

MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED MINUTES**

Thursday, September 8, 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>_</u> Stacy Doolittle (prior notice)	<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**

Thanks to Helen Jeong for continuing to attend our meetings. Her company is close to filing their project and she'll share information with us when appropriate.

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

- **Minutes from July 14, 2022 BOD meeting – Detail for the July 25-26 online vote for offering up to 2 Climate Steward course scholarships was added to the draft minutes. *Sarah moved to approve the minutes as amended. Pat seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)***

- **Treasurer's Report**

Cathy reported limited activity but there were several new memberships. The only large expenditure was \$554 for our "errors and omissions" insurance. The checking balance is \$83,614.64.

The Finance Committee looked at CD offerings and recommended we invest in a short-term CD offered by Pacific Western Bank. Cathy noted two other local offerings: a 13-month CD at 2.75% interest also at Pacific Western and a 59-month CD @ 1.5% at US Bank. ***Steve moved that we invest \$60,000 into Pacific Western's 7-month CD at 2.0%. Janet seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)***

Cathy recommended that for better security we set up and start using a credit card instead of debit card to pay our bills. *Cathy will investigate setting one up with US Bank and eventually we will change our automatic monthly payments to it.* The Treasurer's report was accepted by consensus.

Conservation Issues

1) JT listing – AM, DF

David expects public education to ramp up soon in anticipation of the October 15 California Fish & Game Commission meeting. An important issue is the appointment of a 5th commissioner and what their vote is likely to be, after the prior 2-2 tie vote. Additional tribal information has been gathered in response to the concern of one "no" vote Commissioner, so it is hoped that his vote changes. We discussed encouraging public input again, but some have warned not to "overdo it." Arch suggested it would be better for organizations to make a single statement and mention their number of supporters.

Steve noted that MBCA will join California Desert Coalition to sponsor an October 1 event about CESA and the Joshua tree.

Janet mentioned that at the Developers Roundtable, someone asked about Joshua trees, and the new County Land Use Services director assured “we’re doing everything we can to stop the listing,” representing the unfortunate ongoing stance of the County and Supervisors.

2) Aurora Solar and Calcite substation – SB

The Lucerne Valley area continues to be threatened with more and more industrial solar projects. Word is that Aurora Solar, the former Stagecoach Solar project, with 3700+ acres along 247, and also the Calcite Substation are likely to be approved next year.

Sienna Solar is adding more acres of panels, and the approval of the substation will encourage other new projects. *Pat will write comments for Sienna Solar and work with Brian on mapping.* We need to demand substantive donations to the disadvantaged communities that otherwise get nothing out of the project.

What about the effect of these projects on 247 as a scenic highway? Brian said it’s supposed to be considered scenic once the proposal is accepted. Sarah learned that there will be a replacement for Karen Watkins who will be point person for Scenic highway. Karen spoke against the Stagecoach project during the Scenic Highway proposal process but we don’t know if the new person will share that stance. *Sarah will check with Betty Munson and report any updates.*

Steve noted that Newsom’s recently-signed bill will fast-track big projects. *Pat will read the bills (AB 205 and SB 122) and let us know just what got approved.* Brian added that if the Calcite substation is approved and built, there are 2 other projects that were approved before RECE 4.10, so they could receive final approval *without* the limits for rural residential areas that 4.10 outlines.

3) Air Quality Monitoring –AM, PF

Mojave AQMD doesn’t monitor anywhere east of Barstow so they have no data on dust from projects that heavily affect Newberry Springs. The only thing they monitor in the area seems to be a mine. The Newberry Springs Community Alliance (Ted Stimpfel) is pursuing the environmental justice issues and has produced a [detailed blogpost](#) about it.

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

Steve has had trouble getting information but will report next time.

5) 30x30 CNRA – PF, AM, GS

Pat, Arch, Brian and Gary continue to work on the effort to identify potential desert lands for protection. Brian created a map that was appreciated by the Inland Working Group. Their draft submission spreadsheet started with 83 components and they submitted 9. They will review quarterly and send additional recommendations for consideration and potential funding. Lands submitted for protection so far included: Conglomerate Mesa; Amargosa NM; a few NALC projects; Pacific Coast trail; Chuckwalla NM; Old Woman Mountain Preserve monitoring; and some desert tortoise lands. *Gary will send us the proposed project list.*

Fund travel to Sacramento for 9-28 conference

The Inland Desert Working Group will have a table presentation and handouts at this 30x30 CNRA event, trying to get the desert into the spotlight. Moises Cisneros of the

Sierra Club is lead. Robin Kobaly will also be involved via her *Desert Underground* research and book, and they will have MDLT and CNPS materials to hand out. Gary noted that more desert territory has been added to the maps of the project.

Gary and Arch are attending and request funding. (Brian will attend virtually.) After discussion, ***Laraine moved to approve funding for Directors Arch and Gary to cover travel costs for the CNRA event in Sacramento on September 28-29, 2022. Costs to be covered include gas, two nights' hotel, and meals, not to exceed \$1200 total. The Directors who are attending will submit receipts and be reimbursed. Steve seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)***

Laraine moved that MBCA cover costs of designing and printing handouts for the CNRA event. Steve seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)

6) [Save California Solar](#) –SB

The CPUC hasn't yet voted on NEM 3.0. Investor owned utilities continue proposing a tax.

