

MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED MINUTES**

Thursday, July 14, 2022 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm Via Zoom

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

Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:09 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 type="checkbox"/> Janet Johnston (prior notice)	<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

We welcomed Julie Monson, a longtime member/supporter, and frequent visiting member Helen Jeong.

Agenda approval

Pat moved to approved the agenda. Sarah seconded and all were in favor. (9-0)

Minutes from June 9, 2022 BOD meeting

After some minor clarifications and revisions, Steve moved to approve the June 2022 minutes. Pat seconded and all were in favor. (9-0)

Treasurer's Report

Cathy reported several new memberships and donations. Grant funds for our Desert-Wise Living programs were received from BDVWA and Golden State Water, both with the additional \$250 requested. We also received \$5000 from MWA covering our 2021-22 grant, and an invitation to apply again for 2022-23. *Steve and Cathy will work out some uncertainties about the timing of the grants of the two different fiscal years.* Our checking account balance (which includes the former CD amount that we're holding for better terms) is \$81,975.57. Laraine suggested that we might consider allocating some of the funds for an extension of the Rieman scholarship. Such a request may come in the future from the Scholarship Committee.

Outreach & Communications

1) Short Term Rentals and SBCO Housing Element– All

Steve was the only person in attendance at the County's video conference site in Joshua Tree on July 7 for the Planning Commission meeting. He commented about the importance of the Program 4 study that the County is undertaking to establish some kind of cap or threshold on STRs. There was no discussion at all by the Commissioners. The County has resubmitted a revised Housing Element to the state, changing the Program 4 study deadline to 2023 instead of 2024. Steve emailed Heidi Duron to ask about timelines but hasn't heard back. Kerrie Aley is planning to comment comprehensively to the County specifically about Pioneertown with data on its STRs.

There are indications that the STR market has receded and there are more vacancy days. There's a real need to determine the effect on specific

communities and to get community stakeholders involved. There is an October deadline for a final Housing Element to be approved by the state and there are significant penalties for non-compliance.

Steve commented on a comprehensive article about STRs in the Twentynine Palms [Desert Trumpet](#) community newsletter.

Steve will continue to communicate with the County and the Supervisor's office to ask for updates.

2) Cannabis cultivation - BH, AM, PF

Brian reported that the bill to put some teeth into illegal cultivation seems to be stalled and will update us if there is new action. Sarah noted the Hi Desert Star reported the County has dealt with every Morongo Basin grow that has been reported (but of course there are more).

3) Reduce speed limit on local highways – GS

Gary is not present.

4) Alts Flamingo 640 – SB

Steve was going to attend a Homestead Valley Community meeting where the Flamingo 640 developers were going to present but they had to cancel. Susy Boyd of MDLT alerted Steve to a proposal for an “under canvas” glamping site of over 100 spaces in Yucca Valley up Warren Vista towards Paradise Valley. We'll continue to track these.

5) New National Monument join coalition – SB

Steve displayed the map of the draft proposal of the proposed Chuckwalla Mountains National Monument + Wild and Scenic River. (Here's [MDLT's page](#) on this.) Passage would ensure better safety against industrial solar and other desert destruction. Sarah noted that when we act on this it would probably be direct lobbying, something to be aware of as part of our 501h evaluation.

6) Candidate virtual forum – LT

Laraine reviewed MBCA's most recent online Candidate forums, one in 2014 with 3 questions for each candidate, and in 2018 a single directed question only for town/city council and water district positions. There is an August deadline for filing. We discussed the possibility of making it live and/or via Zoom instead of just posting answered questions online. *Stacy, Sarah, and Laraine will work on this.* Julie Monson offered some comments; she worked on a candidate forum with the League of Woman Voters in the past and while it's complex to set up, she suggested it's very effective. After it's filmed it can be put on the website. We might consider asking other groups (MDLT) to join the effort. *Julie will send us some information and references and is willing to join a preliminary meeting.* Encouraging people to vote is also an important message.

