those successes to stakeholders on a regular basis: “look what we did with your help, etc.”
- Tell a story, show the arc of progress. For example, reference back to what SFe did in the 90s to significantly reduce the per capita use of water (big success story).
- Organize a “water conservation challenge” where different stakeholders can show what they’ve done, for example:
  - City repairs leaks in water lines saving x million gallons a year.
  - Builders Association reports 10 new grey water systems this month, which is equivalent to x thousands of gallons in aquifer water infiltration per month.
- Get community involved, encourage participation by having giveaways, or maybe get more feedback by having surveys with incentives.
- Incorporate values in planning, ask people how they value water.
- Provide special attention and more education for newcomers who have little context.
- Let people know that you hear them and honor their priorities.
- Offer field trips: La Cieneguilla for instance, below WWTP.
- Attend, present, listen at other people’s meetings. For example, the Acequia Association, etc. Don’t expect people to come to your events if you’re not willing and interested in going to theirs.

**Participants list the following specific areas of concern:**

- Groundwater, especially modeling.
- Nuclear contaminants coming from LANL moving through the geologic formations that may eventually reach groundwater and surface water sources.
- Contamination of groundwater and private wells with septage.
- Role of EPA and State Environment Department in addressing water quality issues.
- Relationship between SF watershed and statewide issues like agriculture, groundwater contamination, etc.

**Participants provided the following responses when asked how they would measure success in the planning process:**

- High percentage of citizens involved.
- Everyone’s concerns were addressed; City/County officials “listened to me” and “I had an impact on the plan, my priorities were honored.”

- Successful planning process presents the complexity of the hydrologic systems and considers the long-term impacts of each scenario.
- “If I can say: ‘I know there is a plan. I believe that the plan will benefit me. I will support the plan at the polls when called upon to do so.’”
- “What is the plan? How much does it cost? What are the benefits? What are the associated co-benefits? If I can answer those questions at the end and explain them to my neighbors, that’s success.”
- Clarity of messages from City and County about decision-making processes and timelines for projects.
- Evidence of taking climate change and environmental impacts seriously, as top priorities.
- If there has been collaboration with neighboring and downstream communities like Cochiti Pueblo and Albuquerque to look at scenarios from a broader watershed level, with all the information we can incorporate, and to ensure consultation with all stakeholders.
- The City and County email boxes are not full of negative comments.

## VII. APPENDIX 2: MEETING NOTES

In this section, we provide links to online agendas for both webinars and breakout sessions, as well as notes for each of the three breakout sessions. While the Google Doc format for these documents enables easy access and download via electronic links, we recommend downloading each document and saving as Word documents in the appropriate filing system, for long-term guarantee of access.

1. **Webinars:** Two, 2-hour informational webinars were scheduled via Zoom. These meetings were designed primarily to provide background information regarding City and County water infrastructure, history of activities and improvements, and planned future activities. Presentations by City and County representatives were followed by a facilitated Q&A. [Webinar Agenda](#).
2. **Breakouts:** Three, 1.5-2-hour breakout discussion sessions were scheduled as Zoom video conferences. These sessions were specifically designed to optimize public engagement. A list of prepared questions helped guide the conversation. [Breakout Meeting Agenda](#).
  - a. Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 pm: [Meeting #1 Notes](#).
  - b. Monday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 am: [Meeting #2 Notes](#).
  - c. Thursday, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 5:30 pm: [Meeting #3 Notes](#).