

MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED MINUTES**

Thursday, March 10, 2022 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm Via Zoom

Black Bold Italics = Board vote *Blue Italics = action commitment*

Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:05 P.M.

<u>_x_</u> Steve Bardwell	<u>_x_</u> Brian Hammer	<u>_x_</u> Gary Stiler
<u>_x_</u> Stacy Doolittle	<u>_x_</u> Janet Johnston	<u>_x_</u> Laraine Turk
<u>_x_</u> David Fick	<u>_x_</u> Sarah Kennington	<u>_x_</u> Cathy Zarakov
<u>_x_</u> Pat Flanagan	<u>_x_</u> Arch McCulloch	

• Introduction of Guests and Board Directors

Return guests Helen Jeong and Blanca Villalobos joined us and each shared some personal background. Blanca is now working for the Center for Conservation Biology at Palm Desert. Helen is gathering information about conservation issues in the Morongo Basin for a client that hopes to build a museum, boutique hotel and restaurant in Joshua Tree.

• Agenda approval

Steve moved the Desert Symposium topic earlier in the agenda as Pat will have to leave at 6. The Agenda with that change was accepted by consensus.

• Minutes from February 10, 2021 BOD meeting

Steve moved to approve the February minutes. Sarah seconded, and all were in favor. (11-0)

• Treasurer's Report

Cathy reported that the CD has matured and we could have the same interest rate and more flexibility by changing to a money market account. This will require updated information regarding our non-profit status including memorializing Directors and officers in the minutes. Thus Cathy listed the names and positions to be recorded in these minutes: Steve Bardwell, President; David Fick, Vice President; Laraine Turk, Secretary; Cathy Zarakov, Treasurer; Pat Flanagan, Director; Brian Hammer, Director; Janet Johnston, Director; Sarah Kennington, Director; Arch McCulloch, Director; and Gary Stiles, Director.

Cathy moved that all MBCA officers, that is, President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer have signing privileges on all accounts and any combination of two (2) signatures from among those individuals are required to make withdrawals. As of March 10, 2022, these individuals are: Steve Bardwell, President; David Fick, Vice President; Laraine Turk, Secretary; and Cathy Zarakov, Treasurer. Sarah seconded the motion and all were in favor. (11-0)

When these March 2022 minutes have been approved at the April 2022 meeting, Cathy will provide the information to US Bank staff in order to open the money Market Account. Cathy will provide more details so we can also vote on opening

the money market account at the April meeting. Cathy also advised that all offices must be present together at the Bank to be confirmed as signatories for the new account.

Cathy listed some memberships and donations that occurred in February, including a \$2000 donation from Karin Messaros intended for a 2022-23 scholarship and funding for future student field trips. Cathy also confirmed we sent formal donation acknowledgment letters for donations made in 2021. We accepted the Treasurer's report by consensus.

Conservation Issues

1) JT listing, Cumulative Effects of development in Morongo Basin SB, JJ, DF
Steve noted that the likely Joshua tree listing (as threatened in California) will be a component of the extensive development that continues in the desert. Pat and Steve talked to the owner/developer of the proposed Wonder Inn, a 106-room hotel and convention center on Amboy road east of 29 Palms. Steve was alerted to the project by Eric Hamburg, and former MBCA President Chris Carraher has been involved. [Transtech Engineering](#) is handling the application process. It is a large and inappropriate property, especially considering water use, despite some circumstances they say are mitigating. Locals are concerned about the company's request for rezoning over 20 acres, expanding the 3 acres that are already commercial because it was formerly an Edison building. They will have to rezone the rest of RL-5 acres into rural commercial. It is inconsistent with Wonder Valley's "community action guide." There are homes within a half mile that will be affected by sound and traffic. The initial study by the County is expected in about 6 months. The developers expect a CEQA review and are preparing for it.

There is also a plan for a new 68-room hotel in downtown 29 Palms.

2) Air Quality Monitoring –AM, SK, SB

Steve and Sarah have purchased a Purple Air monitor and Arch will help with installation.

