

## **MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED** MINUTES**

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

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

### **Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:04 P.M.**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Bardwell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Hammer	<input type="checkbox"/> Gary Stiler (prior notice)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stacy Doolittle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janet Johnston	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laraine Turk
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Fick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sarah Kennington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cathy Zarakov
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pat Flanagan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arch McCulloch	
<u>Social media consultant:</u>		<input type="checkbox"/> Aimee Buyea

### **Introduction of Guests and Board Directors**

We welcomed returning visitor Helen Jeong.

### **Agenda approval**

***Steve moved to approve the submitted agenda. Pat seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)***

### **Minutes from January 13, 2021 BOD meeting**

***Steve noted two corrections then moved to approve the amended January minutes. Pat seconded, and all were in favor. (10-0)***

### **Treasurer's Report**

Cathy reported a lot of January financial activity including new memberships, membership renewals, and donations.

Our CD is due for renewal on February 14. We discussed whether to renew the current 9-month commitment earning .005%, which earned us \$9.38 interest (less than we usually get from Amazon Smile donations). There was consensus to accept Steve's suggestion to renew for 6 months (same rate) and review again.

Starting this month, our new Nationbuilder subscription rate rises (for more services) to \$99 per month. There is \$57,134.82 in our checking account and \$22,766.23 in the CD. *Laraine will scan and send to Cathy a CD notification we recently received at the Post Office.*

### **Conservation Issues**

1) JT listing, Cumulative Effects of development in Morongo Basin SB, JJ, DF  
Steve noted that there have been several development incidents recently.

- Janet has seen land scraped near her home.
- Wonder Valley resident Eric Hamburg reported to Steve that there are plans for a high level large project there called the Wonder Inn.
- There is a proposal to rezone 160 acres in Pioneertown from RC to RL-5.
- The Pioneertown AWE ranch developments continue.

- The brothers who own the Red Dog Saloon in Pioneertown plan to invest in reopening the airport restaurant.

We discussed the recent situation in Yucca Valley in which their Planning Commission insisted on transplanting or removing a Joshua tree that the owners wish to save. Removing it is counterproductive in this case. YV is following the rules exactly – in this case - making it appear cumbersome, “making a mountain out of molehill.” Associate Planner in YV Jared Jerome seems sympathetic. Janet talked with Brendan Cummings of the Center for Biological Diversity, trying to determine what to pursue without it becoming counterproductive. The couple wishing to save the tree is communicating with Fish & Wildlife to suggest amending the ordinance to provide alternatives in situations like theirs. Janet hopes we can support the couple, perhaps with a written comment to Fish & Wildlife in support of changing the ordinance. Stacy offered to put something on Facebook but after there’s a decision about rewriting the ordinance. Arch cautioned we need to be very specific about what the problem is to avoid backlash criticism. David will talk with Christina Sanchez, local resident with a lot of knowledge about the issue, and with Brendan. He’ll try to get a simple message created for Facebook sometime after next week’s Fish & Wildlife meeting. {See Agenda item #30 (B) on the second day – Feb. 17 – of the [F&G Agenda for its Feb 16-17 meeting](#).}

#### 2) Air Quality Monitoring – AM, SK, SB

Steve and Sarah bought a Purple Air monitor for each other for Valentine’s Day and asked Arch for help with installation. Stacy suggested they get a video of the installation.

#### 3) Light Trespass Ordinance – SB

*Steve would like to see a County handout with some details and examples of good lighting practices and will contact code enforcement about this.*

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

Pat reported that a third letter will be sent to CNRA about the [latest 30x30 plan](#) underscoring that they have not included all the California desert appropriately in the Inland Desert region. Among the excluded desert lands are the Joshua tree stands on the east side slopes of the San Bernardino Mountains. Arch added that they left out a lot of desert features including Anza-Borrego and Death Valley.

