

## MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED** MINUTES

Thursday, March 9, 2023 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm Via Zoom

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

### Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:07 PM

<u>_x_</u> Steve Bardwell	<u>_x_</u> Brian Hammer	<u>_x_</u> Arch McCulloch
<u>_x_</u> Stacy Doolittle	<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		

- **Introduction of Guests and Board Directors**

Thanks again to Helen Jeong for joining us, and to “Russ” who didn’t identify further.

- **Agenda approval**

David asked to add the topic of someone interested in donating land to MBCA. ***Steve moved to approve the revised minutes. Pat seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)***

- **Minutes from February 9, 2023 BOD meeting**

With minor changes sent by Steve and incorporated by Laraine prior to the meeting, ***Steve moved to approve the February minutes. Pat seconded, and all were in favor. (10-0)***

- **Treasurer’s Report**

Cathy described how the different schedules of monthly bank and credit card statements create a timing problem for her in reporting to the Board. She proposed to include a copy of each month’s credit card statement in addition to the usual QuickBooks reports based on bank statements. This would not only resolve the timing problem for reporting but would add more detail and transparency. There was consensus that the Board was very comfortable with this solution.

Cathy then reported on memberships and donations. Our checking account balance is \$22,646.83. The CD remains at \$60,000 and matures on April 19. *Cathy will research our CD options and report at our April 13 meeting.*

Pat asked about the status of the \$25,000 donation by Fred Stern several years ago related to the Newberry Springs solar issue. It is considered to be part of the CD. Pat said it was intended to be used for litigation related to renewable energy issues. Laraine will check past minutes for references to this donation. *We should create a definitive statement for its use if we haven’t already. Steve to add to April agenda.* (Note: background on this donation can be found in the Treasurer’s section of the minutes of July 9, 2020 & January 14, 2021.)

Janet asked if she would need pre-approval if the printing of Scholarship flyers goes a bit over the \$100 Board member reimbursable spending limit. There was consensus that pre-approval wasn’t needed.

## Outreach & Communications

### 1) Flamingo 640 Glamping – SB

The County Planning Commission today let the glamping project die by inaction, “without prejudice.” The developer could appeal to the Board of Supervisors within 10 days or resubmit a revised project later. Steve believed it was the largest public comment turnout he’d seen at the JT Government Center video facility. Traffic was an especially big issue, plus parking and that it’s really a resort hotel, not a campground. Steve received words of appreciation from others present for MBCA’s role in getting the word out.

### 2) Wonder Inn – PF

This project is on the Planning Commission agenda for March 23. Among the main points in our [comment letter](#) and especially the [addendum](#) is how many add-ons the developers did not include in their proposal but are advertising on social media, e.g. a housing development with swimming pools, and “ATV adventures” which would be illegal in that area. They also misstate facts such as the development being “the first resort within Joshua Tree National Park.” Over 160 comment letters were sent to the County.

### 3) [Selection](#) of new head of LUS – JJ, DF, SB

Steve sent Supervisor Rowe a copy of a [September 2019 letter](#) from former head of Land Use Services Terri Rahhal that “provides an insightful overview of the differences of needs and considerations for the various regions of the county,” including unincorporated and desert communities. Steve suggested that Dawn share this information with candidates for the open LUS Director position. (Note: I’ve placed the Rahhal letter linked above onto our website only to make it available to you – it’s not available to website viewers.) Janet explained that the Rahhal letter was related to the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). Dawn acknowledged receipt of the Rahhal letter and will pass it on. The Planning Commission should also be made aware of the points that Terri Rahhal makes in the document.

Pat added that LUS Director candidates and the Planning Commission also need to understand the history of the 5-acre tracts. Yucca Valley didn’t accept that program and that’s why they have more dense developments. *Janet suggested we create a video for our website explaining the 5-acre tract act (no one assigned).* Steve said that Bonnie Hawthorne made a great presentation today against Flamingo 640 and is anxious and ready to work with us again. *Pat also wants to add the booklet [5 Acres of Heaven](#) onto the website; Brian offered to help. Laraine will initiate this with Nora, Stacy, and Brian to determine how to best present the very large document (~120 MB).*

### 4) Housing

#### *SBCO Housing Trust - JJ*

Janet continues to work with Astrid Johnson and Kymberly McClain, who is working on grants. Janet has been attending the East Valley Regional Steering Committee (EVRSC) of the [San Bernardino County Interagency Council on Homelessness](#). The County’s Housing planning schedule is not clear. *Steve asked, and Janet agreed to put together a glossary of the many housing-related acronyms.* Janet added that 29 Palms housed 46 people during the recent

storms and some of the cost was covered by donations from the December benefit we co-sponsored.