7) New National Monument - join coalition – GS

A committee is working to develop Chuckwalla National Monument, about 730,000 acres including land in the far southeastern portion of California, the Aztlan area of the Quechan people.

Outreach & Communications

1) Short Term Rentals and SBCO Housing Element– JJ, SB

Janet reported that we're waiting for another letter from the CBD lawyer. One goal is to insist on no delays for the "Program 4" study. The real estate market is changing and there is less STR activity, but there are still 1100 permits in JT, including the ones that were in line during the pause. Twentynine Palms is at their 500 cap and are holding 25 on the side. Yucca Valley reports not having quite reached their cap. There are some reports of owners backing out of STRs.

Levon Kazarian is working on corporate/LLC STR ownership issues. There seems to be a County loophole. Janet found language requiring a driver's license for a person if an LLC owns the land, which should limit them to only 2 rentals.

Steve emailed Heidi Duron to ask about Program 4. Kerrie Aley relayed that some owners are finding trouble getting insurance, which may also be the case in mountain communities. Astrid (MB ARCH homeless assistance program) is still getting a lot of phone calls about problems with housing. There are more rentals listed in the paper lately, so some STRs may be switching.

There is no indication that the Morongo Basin MAC will be reconstituted.

Steve will be doing a presentation about STRs to the MB Democrats at their Saturday, September 9 meeting.

2) Cannabis cultivation - BH, AM, PF

The County enforcement efforts continue, but much has been "cleaned up." [Brian will share MWA actions when available.](#)

3) Flamingo 640 – SB

The Developers made a presentation to the Homestead Valley Community Council. Traffic issues are especially of concern but they're moving forward as there was a mitigated negative declaration for the EIR. Developers will make another presentation to HVCC.

4) Candidate virtual forum – LT

This is not a priority and we will take it off the agenda.

5) UCR Climate Steward - LT, SD

Stacy will be enrolled via one of the MBCA scholarships. The other applicant decided not to enroll.

6) Tabling at Night Sky Festival – SB

Sky's the Limit offered us a table during their September event, but the audience is primarily not local and not a good match for our messages.

7) Recap of call re: MDLT strategic planning– JJ, SB

Janet and Steve met with Kelly Herbinson of MDLT. They are looking for input from local conservation organizations for their 3-year strategic planning. They appreciated that we are focused on local action and hopefully there will be more networking, information sharing, and even social events between us.

Pat was interviewed by John Simpson (MDLT) which sparked more ideas about our interactive Conservation Priorities map. MDLT shares the maintenance cost. It's a good connection with the community and the map could be used by the larger community and be placed on MDLT's website too. *Pat is in touch with Green Info who are looking into how they can update the program.*

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues

1) Social Media and Website updates – Stacy / Laraine

Stacy is setting up a Google Earth Mapping page on our website based on suggestions and data that Brian presented. It will enable people with access to Google Earth to create unique maps with various conservation features.

2) Events Committee reports

Saturday, October 1 – We will partner with the California Desert Coalition at the YV Community Center for an in-person program on the California Endangered Species Act and the Joshua Tree, in advance of the California Fish and Game Committee. Speakers include Brendan Cummings and others.

Thursday, October 27 – MBCA Webinar re: STRs. The program and date are tentative; will probably focus on the Housing Element.

Sunday, November 6 – Thank You luncheon for 2022 Tour hosts, docents, videographers, and Directors (and spouses) at Harrison House.

Annual meeting topic: WATER - Steve suggested we ask Marina West to update and present the regional water overview she made a year or so ago.

3) Educational support

Scholarships – LT, JJ, SK, SB

All 3 scholarship checks have been sent.

Field trips CSA 20- JJ

Janet has talked with Tammie from the County Parks & Rec office and with Eva Soltes, and will be connecting with a new person at MDLT. The Google Earth project could help with a curriculum. She will meet with La Contenta this fall.

Brian spoke about the Google Earth Maps project. We can create a library of Google Earth files that's "a living, breathing repository," from which people can download files they have an interest in and layer into Google Earth on their home computer. He will work with Janet related to the field trips curriculum.

4) Non-profit designation to adopt provisions of 501(h) - All - see separate email

Sarah summarized that after a deep dive, the committee (Sarah, Cathy, and Laraine) confirmed that most of our activities aren't lobbying and the money spent doesn't warrant doing the extra bookkeeping that would be required with a 501h designation. However, we should keep an eye on our written communication to keep away from lobbying language.

5) Update on 'Google Workspace for non-profits'- SD, GS

Each user needs to establish an account. Gary believes training would be best together in a classroom with computers for each participant, possibly at CMC. *Pat will check with CMC CFO Meredith Plummer about possible use of a computer lab.*

The *Joshua Tree Voice* magazine is having an awards event and MBCA was nominated in one of the categories. Two Directors will be invited to the event.

Letters created / signed onto :

Sign on to letter for Natural Working Lands,

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, October 13, 2022 - 5:00 – 7:00 PM – zoom

Adjourned at 7:02 PM