

MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED MINUTES**

Thursday, October 13, 2022 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm Via Zoom

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

Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:01 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**

Steve thanked Helen Jeong for joining us again.

- **Agenda approval**

Steve moved to approved the agenda. Janet seconded, and all were in favor. (11-0)

- **Minutes from September 8, 2022 BOD meeting**

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

- **Treasurer's Report**

Cathy sent an email to Directors prior to the meeting explaining we're in transition to an online version of QuickBooks so there are no detailed reports available today. Nora connected us with Tech Soup for a much lower price for the QB subscription; it has been approved and will be set up soon. We transferred \$60,000 of our reserve cash into a 7-month CD with 2.01% interest at Pacific Western Bank. The remaining checking balance is \$20,629.14. A payment of \$89.94 was made for our new MBCA Zoom account. There were several new memberships and renewals and some donations added to those memberships. Cathy was also asked by US Bank to fill out an extensive organizational activity questionnaire that may have been related to our transfer out of \$60,000.

Presentation by Helen Jeong of proposed development

Helen has been working with a private family seeking to develop a "Joshua Tree Village" project, keeping in mind the County's Community Action Guide and MBCA interests, as well as sustainability and connection with the community. The project is about a half mile east of AutoCamp. Nine acres of development (already commercial zoning) will include retail and non-profit sectors. Commercial uses include a boutique hotel of 58 rooms, RV Park, restaurant, museum, gallery, observatory, cultural center, wedding chapel, education place or reception hall, and parking. They have been in contact with tribes hoping to get some artifacts on loan for their proposed museum. They've talked with JBWD and Sky's the Limit, want to use night sky friendly lighting, and are working with Robin Kobaly on garden design. They plan to reach out to Ruth Rieman to have a sculpture in the garden in Steve Rieman's honor. They are close to submitting final plans to the County.

Conservation Issues

1) JT listing – AM, DF,

Yesterday the Fish & Game [Commission](#) delayed the “threatened species” listing decision until February 2023. Newly-appointed Commissioner Anthony Williams needs time to thoroughly understand the issue. Sarah noted the comments by the [CDFW Director](#) that they finally did a really robust effort in consulting tribes and he hopes it’s a template for future consultations. There seems to be pressure toward a legislative conservation plan as a solution rather than a vote to list the species.

2) Aurora Solar and Calcite substation – PF

[AB 205](#) and [SB 122](#) streamlining permitting via CPUC as lead agency. Pat is not sure which requirements these projects will fall under. CEC has the ability to do siting certification processes for green energy projects storage and transmission, but basically they don’t have to worry about CEQA. AB205 allows developers to opt into a new process under exclusive state jurisdiction. Approval would overcome the Lucerne Valley area with solar. We may not get to comment on solar anymore, although there hasn’t been a test case. Steve said the legislation was a rider on another bill to get it passed. Utilities lobbyists are probably behind it to avoid public scrutiny. *Pat will send Laraine some information to put on our website.*

3) Scenic 247 – SK

Sarah said the aforementioned solar projects will very much affect the scenic route. While Heidi Duron in Land Use Services is now the point person, no information has been forthcoming. They may be waiting to see if a new transmission line gets approved, so it doesn’t look good for Scenic 247. Sara Fairchild volunteered hundreds of hours to map the route and it may have to be redone if there are more projects approved. It’s eligible but now there are roadblocks. Sienna Solar is not a contiguous parcel and would require a lot of overhead lines to connect; Brian looked at the plan and said it looks “like a spaghetti bowl.” Steve added that if Aurora comes under the new rules it will fast track and the house of cards falls down. State Lands is the lead agency on the developments to increase money for retired teachers.

4) Air Quality Monitoring –AM, PF

Lucerne Valley air quality is still bad. AQMD doesn’t come in response to complaints until the next day to measure and seems not to care. Low income areas are overlooked, not getting monitoring as they should, considering the inevitable high winds in the area.

Gary talked about the October 6 haboob that tore through Coachella, Palm Springs, and Redlands, which likely brought Salton Sea silt and chemicals. He contacted AQMD noting that it was life-threatening for some and there should have been a warning but they “don’t seem to care.” Cal EPA and CARB should be consulted. We could ask for stories from affected people in an Eblast. *Gary and Arch will meet with Pat to work on how to get warnings about health risks in these conditions. Gary has drafted a letter and will send to the committee for editing.* Cathy said she had an air quality reading of 300+ the day after the haboob even though it didn’t technically reach Yucca Valley.

5) Report on Statewide Lighting Ordinance [AB2382](#) – SB

Steve reported that Gavin Newsom vetoed it “because it would be too expensive.”

6) Report on 30x30 CNRA convening 9-28-22-AM, GS

Steve asked Arch and Gary to report on the convention. Arch noted there were positives and negatives, but thought it was good overall. The plenary session had no opportunity for Q&A or input. The Expo was where they had a table with other groups from all over state. Arch and Gary took turns looking at other groups' displays and staffing the table. The demonstration on a mapping tool was impressive, showing detail all the way down to parcels. Other good contacts were [Baani Behniwal](#) and [Woody Hastings](#) of the Climate Center. Baani was receptive to the desert sequestration issue and wants to see peer-reviewed papers on the subject. Another good contact was [Steve Hobbs of *The Conservation Fund*](#). This group was once part of *The Nature Conservancy*, but is now a separate organization, and will assist land conservancies/trusts (not just TNC) by making 'up front' loans for land purchases, and by helping with advance planning strategies for such purchases. This contact could be a valuable one to pass on to MDLT, NALC, and the like. Additional networking contacts included Andre Sanchez of CalWild, Mari Galloway of Wildlands Network, and Liesbet Olaerts of the Sierra Nevada Alliance.

