City water expert seeks public input

Moab area water plan calls for more community involvement

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By Ashley Bunton

More public input is sought on the Water Resource Management Plan for the Moab area.

Mill Creek flows through the Flat Pass/Steel Bender trail.
A December meeting of the Water Resource Management Plan Committee Focus Group discussed recent efforts by consultants hired by the City of Moab to try to increase public engagement.

“We value public input on this,” consultant Ben Miner said. “We want to know what you think. Please send emails, phone calls. I know there’s some information on some links on the Moab City website. Let us know what you think we want. We want your understanding as well.”

A list of resources about the Water Resource Management Plan and consultancy work can be found on the city website at tinyurl.com/WaterPlanVoice along with instructions on how to send an email with any questions about water in the Moab area.

“As consultants we know a lot but generally, we don’t know as much as we’d like sometimes about the community,” Miner said.

Miner, who is the project manager from the consultant firm Hansen, Allen and Luce, gave a presentation to the focus group with a PowerPoint about the vision for the water resource management plan and work progression.

“I think everyone here probably understands the Moab area, Grand County and this area, generally has been going through sustained growth,” he said.

Miner said growth includes population growth as far as new residents and the new homes being built each year.

“Also, you have a very large tourism segment,” Miner said. “Obviously with Arches and the national parks and the Colorado River and in many of the wonderful opportunities for recreation, there’s a lot of recreation move-in, and there’s hotels and nightly rentals, and so that’s a big part of it. And so with those things, there has been increasing water demand. And there has been a concern among some folks as to the water supply. And so, is the water supply going to be adequate as their communities grow?”

The focus group is a coalition of representatives from the City of Moab, Grand Water
and Sewer Service Agency, Moab Irrigation Company and San Juan Spanish Valley Special Service District.

Moab City Engineer Chuck Williams said that the water coalition was formed to bring the area’s largest water utility providers together.

“We’ve been coordinating on things and decided that one of the things we should undertake would be a resource management plan that would help us ensure as much resiliency as we could for the next 100 years in terms of water in our area,” Williams said.

Also on the consultant’s team is Olivia Cvetko from Logan Simpson Design based in Salt Lake City. Cvetko spoke during the meeting about the work done so far “in the public eye and involving people as much as possible.”

“We’re hired to do the public engagement piece of this,” Cvetko said. “It’s an interesting one because a lot of the public involvement ... is on the informational basis, kind of saying, what are your big questions?”

Big questions like “How much water do tourists use? Are hotels wasteful? And do we have water for new development? If not, what are we willing to give up? What are our priorities for where that water is going?” she said.