Steve wants to push for legislation that mandates STR reporting. On a recent KCDZ Up Close show, Dawn said the County has hired someone to study the STR tax and noted that STRs are a problem in some areas and not others. Steve added that the County isn't making any reference to "Program 4" so it's not clear what its status is.

David added that on the Up Close Show Dawn said they advertised positions for a new Municipal Advisory Council but didn't get any applications. Few people even knew about it. Steve was asked informally by the Supervisor's representative Glen Harris and expressed interest but never heard anything back. Steve feels we should advocate for a new MAC because the proposed monthly open houses are not helpful; they're just "listening sessions" at best. There's no opportunity for community recommendations.

*Short Term Rentals* – Legislative action to mandate tabulation of STRs - JJ - We'll continue to watch for any action on this.

5) Adopt-A-Highway update– DF

David noticed recently that an entire trash bag was dumped on the center lane but it was cleaned up soon after, perhaps by the CHP.

6) Scenic 247 – SK

The County has assigned a planner. The next step is developing a Corridor Management Plan. The designation was an important part of the comments against Flamingo 640.

7) Conservation priorities mapping MDLT –SB

Steve learned from Kelly Herbinson that MDLT has funded a graduate student to work on this. Events at today's Planning Commission meeting showed the importance of having such mapping.

8) Meet with FOJT – SB

Hasn't been scheduled yet.

## **Conservation Issues**

1) Solar and DRECP – PF

The [BLM announced](#) they have opted not to reopen the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan:

"After consideration, the BLM chose not to include the area under the DRECP in the current effort as the BLM continues to believe the DRECP supports an acceptable balance between conservation and renewable energy opportunities within its planning area boundary. Public comments received to date support this position."

This is good news; while it's not ideal, its protections would have most likely been weakened by changes. Steve noted that the [HVCC](#) doesn't want to see *any*

industrial scale solar anywhere in the desert, a very strong stance. *Pat will continue to try to find the old EPA study that set aside places to use for solar.*

2) JT listing –DF, BH

Brian reported that the trailer bill that contains the revised Joshua tree restrictions is problematic on several counts. It was likely written by the Governor's staff with an expectation it would be picked up and revised by legislators but that hasn't happened. He's hoping to convince his agency to get involved. As it is, it's "draconian." It's not clearly defined what Joshua trees' status would be outside of the boundaries indicated on a map he shared. *Steve will check with Brendan Cummings to find out more about the content and status.* Dawn Rowe is now in opposition to the listing but we're not sure if her stance is just on this particular approach or in general. *Brian will send us the Joshua tree locations map.* Arch sees other problems such as delineation of hybrids.

3) [Save California Solar](#) / NEM 3.0 – DF, SB

MBCA [signed onto a letter](#) in support of a [request to rehear](#) the NEM 3.0 decision by the CPUC on the basis of environmental justice and other points. It probably won't stop it from going into effect in April. Steve noted that by adding a battery you can stay in NEM 2.0.

4) Air Quality update – AM, SK,

Contact Erin Rode - SB and Raul Ruiz re: Haboob - ? Not done yet.

5) 30x30 update –AM

Research EPA study re: solar siting recommendations –PF

*As noted above, Pat will continue to try to find the old EPA study that set aside places to use for solar.*

Arch reviewed the history of the Inland Desert Working Group (IDWG) project for the 30x30 California initiative. The group was asked to create a list of protection areas that were "shovel ready." They started with a wish list of around 70 mostly large parcels and ended up submitting 5 or 6. Moises Cisneros (of Sierra Club and the IDWG) was contacted by BLM and asked if IDWG had a list of properties so that BLM could possibly incorporate them into their list. (Note the 30x30 is state and BLM is federal.) BLM may be looking for public comments to describe areas we want to preserve, so it's good to be asked! Arch will look through that early list of 70 but needs help working on descriptive text for the properties. Steve added that MBCA [signed on](#) to support AB 1757 for creating an advisory committee to highlight lands with carbon sequestration capacity. There is a need to include a desert representative on the committee.