7) UCR Climate Steward – LT

Laraine reviewed that we had offered a \$375 scholarship for this course last

year but neither of the two interested women could enroll. It's a serious college-level course with a lot of reading and writing as well as group sessions. It was suggested we approach our scholarship winners for the last few years. *Laraine will work with Steve to put something into the next Eblast.*

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues

1) Events Committee reports:

Release of videos

All Tour videos are on the website but are also being posted one each week on Facebook. Stacy has also posted it to other Facebook groups including 29 Palms. There have been 1200 views already on the Harrison House video, without boosting! Steve again gave appreciation to Stacy and Cole for doing such a great job. MWA is going to link it into their newsletter and have it on their website. Brian offered his help in promoting it if need be. It should be in the newsletters for all the water agencies. *Steve will highlight the videos in the next Eblast.*

Since we haven't yet been able to meet with Golden State, and they have responded recently to our request for an addition \$250 for next year, Steve will write a thank you letter. Brian will provide him with a name as they have a regional office in Apple Valley.

Tour hosts reception

This thank you event for hosts and docents will be at Steve and Sarah's. *Sarah will send some possible late-summer dates to the Tour Committee. Cathy will then send out an email to docents and hosts when the date is set.*

Funders Report. LT

Laraine continues to work on this.

2) Educational support

Scholarships – LT, JJ, SK, SB

The recent planned Committee meeting had to be postponed; another will be set. Issues to decide include reviewing and improving the application and the review process and considering how to continue the Rieman Scholarship.

Field trips CSA 20- JJ

Nothing new.

3) Social Media and Website updates – Stacy / Laraine

As noted earlier, there have been 1200 views of the Eva Soltes/Harrison House video and good numbers on the other videos as well. There were over 2000 visits to the website in June, also due to the STR petition.

4) Purchase MBCA zoom account – LT

Steve will work on this and we decided that the President/Steve, Vice President/David, and social media person/Stacy should have the ability to set up meetings.

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

The committee to consider electing 501h status met (Steve, Sarah, Cathy, Meg, Laraine) and decided it would be a healthy process to record our advocacy and lobbying activities to assess whether electing the 501h status would be prudent or unnecessary. It has to do with measuring expenditures related to legislation at federal, state or local level. We asked for some input from a supporter who's an attorney, and with caution they advised that our activities on the Joshua tree protection and the STRs were probably not direct lobbying actions.

Laraine felt we should talk more at the Retreat about this, and ask Directors to keep track of their volunteer activities on behalf of MBCA. (If we don't elect the 501h and the IRS audits us for lobbying, they count the monetary value of volunteer hours; whereas under the 501h, only money expended is counted.) Arch asked whether action on California's 30x30 program is lobbying. Laraine thinks not, because we've been asked to be part of the program development. Steve added that the 501h requires additional bookkeeping and accounting requirements. Because we are low-income and non-lobbying, we may not need this. Cathy noted that even if organizations don't elect the 501h, they (we) should keep track of activity both for good practice and in case there's an audit.

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

Stacy found some online training which she will share. We could also do a training prior to a regular meeting. She also mentioned Bruce's Café at the College as a potential rental space because they have a large screen for demonstrations and online meetings. *She's also willing to do one-on-one training if needed.*

7) August retreat August 14, 2022

Agenda for retreat

The Retreat will be at Sarah and Steve's on Sunday, August 14, from 10AM – about 3 PM including a potluck lunch. *Laraine will send out a request to all Directors for suggested agenda items and send it to Steve for final development.*

Conservation Issues

1) JT listing – AM, DF

Steve noted Arch's [great article in the Desert Report](#) (p. 14). Arch summarized the current status created by the Commission's 2-2 vote and resulting pause, characterizing it as not the worst nor best thing that could have happened. David is part of the [Protect the Joshua Trees.com](#) group. They think part of the strategy of the 2 commissioners who voted against accepting the staff report was to delay until there's a new commissioner with – hopefully - more science-based background. Arch feels that both science and legal viewpoints were on our side, with protection warranted. He feels that one of the commissioners opposing threatened status was simply against approval, the other afraid of

coming out against it due to business issues. Tribal responses have been strongly for protection but the Commission asked for more tribal input.

