

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

Thursday, June 9, 2022 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm Via Zoom

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

### **Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:02 P.M.**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Bardwell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Hammer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gary Stiler
<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	

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

Guests included Meg Foley, Helen Leong, Blanca Villalobos, Geary Hund, Robert Berkman

### **Agenda approval**

***Steve moved to approve the agenda. Stacy seconded, and all were in favor. (11-0)***

### **Minutes from May 12, 2022 BOD meeting**

***Steve moved to approve the May 2022 minutes. Stacy seconded, and all were in favor. (11-0)***

### **Treasurer's Report**

Cathy reported 2 new couples memberships, and 1 new single member. A check for \$1250 for the 2022 Desert-Wise Living programs was received from Bighorn Desert View Water Agency. Expenditures included payment to filmmaker Bonnie Hawthorne and to radio station Z107.7 for advertising for the Tour. *In July we will have the officers gather at the bank to create a new signature card.* We have discussed at prior meetings transferring money from checking back to a CD or money market account. While checking is earning only .05% APR, the money market is only .01% and a 17-month CD for 17 months is .15%. A 5-year CD yields .4% with possibly a one-time increase within the timeframe. Our account total is \$80,965.73. Steve suggested and there was consensus that we should wait for better interest income to make any investments. We accepted the Treasurer's report.

### **Outreach & Communications**

1) Short Term Rentals and SBCO Housing Element– All  
Planning for upcoming BOS

The STR issue is on the Supervisors' agenda next Tuesday. Steve, Janet, Levon, Astrid, Stacy, and Wayne Hamilton met with Dawn Rowe and Curt Hagman and their staff, had a virtual meeting with Lewis Murray of Rutherford's staff, and may have a virtual meeting Monday with Christopher Porter, Paul Cook's representative. Thus, by Tuesday there will hopefully have been conversations with 4 of the 5 supervisors.

Steve received a call from Dawn Rowe today about the mechanism for enacting a pause. There are concerns about voting on a pause without it being properly noticed and agendaized. She said it can be placed on the agenda as an urgency issue following the STR ordinance revisions forwarded from the Planning Commission.

Our letter: 1) questions consistency with Countywide Plan; 2) notes the much larger growth in our area than anticipated when the Countywide Plan was developed; and 3) challenges the draft Housing Element. Hagman had commented “we need more infrastructure out here,” plus wastewater treatment and “a new source of water.”

Other topics discussed were: 1) the difficulty of managing a county of this size; 2) differences in mountain and desert community situations; 3) too much out of state STR ownership. Steve outlined the problems with the Housing Element not recognizing STRs as unavailable housing. The County is proposing studies on this (“Program 4”) but not until next year.

Laraine reported several hundred STR petition signatures and rising, and that the final petition will be ready to send on Sunday, with a final version for Steve and Janet to take on Tuesday.

Steve also reported that Dawn is not in favor of stopping those applications that are in process, and we feel that is fair. It’s important to get a lot of people at the in-person or the remote site in Joshua Tree to comment. Levon Kazarian has offered a van to go to the meeting in San Bernardino.

Regarding the recommended Planning Commission revisions, we should state that permits should not be transferred; emphasize the limit of 2 per person; and take out the LLC loophole. *Steve will do one more Eblast urging attendance and explaining the Planning Commission item.*

MDLT wants to sign on to our STR letter with CBD. *We will suggest they instead follow the Sierra Club’s model, summarizing the issue and supporting our letter.*

2) Cannabis cultivation - BH, AM, PF

Brian reported there is a new law pending by high desert Assemblyman Thurston “Smitty” Smith to criminalize theft of water and other related issues; it may be waiting the Governor’s signature. *Brian will provide us with more details if it passes.*

He noted that Operation Hammerstrike continues in his area. A new grow season seems to be starting.

Arch said that CNPS gave some cannabis-related issues to their lobbyist to work on but has no details at this time.

3) Daggett, injunction? – PF

Pat has been working with Ted Stimpfel and Bob Berkman of Newberry Springs trying to get an injunction because of the excessive dust from the project but was advised it won't happen. There are continued big wind storms but the state just gives a formula reply and AQMD seems not to be concerned. Ted is putting together data to show how bad it is. They will submit to CARB and EPA to see if they can stop activities causing the excessive dust. It needs treatment like Owens Lake (gravel topping). It's not only an environmental disaster but also has health, economic, and social justice effects. Making this point is important because of federal interest in adding more solar across SW deserts.

Ted is working on some video. Steve wondered if more Purple Air monitors can help. Bob says there are 6 in the area and that the CSD put up 3 though they are intermittently unreliable. Pat noted that there hasn't been recognition how much the dust can reduce solar power – they should have put up EPA monitors to measure. There is no baseline. Bob said there are 2 counters in each Purple Air resulting in a range of 20-80% confidence between them, so not really accurate. Arch said the 2 counters can be cleaned to make them more sensitive and vary less. He urges more monitors; they are at least useful for an overall picture since there aren't enough official ones. He suggests Newberry Springs contact politicians with their evidence.

4) Reduce speed limit on local highways – GS

[California Assembly Bill 43](#) passed last fall. It should apply to CalTrans and SB County. Senators Grove and Mayes are working with Cal Transportation Commission. It will probably be 6 months before any action and then the County will also have a final say.

5) Cadiz – This topic will be deleted from future agendas.

6) Flamingo 640 – SB

Included in #1 under Conservation Issues – Joshua trees.

7) Wonder Inn – PF

Nothing new.