6) Chuckwalla National Monument - AM

Supporters have been asked not to publicize the proposal too much, likely for political reasons. Protecting this land was #1 on the abbreviated 30x30 list.

7) MWA update re: water – BH

Brian showed some MWA maps describing the recent rain and noted that this has actually been a typical rain year, even though due to the long drought it seems extreme. There's a pretty good snowpack in both the local mountains

and the Sierra Nevada, but with a warm storm predicted soon, the melting could be problematic. Surface water has been recharged to the tune of 60,000 acre feet. Pat pointed out the comparatively low amount of water that fell in the Newberry Springs area, exacerbating dust problems with solar projects.

8) Dark Skies - Presentation in Wonder Valley 4-14-23 – SB

This program will be sponsored by MBCA and Friends of Wonder Valley. Steve, Pat, Margaret Prescod and others are involved. *Steve will share the flyer when it's ready and Laraine will post on our Events Calendar.*

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

1) Draft policy for nomination of Board members – LT

Laraine reviewed the proposal and will revise it with suggestions made today and send out for a final review and will also provide a draft “invitation” letter.

→Pat asked whether MBCA will become a financial sponsor for StopWonderInn. Steve reported that after asking input from Laraine and Meg Foley, it seems not in our best interests, and he has shared that with Eric Hamburg.

2) Events Committee reports: Spring DWL program

The Tour Committee is meeting weekly and working on in-person sites for April 23 as well as videos. Melissa Sabol is ready to work on our graphics and Cole Gibson on videos.

3) Social Media and Website updates – Stacy / Laraine

We had high website traffic in January. The \$27 Facebook ad for scholarships has already generated 52 link clicks.

4) Educational support

*Scholarships – LT, JJ, SK, SB*

The Committee is working on a broader distribution of information and has had great help especially from non-Director committee members Karin Messaros and Meg Foley. The application deadline is April 2.

*Field trips – JJ*

Janet will be meeting soon with school personnel. Laraine noted that the Board needs to know soon exactly what the busing costs will be for the trial event.

5) Purchase video projector

Inventory MBCA equipment

Steve confirmed with a donor from Wonder Valley that their \$300 donation is available for any MBCA usage, but they would be pleased if we use it to purchase a video projector. There was discussion about potential difficulties in sharing due to distance and it was confirmed that MBCA is the owner. **Steve moved to purchase a video projector offered by Eric Hamburg for \$300 to be shared as needed with the Stop Wonder Inn group. Laraine seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)**

6) Support MEHKO? – SB, LT

We’ve been asked by MBCA member Crystal Wysong to sign on to a coalition

supporting implementation of Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation licensing in San Bernardino County. We agreed it would provide the chance for low-income residents to have a home business that helps them afford housing.

**Laraine moved to sign on to the coalition letter requesting the implementation of Microenterprise Home Kitchen Operation licensing in San Bernardino County. Stacy seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)**

*Laraine will check with Crystal about where to send our support and will create a News post on the website.*

7) Poetry on our website? – PF

We agreed to table this until the next meeting.

8) Card for Greg Mendoza, Phyllis Schwartz.

9) (added) David - land donated to MBCA?

David received a phone call from a Tom Ludlow of Yucaipa. He said his mother had passed and left an inholding parcel in Yucca Valley that he would like to donate to MBCA. David explained it's not something we do and suggested he contact MDLT. David gave him Steve's phone numbers.

***Adjourned by consensus at 7:11 PM.***

Letter: Sign-on to [challenge NEM3](#); Letter: Desert representation on board created by [AB1757](#); Scoping comments on [Soda Mountain solar](#); [Letter](#) on proposed Wonder Inn resort.

**Next Regular Meeting:** Thursday, April 13, 2023, 5:00 – 7:00 PM - zoom