3) Light Trespass Ordinance, Earth Hour 3-26-22, 8:30 – SB, LT

The County has published a flyer and a [webpage](#) with details of the new light trespass ordinance presented in a consumer-friendly way. We have posted a calendar item encouraging people to participate in [Earth Hour on March 26](#) and report back to us on their actions.

4) 30x30 Carbon sequestration in the desert. – PF, BH, SB

Steve, Arch, Gary and Pat have worked on several letters and signed on to collaborative letters trying to add recognition of the desert's carbon sequestration value to climate change. Pat said they have not been very responsive. Arch is working on a proposal to press them more and will be researching Colorado's recently published climate change program. Gary also looked at the plans for Utah, Nevada, and Texas. California's draft proposal has

a lot of focus on climate justice, which is necessary, but so is an emphasis on sequestration and plant and animal issues. The next report may come in April. Pat is checking CARB's report to see if it overlaps with CNRA's. Significant desert spokespeople have sent letters and made presentations, including Cam Barrows (biodiversity), Robin Kobaly (desert fragmentation and age of plants), and Suzy Boyd (carbon sequestration). We need to keep confronting, maybe even going to Sacramento to make presentations in person to CARB and CNRA.

5) Scenic 247 – SK
Nothing new.

6) Save California Solar NEM 3.0 –SB
Nothing new.

7) HR 5355 Desert Community Lands Act - BH, SB, PF
Nothing new. Steve proposed we write a letter specific to the Apple Valley area affected by this legislation.

8) Cellular Tower in Morongo Valley – GS
There is a Facebook group in Morongo Valley keeping tabs on this and Gary will try to meet with the leader. BLM has been responsive and there will be an online public meeting March 17. Comment deadline is March 21. Steve said it's supposed to be providing 5G service to our area but there are trade-offs. Gary added that originally it was intended to provide emergency communication services to the Morongo grade, but that's out of date considering current alternatives. The location is northwest of downtown Morongo Valley, north of the fire station, in the low brown hills north of the highway. The tower would be 198 feet with a flashing red light, and there's a noise factor.

9) Drop in JBWD water use – SD, JJ
Janet shared some data from JBWD believing it ties into the number of families leaving because of the rental housing shortage. From 2016-2020, 1219 connections were dropped, which is 13% of the water district, at least in part due to short term rentals. New connections between 2011 and 2019 averaged 8.5/year. In 2020 there were 63 new connections, in 2021 there were 129, and there have been 37 in the first months of this year, so about 200 new connections are possible this year. Steve asked if there was a drop in water use. Stacy reported that usage began dropping about 3 years ago, which the district attributed at least in part to messaging and conservation. Landscaping is 80% of water use. It's also true that STRs use less water because they're not constantly occupied. *Stacy will share more detailed water usage info for JBWD.* She also noted there's a time lag of installations and usage data.

10) IPCC [report](#) – BH
Brian recently sent the new Intergovernmental Plan for Climate Change report to us with its startling conclusions about lack of progress in responding to

climate change. We're not good at dealing with long-term threats and it's easy to be pessimistic.

Outreach & Communications

1) Cannabis cultivation environmental impacts work with Better World Group? BH, AM, PF

It's offseason for grows and many have been taken down, about 30/week by the County's Operation Hammerstrike. Some may return in spring. At least now that the County and law enforcement can remove greenhouses and perform other abatement, it will take longer if the criminals try to get started again.

2) Short Term Rentals and SBCO Housing Element- JJ

During the Planning Commission hearing Thursday March 3rd there was much excuse-making about the housing issue and a lot of polarization. Commissioners are not addressing housing issues. This coming Thursday is the Housing Element so we'll try to make the case about the rental housing problem. In both the MB and Big Bear there is simply no housing for teachers. Families are leaving, the situation is dire, and districts are trying to cope. We're expecting a Desert Sun article to focus on the housing issue.

In preparing for the Housing Element workshop we'll be focusing on how STRs are reducing availability which makes the situation inconsistent with the policy. STRs mask the problem because the County counts them as available housing. The grant that Wayne Hamilton (liaison with the School District) used to help renters has run out. Now they can only provide transportation for a kid who has to move in order to stay in the same school the rest of the year, and it doesn't continue beyond the current year. The Supervisors should support another subsidy.

