

Water Commission REGULAR MEETING

Excerpt from DRAFT Unapproved Minutes

April 17, 2025 – 5:30 PM

222 Laporte Ave., 1st Floor, Colorado River Room

1. CALL TO ORDER

- a. 5:31 PM

2. ROLL CALL

- a. **Board Members Present** (in person): Chairperson Jordan Radin and Commissioners Laura Chartrand, Paul Herman, Rick Kahn, Nick Martin, Nicole Ng, Greg Steed
- b. **Board Members Absent**: Commissioners James Bishop and Carson Madryga
- c. **Staff Members Present** (in person): Jill Oropeza, Katherine Martinez, Jesse Schlam, Kathryne Marko, Leslie Hill, Nicole Poncelet-Johnson
- d. **Staff Members Present** (online): Jen Authier, Michael Neale, Richard Thorp
- e. Guests: None

3. NEW BUSINESS

Regular Items

Michigan Ditch Forest Health and Pre-Fire Mitigation Project: Phase 2

The City owns Michigan Ditch, a critical water supply infrastructure located near Cameron Pass within Colorado State Forest State Park.

Watershed Program staff along with regional partners from the Colorado State Forest Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife recently completed a multi-phase Michigan Ditch Pre-Fire Mitigation Plan. The plan identifies forest thinning treatments that will help reduce the risk to the Michigan Ditch infrastructure and water supply from future large-scale wildfires.

The Watershed Program was recently awarded a \$1 million grant from the Colorado Department of Natural Resources to implement the project's Phase 2 (scheduled for 2026-2028), which will include up to an additional 180 acres of targeted forest treatments designed to create fuels breaks and reduce the risk of future large-scale wildfires reaching the ditch from the north and west.

Watershed Program Manager Richard Thorp presented the project's Phase 1 to the Water Commission last year. He returned to provide an overview of Phase 2 including the Forest Health and Pre-Fire Mitigation Project, and request a recommendation from Water Commission that City Council approve accepting the grant and entering into an intergovernmental agreement regarding the project's Phase 2 services.

The project is in strategic alignment with City Plan's Environmental Health Outcome and the City Council Priority to "protect community water systems in an integrated way to ensure resilient water resources and healthy watersheds."

Discussion Highlights: Commissioners commented on or inquired about various related topics including clarifying the grant is already approved; expense of hauling out timber (Mr. Thorp responded that the goal is to reduce fuel); a match of \$317,000 from the watershed protection budget (from the Water Fund's Utilities capital improvement fund); staff plans to apply for another grant this fall that if awarded would mean the Water Fund would not have to be used; clarifying that no other cities or other water providers are contributing money to the project; the observation that one state entity is giving a grant, and staff is processing it and giving that money to another state agency; whether the U.S. Forest Service is doing similar work (Mr. Thorp replied that they're not as it relates to this project, which is part of a larger landscape-level effort; Watershed Specialist Jared Heath presented the wildfire readiness project to the Water Commission last year).

Commissioner Herman moved for Water Commission to recommend that City Council formally approve of the City entering into the Intergovernmental Agreement Regarding Michigan Ditch Forest Health and Pre-Fire Mitigation Project Phase-2 Services through the Colorado State Forest Service and accepting the Colorado Department of Natural Resources' Colorado Strategic Wildfire Program Grant.

Commissioner Ng seconded the motion

Vote on the motion: **it passed unanimously, 7-0**

Minutes will be approved by the Chair and a vote of the Water Commission on May 15, 2025.