8) New National Monument join coalition – SB

Steve received a request from Colin Barrows asking if we're willing to participate in a committee or focus group to advocate for the new Representative Ruiz land conservation plan. *Gary volunteered to join on MBCA's behalf. Steve will give his name to Colin.*

**Capacity Building & Organizational Issues**

1) Events Committee reports:

*Release of videos*

Stacy reported they will be ready for release as soon as final graphics are added. They are waiting for 2 site owners to provide content. They will be released one per week over 4 weeks. Steve thanked Stacy for all her hard work on this project.

*2022 landscape tour essay contest– DWL committee*

Laraine reported that the [essays have been posted](#) and she is working on the summary report for Funders.

*Fall DWL event*

[We'll discuss this at our August Retreat.](#)

2) Educational support

*Scholarships – LT, JJ, SK, SB*

Steve and Sarah presented the 3 scholarships at the YVHS event and showed a video of the presentation. [Laraine will call a summer meeting of the Scholarship Committee](#) to review the scholarship process, application evaluation, possible extension of the Rieman scholarship, finding a way to get 29Palms HS more involved, and other topics. Laraine reported she asked recipients for photos to post but got no response so far.

*Field trips CSA 20- JJ*

Nothing new.

3) Social Media and Website updates – Stacy / Laraine

Stacy shared data about the wide reach of the STR video, as there were thousands of views. (As of July 5, there were 8,396 views.)

4) Purchase MBCA zoom account – LT

We approved the purchase, but need to decide names to be officially on record as authorized owners (Steve & Stacy & Laraine?)

5) Revise non-profit status to adopt provisions of 501(h) – LT

Steve emailed JP Rose (of CBD) to ask for assistance but it's not his area. Laraine and Cathy are comfortable with it. While we agreed the IRS might never pursue us because of our relatively small money footprint, Sarah suggested we go through the motions this year without actually applying, to quantify and review what the numbers would be. Cathy noted that having to track our activities for the 501h makes more concise what our lobbying parameters are, especially since we seem to be doing more advocacy activities that might be labeled lobbying. There is more reporting required, but advantages outweigh disadvantages. [Meg, Sarah, and Laraine will work on this.](#)

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

Gary noted how evident it was in this last week how awkward editing can be among a number of people in Word. Gary and Stacy said we're good to go and Nora lined up Google Workspace for us. [Stacy & Gary will set up a](#)

*demonstration for those interested, especially Janet, Steve, Gary, Pat, Arch, and Brian, but will let everyone know.*

7) Schedule August retreat date, Sunday July 31?

*Laraine will send out a request for availability on each Sunday 7/31-8/28.*

8) Virtual Forum

Laraine briefly described past pre-fall election Virtual Forums we have held. Steve suggested it contributed to our “cred.” The questions relate to our mission and it is very community-oriented. *We need a committee to plan this.*

### **Conservation Issues**

1) JT listing – DF

The Fish and Game Commission hearing is Wednesday. There were several hundred at the MDLT rally. Brendan guesses there’s a 60% chance of the Commission overturning the staff recommendation against the listing. David sent in a comment letter with a different angle, focusing on the cumulative bad effects on Joshua trees by engineer Bill Warner’s local developments over many years, such as clearing 40 acres for the new elementary school even though only 16 acres was necessary and a similar situation west of CMC. State staff are not realistic about the rate of climate change. Steve is going in person.

2) Air Quality Monitoring –AM, SK, SB

Arch said that while government regulators won’t take Purple Air as valid, the community can use it as political ammunition to make them care about it. Sarah spoke with AQMD; they put them up in multiple locations but they’re ignoring them. *We need to continue commenting.* Pat continues to work with Ted and Bob of Newberry Springs. She reported that Earl at CARB told her the locals need to complain.

3) Statewide Lighting Ordinance [AB2382](#) – SB

*Steve hasn’t found any updates but will continue to research this.*

4) 30x30 CNRA assign member to the group. – PF, AM, GS

There’s been a request to have an MBCA representative. Pat, Arch and Gary have been involved and should continue. Pat said that things are quiet right now, but she may be joining a statewide group to represent the desert, which is underrepresented in the plan, which has an inaccurate desert map that the leaders won’t change. *Gary suggested we imagine a group of parcels that really should be conserved/given special status, and will send an email to look at such parcels on County GIS map and locate APNs.* There is a criteria sheet to describe recommended parcels. They are collecting this information for eventual consideration and possible purchasing. *Call Gary if you have ideas.* Should we spread the word to the membership? Pat suggested if the state school lands are purchased it will save them from solar development. Gary suggested we consider working with military installations such as China Lake, MCAGCC, or Ft. Irwin. *Arch, Pat, Gary will get together with Brian to work on*

*the parcel choices.* Meg suggested Stephanie Dashiell might have knowledge and skills and Brian agreed.

5) [Save California Solar](#)–SB

CPUC had a meeting but there was no news about NEM 3.0. *Steve will email Dave Rosenfeld.*

6) HR 5355 Desert Community Lands Act - BH, SB, PF  
No news.

7) Cellular Tower in Morongo Valley – GS

No news. Meg said the BLM is still reviewing comments, with no estimated time for a response. Broadband services by [Pacific LightWave](#) are likely to be installed before the outcome. The Morongo Valley CSD ad hoc committee is fighting against it.

8) Alts and HipCamp – SB

Steve mentioned this issue in meetings with supervisors, stressing “we can’t have trucks bearing PortaPotties all around the desert,” as well as the stress on septic systems. Dawn seems in favor of restrictions/enforcement and Hagman similarly.

**Letters created / signed onto:**

Letter re: Support California Deserts;  
Sign-on to letter re: Fungi and Soil Biodiversity;  
CBD and MBCA letter to County re:  
STRs and Housing Element and CWP;  
MBCA comments on Draft Housing Element;  
Sign on to CBD letter re: Joshua Tree;

**Next Regular Meeting:** Thursday, July 14, 2022 5:00 – 7:00 PM - zoom