The County will not say where the TOT ("bed tax") goes. *Janet is considering filing an FOI to find out.* A Public Information Request requires a payment. *Gary will send some information from a Big Bear group USBT (Unincorporated San Bernardino Together)* and will be with them at their meeting with Rowe. We should locally be receiving some kind of value from the huge increase in TOT.

3) Cadiz, DF

Current stock price is \$1.92 compared to August when it was about \$14.50.

4) Info sheet to Realtors-CA welcome center - GS, SD, SB

We've agreed this will be a summer project. Gary has continued to work on it. It's all related to climate change. Gary feels it could be a watershed publication - a community reaction to global warming. Sarah summarized: "Welcome climate change refugees!"

5) MBCA in Desert Moon Pictorial, & JT Voice - SD

Melissa has created the ads, and they can be used in multiple formats. She'll work with us on design cost since we don't have a budget for this project. We should add a budget item for general publication and promotion. Stacy also shared the DWL Tour rack card. *The Tour Committee will research and recommend.*

6) Proposal from JT Distilling to donate % to MBCA-SB, SK
Sarah, Steve, Arch and Stacy were at the Distilling event and were impressed with their operation and apparent commitment to supporting conservation. There were many conservation community members there.

7) Desert Symposium April 1-2 & 3-4 at CMC – PF
Pat suggested we take advantage of this event being at CMC this year. Go to DesertSymposium.org for information. Presentations at CMC on April 1-2 will be followed by field trips to various volcanic areas in the region on April 3-4.

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues

1) Social Media and Website updates– Aimee / Stacy / Laraine
Stacy reported we promoted the Earth Hour and changed the homepage slider for the Tour. Once the Tour registration process is in place, there will be sharing on social media.

2) Events Committee reports:

2022 landscape tour – DWL committee

There will be 5 in-person sites and later, 4 videos, probably not until June. The Tour budget for videos is \$7200, based on the water district donations. **Steve moved to approve payment of \$6850 to Cole Gibson for the Tour videos including a master video. Sarah seconded and all were in favor. (11-0).** Stacy then showed Melissa's proposal for the DWL Tour graphic design, rack card, program/brochure/map, web banners, tour ads. **Steve moved to approve payment of \$875 for Melissa's graphic design work for the Tour. Laraine seconded and all were in favor. (11-0)**

Thank you to water agencies – SB, AM
Not addressed.

Fall DWL event: Ken Layne ? – SD
Not addressed.

3) Educational support

Scholarships – LT, JJ, SK, SB

The online application is due April 2.

Field trips CSA 20- JJ

The schools are lifting the mask mandate tomorrow so there may be an opportunity for a dry run field trip this spring. *Janet will talk with the school and Tammy to see if it might be possible.*

4) Development of MBCA strategy/elevator statement – SD

Stacy explained it's the kind of statement you might make when you get on an elevator with a funder; you make a short and succinct pitch. While we have a mission statement and other content, it's complex and hard to articulate. We need something shorter but with more meaning. We should also consider putting some sort of value on the work we do, so she can understand better where to put the most effort into social media. What are our top issues? *Steve will work with Stacy on this.* In the short run, the Planning Commission hearing on the Housing Element is critical. And now that the County has light trespass info, we should highlight that including Astrotourism.

5) Utilize 'Google Workspace for non-profits'- GS

In relation to Stacy's issue, Gary would also like some way to aggregate information to share. He uses Google Docs; it helps to collaborate on content. He likes the idea of a committee to organize communication. There's no cost for Slack or Google workspace and any email works. *Stacy volunteered to set it up.* Arch worked with it on 30x30, but there was issue of who gets to save edits. *We need a demonstration.*

Letters created / signed onto :

Letter in support of Moises Cisneros for Desert Advisory Council for Mojave Trails National Monument subgroup; Letter to F&G commission re: saving Joshua trees in place; Statewide letter re: strategies for 30x30; Inland Desert Working Group letter re: strategies for 30x30; email to State Housing and Community Development; 2-22-22 Email to California HCD and AG re: STRs.

<p>Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, April 14, 2022 5:00 – 7:00 PM - in person & zoom ???</p>
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