(Here is a link to [CalNature Maps](#).)

Gary reported that Old Woman Springs Ranch has been sold and so has an uncertain future as a protected area. He spoke with Kelly Herbison of MDLT and learned they intend to be "more open" to relationships with other NGOs.

Steve asked whether there was a list of all attendees; Arch will look into it and believes we should maintain contact with other members of the "Power in Nature" coalition. Sarah thinks someone from the group that is working to loan funds for conservancy lands purchase may have a cabin near their home. *She will look into it.* 30x30 info has been posted on Google Docs.

7) [Save California Solar](#) –SB

Steve noted we continue to follow messages from this group while waiting for Governor Newsom to take a position on NEM 3.0. Speculation is he may not do anything until after the election.

8) Chuckwalla National Monument – GS

Gary reported they have finally released the map proposal but are still building support amongst Native Americans, businesses, and legislators, to prepare for presentation to Representative Raul Ruiz. The Navy is supportive in working on boundaries in relation to their Chocolate Mountain Gunnery Range.

Outreach & Communications

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

Janet reported on the SB County Supervisors September 27th meeting. The good news is their apparent commitment to do the (obligated) housing study. The errors in their housing report to HUD that we pointed out in October 2021 hadn't changed and are still misrepresenting. A big issue is that the East Valley Homeless Steering group is not getting reimbursed for emergency solution grants. The paperwork was completed in April but the County is not releasing the funds. A meeting is planned with JP Rose of CBD for next steps. A possible proposal is to have four planning commissions, one for each region. The size of SB County is really an issue.

2) Cannabis cultivation - BH, AM, PF

Brian reported there has been less activity recently. A state task force will now assist local teams.

4) Flamingo 640 – SB

Steve reported there have been no decisions on this project. Now is the time to start putting pressure on the Planning Commission to let them know people are watching by attending planning commission meetings and making public comment on it. It's an inappropriate development near residential communities similar to the big industrial scale warehouses in Bloomington.

7) UCR Climate Steward class- SD

Stacy shared a PowerPoint presentation about effective communication regarding climate change, such as assessing audiences and framing the issue. Climate deniers are only 10% in actuality. Begin with values. Use metaphors to explain the science. Connect to solutions. Help people understand and then they're more likely to feel they want to be part of the solution. Involve people in activity. Become a trusted messenger. Use resources at Cal-Adapt.org. Stacy's capstone project is a JBWD Climate Action Plan and Solar Strategy, already presented to JBWD. We applauded Stacy's great presentation! She may show it to other water district managers.

5) Conservation Priorities mapping tool – PF, SB, BH

At the CNRA conference, Gary and Arch met people demonstrating a more current mapping tool. Our Morongo Basin Conservation Priorities website map needs updating by GreenInfo. The intent is to let people see what values are on their property and help them think differently about where they live and what's valuable. Gary provided a link to the [30x30 data](#).

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues

1) Social Media and Website updates – Stacy / Laraine

Stacy reported that we paid for promotion of the CDC/MBCA event about the Joshua tree listing and climate change on Facebook and Instagram. There were more than 800 visitors to the website in September.

2) Events Committee reports:

Fall events

Report on 10-01-22 re: CESA and Joshua Tree by CDC and MBCA

Attendance in person was modest, with more online. The speakers were fantastic. Steve noted that local participant Jo Ann Bollen was "blown away" as she had not been familiar with the topic/issue. Laraine said the evaluations were more numerous than usual and very complimentary. Robin Kobaly's presentation about the desert underground was especially appreciated. *Someone suggested we do a video of Robin's presentation to share. Laraine will send the evaluation results to the Board.* There were also a lot of good suggestions for future topics, intended for the CDC Workshop program, but good ideas for us as well. Pat noted the need for data, e.g. quantifying how much carbon one creosote can sequester then multiply. *Maybe we could fund such research or crowdsource it. Gary, Pat, and Sarah are interested.*

10-27-22 Webinar re: STRs

We had tentatively planned this before getting involved with the CDC event so it's on the back burner for future consideration.

Tour hosts and docent reception – NOVEMBER 6

We need Board members to help set up and take down tables and chairs as part of the agreement with Eva at Harrison House to keep down the rental fee. *Laraine will send out a request for task and time commitments.* Hopefully all Board members can attend and help.

Annual meeting topic: WATER – Stacy

3) Educational support

Scholarships – LT, JJ, SK, SB

No report; meeting to be held in November.

Field trips CSA 20- JJ

Janet spoke with Mary at MDLT, and is planning a meeting with La Contenta. Eva Soltes has provided field trips to Harrison House for middle school students and maybe we can tie that in with the Conservation area.

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

Stacy is available for help with managing our Google Workspace. Steve suggests everyone get familiar with using it. Brian added that Stacy walked him through the process the first time and “it didn't hurt a bit!”

Upcoming events of interest that various directors plan to attend:

- The Joshuas, awards by the Joshua Tree Voice including MBCA as a candidate in the Ecology category;
- BasinWide Foundation Awards including two who have been involved with MBCA, Jim Ventura of MWA and Astrid Johnson of MB ARCH for homeless issues;
- Fundraiser for Big Morongo Canyon at Desierto Alto; and
- Bobby Furst fundraiser event for homeless kids.

Letters created / signed onto:

MBCA Letter re: scoping for Sienna Solar 2; Sign-on: Cactus Springs Area of Critical Environmental Concern

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, November 10, 2022 5:00 – 7:00 PM - zoom
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