

**From:** [Webmaster](#)

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**Subject:** Water Update

## **Water News**

### **What's Happened in the Last Few Months**

#### **Short Summary**

**The Sandia Knolls Neighborhood Association Annual Meeting will be scheduled soon. Come find out what's going on in the neighborhood!**

1. Edgewood Planning and Zoning tabled their decision about whether to extend Campbell Ranch's preliminary plat approval for the first 92 homes of its 4,023 home subdivision until its February meeting. Sandia Knolls testified at that hearing and stated that we did not believe NM Water Services Company has enough water rights to serve the 400 current customers and the 750 homes it has contracted to serve in Campbell Ranch.
2. The Public Regulation Commission (PRC, which regulates utilities) held a pre-hearing meeting last Monday, where the Hearing Officer outlined the scope of the PRC case, how evidence from the 2006 case would be handled and laid out a calendar of events. Sandia Knolls is a party to that case. The PRC ordered that the case be re-advertised, so new protestants can join the case (see the East Mountain Telegraph for the legal notice), if they wish. After all sides present evidence (again) the case is scheduled to be heard in late May or early June. The PRC will decide if extending service into Campbell Ranch will impair NM Water Service Company's ability to furnish adequate, efficient and reasonable service.
3. The Office of the State Engineer (OSE, which regulates water) has just listed all the protestants in that case, and many people from Sandia Knolls are on the list of protestants. The OSE will decide if there is enough wet water to serve the new homes, and will also decide if NM Water Service Company has enough water rights to do what it proposes. NM Water Service has also applied to the OSE to add the new deep well drilled 2 years ago on Campbell Ranch and to add a large storage tank to serve Campbell Ranch.

#### **More Details**

Sandia Knolls has been involved in making sure there is enough water to serve the Knolls for the last 7 years. Our last efforts culminated in 2006, when the Public Regulation Commission (which regulates

utilities) and the Office of the State Engineer (which regulates water) issued rulings that stated that all the water rights owned by the former utility had to be passed to NM Water Services Company, the current utility that runs the utility system which serves us because there were no excess water rights. Sandia Knolls went through a lengthy legal case, at great expense, to get that ruling in 2006.

Since then, Campbell Ranch has contracted with NM Water Services Company, the utility that serves us, to provide water for 750 new homes to be built on Campbell Ranch using the water rights that are owned by the utility. There are three separate legal actions that have come from this contract (Edgewood approval of their preliminary plat, the PRC application to extend water lines into Campbell Ranch and the OSE application for permission to use that much water).

Campbell Ranch is a large proposed subdivision of 4.023 homes (about 10,000 people) that will be concentrated along North 14, starting at La Madera Road. Campbell Ranch annexed itself to Edgewood, which means that Edgewood has jurisdiction over the area, not Bernalillo County. The first area to be built will have 6 homes per acres, a density comparable to Rio Rancho. Such a large subdivision obviously has big implications for many things other than water: traffic on North 14, schools, water treatment, commercial development, fire protection, to name a few.

One of the key arguments is how much water is needed for each house. Experts disagree on that point --- ranging from .25 (the number Campbell has used), to .33 (a common usage amount for the mountains to .6 acre feet (the standard Bernalillo County has set for new subdivisions. Sandia Knolls has argued that current customers should be able to keep the County standard for use, since to reduce that level could put us at a disadvantage when compared to other homes nearby. Our current use, however, is closer to .3 acre feet per home.

Another important point is how much water there really is in the East Mountains. The geology is very complex, and hydrologist are not able to answer that question with any certainty. However, there are a number of water studies which point to stable water levels in some areas and declining water levels in other areas of the East Mountains.

Sandia Knolls Neighborhood Association voted in 2005 at a full meeting to take legal action to maintain the water rights in the utility, so that current customers would have adequate water. That legal action cost \$22,000 and required extensive fund-raising to pay for the legal and hydrological support needed. In the summer of 2008, another public Sandia Knolls meeting reaffirmed that decision, and clarified that the Neighborhood Association opposes spreading the existing water rights over an added 750 homes (to less than 400 now served).

There is an active volunteer Water Committee that does this work on behalf of the Knolls, and major decisions are approved by the Sandia Knolls Neighborhood Association Board. And for all of you who have volunteered (and there have been many --- doing everything from trying to get certain documents, to writing summaries for the mailbox information boxes to all the people who have helped with fund-raising) ----- we thank you for all of your help.

2009 may be a big year. We may have to hire a lawyer again, which means more fund-raising. And if there is a lawyer in the Knolls who can give us advice, that would be very helpful. If anyone wants to

help us prepare for the February Edgewood Planning and Zoning meeting, call any of the officers of the Neighborhood Association, Kathy McCoy or Janet Winchester-Silbaugh. See the web site for phone numbers and contact information.

**If you have comments or thoughts, please contact us. The annual Sandia Knolls Neighborhood Association meeting will be scheduled sometime soon, so please come and find out what's going on!**

Janet Winchester-Silbaugh  
on behalf of the Water Committee