



WATER COMMISSION MEETING

MONDAY, June 23, 2025

MINUTES

Monday, June 23, 2025

3:30 – 5:00 PM

Hearing Room

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Hilbert called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. and asked for a roll call.

PRESENT: Chair, Jack Hilbert (Dist. I)
Vice Chair, Donald Langley (Dist. I)
Regular Member James Eklund (Dist. I) (*remote*)
Regular Member Clark Hammelman (Dist. II)
Regular Member Roger Hudson (Dist. II)
Regular Member Jim Maras (Dist. II)
Regular Member Evan Ela (Dist. III)
Regular Member Mickey Conway (Dist. III)
Regular Member Harold Smethills (Dist. III)
At-Large Sean Tonner (*remote*)
At-Large Tricia Bernhardt

2. Approval of Water Commission Meeting Minutes from May 19, 2025

Chair Hilbert asked for comments or a motion to approve the May 19, 2025, Water Commission Meeting Minutes.

Mickey Conway moved to approve the May 19, 2025, meeting minutes.

RESULT: APPROVED

MOVER: Mickey Conway

SECONDER: Harold Smethills

AYES: Jack Hilbert, Donald Langley, James Eklund, Clark Hammelman, Roger Hudson, Jim Maras, Evan Ela, Mickey Conway, Harold Smethills, Sean Tonner, Tricia Bernhardt

NAYS: none

ABSTAIN: none

3. Referral Items for Possible Consideration – a “No Comment” will be provided for any and all items unless the Commission indicates otherwise

a. SB2024-070 – Pinecrest Community Church

Clark Hammelman reviewed the application to divide a 35-acre lot and split the water supply. He expressed concern over the proposal to install two acres of sod on one lot and three acres on the other without providing details on irrigation methods, sod type, or estimated water use. He recommended the Commission consider recommendations regarding guidelines to limit high water-use landscaping.

Harold Smethills supported this recommendation and raised additional concerns about the sustainability of commercial operations, such as a proposed dog kennel, that would rely on aquifers without renewable water access.

Staff was directed to relay these concerns to the Board of County Commissioners.

4. Discussion and Action Items

Kati Carter, Assistant Director of Planning Resources, informed the Commission that Mekorot's presentation was cancelled about a week prior due to ongoing events in the Middle East, and staff will continue to communicate with them to reschedule. Despite efforts, staff was unable to secure another presenter on such short notice.

She also clarified that water providers have been highly responsive and supportive in completing the county's water plan survey, countering any previous misconceptions about a lack of engagement.

5. Information Items

a. Mekorot Presentation

Cancelled; will be rescheduled.

b. Douglas County Water Plan Update

Will Koger from Forsgren Associates presented ongoing technical analysis related to Douglas County's projected population and water demands through 2050. He discussed the need to reconcile differing growth estimates—467,000 by 2050 (State Demographer) versus 484,000 by 2040 (County Plan)—and provided updates on the water provider survey, with 14 of 31 providers having submitted data and 12 more in progress, aided by the South Metro Water Supply Authority.

Bill Fronczak of LRE Water presented an update on the groundwater study focusing on the Denver Basin aquifers in unincorporated areas. He explained the Petra analysis of over 555 geophysical logs to determine available water in permeable net sands, noting early findings that the Arapahoe aquifer is the strongest producer. The study includes an interactive GIS and is 60% complete, with a technical memo expected early next year.

Commission members raised questions about how the collected data would inform future water usage projections and ensure long-term sustainability, particularly in relation to groundwater withdrawals and declining water levels. Clarification was requested on whether the Petra analysis covers both incorporated and unincorporated areas; it was confirmed that while the dataset is county-wide, the primary focus is on unincorporated regions due to municipal water rights.

Additional discussion addressed the apparent gap between legally available water and the actual volume recoverable from aquifers, which was attributed to geological variations such as the presence of clays limiting water flow from net sands. Commission members also expressed interest

in receiving interim findings and holding work sessions to better understand technical aspects as the study progresses.

6. Member Discussion

Tricia Bernhardt announced a potential two-hour educational site visit focused on Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR), to be led by Mark Marlowe of Castle Rock Water and their ASR expert. The session would showcase Castle Rock's ASR development and is tentatively planned for the week of July 21–30. Interested members were asked to contact Tricia, and Clark Hammelman suggested staff circulate details about the opportunity.

Tricia also asked about the reappointment process as her term ends in December. Staff clarified that the County Manager's Office will reach out to members later in the year to assess interest and coordinate reappointments with the Board of County Commissioners.

Harold Smethills proposed three policy issues for future Commission consideration: limiting non-functional or decorative grass on properties using wells in unincorporated areas; defining appropriate conditions for commercial activities on the aquifer; and prohibiting large-scale development from using the aquifer when municipal water is available, to prevent overuse and discourage avoidance of municipal tap fees. The Chair confirmed that these topics would be formally documented for future discussion and potential recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners.

Don Langley asked about the county's current population, which staff estimated at 370,000. He noted the projected 20-year growth of 100,000 seemed conservative given ongoing development. Don also asked about irrigation restrictions on wells; Evan Ela clarified that irrigation allowances depend on property size and well type.

7. Adjournment

Chair Hilbert declared the meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.