#### 5) Scenic 247 – SK

Arch sent Sarah a database of plants along 247 and Sarah forwarded it to the CalTrans architect, but hasn’t had any reply yet. There’s still a lot of state entities to be involved to finalize the plan. One frustrating issue is the provision that problem areas can be “screened with trees,” impossible in our desert.

#### 6) Save California Solar NEM 3.0 – SB

Governor Newsom has postponed indefinitely the adoption of NEM 3.0 and has appointed 2 new PUC Commissioners.

7) HR 5355 Desert Community Lands Act - BH, SB, PF

Thanks to Brian for creating a helpful map of the areas in question in Apple Valley and 29 Palms. The bill proposes returning land to communities. Pat believes in both cases the purpose is for OHV use, not preservation. In Apple Valley there are questions on the relationship of their Habitat Conservation Plan to the proposed changes. Brian noted that there are few or no registered voters in the area and they could ask LAFCO to annex the lands into the Town. And interestingly, some of those proposed new boundaries actually split up large parcels. Pat believes the land in question in the southeastern part of 29 Palms is seen as useful for OHV travel directly from the City to a private area where OHV activities are held. *Steve will research a bit more and consider whether we should write a letter.*

8) Cellular Tower in Morongo Valley – GS

Gary not present.

9) Enquiry from Joshua Tree Voice re: Wildlife vs autos – PF

Pat showed us the article in the most recent [Joshua Tree Voice](#) edition (see page 8). Jacques Guevara wrote an article about Nicole Holland of Cactus Mart and the wildlife safety issues in Morongo Valley. Pat would like to connect people with their proximity to wildlife linkages using the interactive map. *Laraine, Pat, Arch, and Gary will work on a website story about this,* using the existing link we have to the [Conservation Priorities interactive map](#). Arch added that there are some historic sites in the area as well to highlight for preservation, such as the Hicks site, aqueducts that come out of Little Morongo Canyon. The article can include Historical and Wildlife preservation.

### **Outreach & Communications**

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

Arch has researched and has confidence in the group that he was connected to via CNPS. They are trying to help local groups with conservation goals. There is a meeting planned with Supervisor Rowe's staff. Arch asked Brian and Pat to be involved with the cannabis issues and they agreed. Janet mentioned the possibility that water districts may be confronting the County over lack of action on water issue aspects of the cannabis grows problem.

2) Short Term Rentals and SBCO Housing Element – JJ

Janet expressed her frustration that the problematic housing data provided by Wayne Hamilton at the February 3<sup>rd</sup> Planning Commission meeting did not seem to make any impression on Commissioners. They continued the issue until their February 17 meeting, which is also supposed to include the Housing element. Janet observed that they're using bad maps, false vacancy numbers, and out-of-date house prices from 2018. She is working on a letter to poke the

Housing agency, pointing out the inconsistencies – this can't be brushed under the carpet.

Steve noted we sent a [comment letter](#) to the Planning Commission (Feb. 2), and he received a response from Heidi Duron, saying that the Housing element topic has been moved to their March 17 meeting. Janet thinks they are probably missing a deadline by doing so and wonders if something is happening at the state level. She felt the Commissioners' intention at the close of last week's public hearing was to prevent any more public testimony. She added that there's been no recusal from Commissioners or Supervisors who apparently own STRs. To Yucca Valley's credit, their ordinance is clear about requiring recusals on this issue for Town officials who are STR owners.

Janet added there is great support on the issue from a group in Big Bear that she's met with. We discussed creating a position paper expressing our support for locally owned STRs, with limits and at residential scale, not commercial. *Janet, Steve and Stacy will work on an STR statement.* Stacy noted that our mission statement references business, i.e. "economic wellbeing."

3) What is your District now? – LT, JJ

Laraine screen-shared [the Cal Matters page](#) where people can check political district changes for their address. All three of her districts have changed. We must make sure we copy the right district offices in the future.