2) Air Quality Monitoring –AM, PF

Pat reported continued dust problems in Newberry Springs and AQMD does nothing. In a written reply, they simply stated “when the wind blows the dust blows.” A herpetologist who lives near the acreage believes the area was not adequately checked for reptiles and they have some data to present. If there is no action on these issues, it opens up even more projects in the Mojave River Basin area under AB 205. Water trucks don’t help; they tried some chemical applications but admitted that didn’t work. The model to reduce dust is Owens Dry Lake, but you need 4” of ½ inch gravel which is costly. The environmental Justice issue is huge. Locals are trying to plan more actions. *Pat suggested that we add NewberrySprings.org to the air quality part of our website.*

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

This bill is in the Senate Resources Committee and moving forward slowly; it would require all state building lighting to be shielded, although not for 150 W or less incandescent lights. Steve will continue to keep an eye on it.

4) 30x30 CNRA – PF, AM, GS

As part of the Inland Desert Working Group, Arch has continued to review maps about desert boundaries but there continue to be issues such as clarification about transition zones, e.g. streams that come from mountains to deserts. They continue to work on describing desert areas. The Commission said they should not just consider biodiversity but also the social aspects, e.g. tribal and historical. Plus, there’s the carbon sequestration issue. They’re developing and reviewing a spreadsheet with all of these factors. They are potentially gathering information for lobbying as well as information sharing and education. *Pat, Brian and Arch will meet for further work on this.*

5) [Save California Solar](#) in person events* - SB, LT

Steve will attend a rally sponsored by the Solar Rights Alliance in Cathedral City on July 20. AB 205 has made the demand for a fair NEM 3.0 even more important. Pat sees AB 205 as eliminating CEQA and it eliminates local authority for land use decisions, including storage and transmission. The Department of Water Resources can keep old fossil fuel plants open. There’s no consideration of grid resources, point of use, etc., and it seems it simply lines pockets of investor-owned utilities.

Steve noted that any project has to benefit the local community, which may be a point of leverage. Pat sees the message as: “For climate change we have to get rid of CEQA.” From the 30x30 project we know the state doesn’t understand the importance of the desert. AB 205 is almost like an emergency powers act. *Pat will continue to follow and will suggest things we can do even if just symbolic.* Pat suggest we work with the Newberry Springs people who will be exceptionally affected especially on environmental justice and air quality. We should join again with CBD and other organizations in any actions.

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

7) Cellular Tower in Morongo Valley – GS
No news.

8) Alts and HipCamp – SB
No news.

9) AB 205
*Discussed in #5 above.

Adjournment at 7:02 PM.

Letters created / signed onto:

Sign on to resolution in support of rooftop solar; Letter re: Energy Trailer Bill

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, September 8, 2022 * 5:00 – 7:00 PM - zoom

ADDENDUM TO JULY 2022 MINUTES – Online Unanimous Vote held between July 25 and 26, 2022.

Motion for financial support (full Board support required)

Pat moved that MBCA provide a \$375 scholarship for the University of California Climate Stewards course offered in Fall 2022 at UC Riverside for up to two accepted program applicants who are either MBCA members, subscribers to our email list, or Morongo Basin or Victor Valley area residents. Laraine seconded the motion. All were in favor. (11-0)

yes Steve Bardwell

yes Stacy Doolittle

yes David Fick

yes Pat Flanagan

yes Brian Hammer

yes Janet Johnston

yes Sarah Kennington

yes Arch McCulloch

yes Gary Stiler

yes Laraine Turk

yes Cathy Zarakov

A unanimous YES vote was recorded online between July 25 and 26, 2022.