4) Cadiz, DF

David said the Cadiz stock value is still going down. Shares were about \$25 in 2008, down to \$14 last year, recently \$3.50 and now \$1.93. Pat got an email that [Keith Brackpool](#) is no longer chairperson of the Board. The new chair is [Susan P. Kennedy](#), who has a lot of political connections and has served on energy boards.

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

Steve reiterated our hope to develop both short and long versions of Gary's extremely thorough draft. Laraine suggested we focus on it this summer, because there's so much Board time commitment currently for the Scholarship program and the DWL Hybrid Landscape Tour planning.

6) MBCA advertisements Desert Moon Pictorial – SD

Stacy said Melissa is interested but is currently out of town. We may need to spend some money on stock photography. Stacy will put together a budget and create a list of photos needed. *Arch asked to receive the list and will take some of the desired photos.*

7) Proposal from JT Distilling to donate % to MBCA – SB

Regarding the proposed MOU that Paul Chakalian gave us at the last meeting, Sarah described the January 28 Zoom meeting that she, Steve and Laraine had with the Co-Directors of MDLT. They shared some of their process of deciding

on accepting sponsors. One of the issues with JT Distilling is that they are so new, without any track record. Steve plans to visit and see their operation. Sarah noted that we need to develop a process or criteria on sponsorship.

### **Capacity Building & Organizational Issues**

1) Social Media & Website update – Aimee / Stacy / Laraine

Stacy shared last month's Google Analytics data showing 845 visitors and other detail. She noted that direction to our website comes from searches of "Morongo Basin" and "Joshua Tree."

We discussed where the Land Acknowledgement should be placed and whether there should be a map or other visual to draw attention to it. We'll continue to work on this. (Post-meeting note: the text is now on the [home page](#) and the [Morongo Basin](#) page.)

2) Events Committee reports:

Recap of annual meeting – *'The Last Joshua Tree? 'CC & the future of this iconic species*

While the *Hi Desert Star* published [an article about our meeting](#), there was no information provided about how to apply for Joshua tree removal permits. We need to send a Soap Box or Letter to the Editor with more details about permitting, and maybe ask to be on the Friday Community Forum 107.7 radio show to spread the information.

2022 landscape tour – DWL committee

There will be 4 in-person and 4 video tours with education emphasis on several. Steve reported that the Wolds have agreed to be hosts and Nicholas Holmes is on board for a presentation related to the Ken Cain straw bale site. With Brian's help we've engaged the support of Nicholas Schneider for a video tour of the Mojave Water Agency garden in Apple Valley with Robin Kobaly as tour guide. MDLT is on board, details to be determined.

Thank you to water agencies – SB, AM

Nothing new; waiting for response from Golden State and Mojave Water Agency.

Potential Fundraiser with [Ken Layne](#) – SD

Stacy reported that Ken is interested, but his events cost \$750-\$7500 depending on what is needed. We need to let him know all our parameters. Stacy's idea is a campfire presentation outdoors, maybe in June, or possibly at [Furstworld](#). The goal is to fundraise and get our name out there. Access could be a thank you to members or members get free tickets. Ken represents the cultural part of our mission. There was consensus that there is potential in this, while it represents a new direction for us – a specific fund-raising event.

Fall DWL event

Maybe we could plan the Ken Layne fundraising event in the Fall. *The Event/Tour Committee will consider it in May, after the DWL Tour.*

3) Educational support

Scholarships – LT, JJ, SK, SB

There are two \$1000 scholarships, with an online application thanks to Nora. The Committee is expanding listings to send out the press release soon. The advertising will emphasize an expanded range of majors related to conservation.

Field trips CSA 20- JJ

Not discussed.

*Steve proposed that the March meeting be both in-person and hybrid and will work on technical improvements.*

**Adjourned at 7:04 PM**

**Letters created / signed onto :**

Letter to Housing and Community Development 2-2-22

**Next Regular Meeting:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 5:00 – 7:00 PM **Zoom?**  
**stay tuned**