

## MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED** MINUTES

Thursday, May 11, 2023 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm Via Zoom

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

### **Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:02 PM**

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

- **Introduction of Guests and Board Directors**

Visitors introduced themselves: Shauna Tucker of Joshua Tree; Kerrie Aley and Alan Songer of Pioneertown (repeat visitors) and Christy Huiner who works with Brian at MWA and lives in Hesperia. Board members introduced themselves and Steve thanked the guests for attending.

- **Agenda approval**

***Steve moved to approve the agenda. Pat seconded, & all were in favor. (9-0)***

- **Minutes from April 13, 2023 BOD meeting**

***Steve moved to approve the April minutes. Sarah seconded, and all were in favor. (9-0)***

- **Treasurer's Report**

Cathy reported some details from the Tour registrations. There were 209 paid registrations, 12 new single memberships, and 21 new couples memberships, most from the Morongo Basin but also from Palm Springs, Indio, Pasadena, Moorpark, LA, Lake Havasu, Manhattan Beach, Laguna Niguel, Michigan, and Illinois. There were 13 renewal memberships and we received donations from Tour hosts Valerie Davis and Scot McKone.

One large expenditure this month was \$515 for liability insurance. Our checking balance is \$23,207.81. The CD earned \$796.79 and the principal was rolled over on April 19 for seven more months at 5% interest per our decision last month. Due to the current bank problems in the news, Cathy researched FDIC refund information and found that if the account balance is under the \$250,000 limit, their goal is to make payment within 2 business days of a bank's failure, and this has apparently happened in the recent failures. We accepted the Treasurer's report by consensus.

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

1) Events Committee reports: Spring Landscape Tour – SD, LT, SK, CZ

Laraine reported that after reviewing all the Tour check-in sheets there appeared to have been 226 participants. *She will do a bit more analysis for the final report that will be made to the funding agencies.* Sarah reported that we extended the Tour Inspiration contest a week as there had been only one entry by the deadline. The three judges are ready to do the review (Judy Wold, Miriam Seger, Mike Lipsitz). *Cathy has a lot of suggestions to share at an upcoming event-review meeting that Laraine will set up. We also need to plan the thank-you event for hosts and docents.*

2) Educational support

*Scholarships* – LT, JJ, SK, SB

Scholarship committee members will be attending the high school events to award the three scholarships: Laraine at Twentynine Palms for Jadyn Sarah Bauer; Steve and Sarah at Yucca Valley for Landon Michael Stitt; and possibly Janet and Ruth Rieman for Kylie Morning Adkins (Rieman scholarship) at Black Rock.

Laraine announced she just received a \$1000 donation from her friends and neighbors Paul and Mary Livio to cover the Rieman scholarship next year.

#### *Field trips –Fund buses - JJ*

Janet summarized the latest plan for one field trip this year and a commitment to work out liability insurance issues over the summer to add a second trip next year. This is the culmination of two years of planning; the original idea was an outing for all local 8<sup>th</sup> graders to the County's [Desert View Conservation Area](#) (formerly "Section 6," which will be the eventual 2<sup>nd</sup> trip).

All La Contenta 8<sup>th</sup> graders (about 300) are scheduled for the trip between May 22-24. County Parks and Recreation staff member Tammie Moore has been key to the planning and their department is the lead. Mojave Desert Land Trust and Joshua Tree National Park have also been involved. The May inaugural event will provide six bus trips of 50 students each with education on water infrastructure and jobs and training availability in the Basin during the bus ride, then stops at Harrison House and its permaculture garden, and finally a stop at Copper Mountain College. Harrison House is covering one day of busing (2 of the 6 bus trips). The estimate for each day's busing is \$600. ***Steve moved to approve funding up to \$1200 to cover the cost of two days of buses for the Field Trip. Laraine seconded and all were in favor (9-0).***

Janet added that donations from other organizations are under discussion to cover substitute teachers and other expenses.

#### 3) MBCA table at MWA Conservation Fair 5-20-23 – CZ

*Steve will be setting up a table and asked for others to join; Laraine and Sarah volunteered. Arch volunteered a shade canopy.*

#### 4) Social Media and Website updates – SD, LT

Laraine reported in Stacy's absence that the Google report showed over 1000 website hits in April, obviously because of the Tour. The Google report system is changing and Laraine has asked Nora to help with the adaptation. *Laraine also plans to convene the Web Team this summer to review the whole site and make improvements and additions where needed or desired.*

#### 5) Draft policy for nomination of Board members – LT

Laraine read the "action commitment" on this topic from the last meeting: *Sarah, Stacy, Laraine, and Pat will meet and come up with a proposal and the Board should finalize a Policy before or no later than our August Retreat.*

#### 6) Inventory MBCA equipment

*Sarah as Registrar will create an inventory of our displays, equipment, and materials.*

#### 7) Poetry on our website? – PF

*Pat agreed this should be included in the Web Team's next agenda.*

8) Card for Greg Mendoza, Phyllis Schwartz

Steve happened to see Rosie Mendoza at the McClellan Tour site and extended our sympathy. *Steve still intends to send cards.*

## **Outreach & Communications**

### **1) Land Use in the Morongo Basin - All**

Steve spoke of changes coming, some unexpected and not positive. Ben Loescher, who is advocating for an overlay for Pioneertown, told Steve that the County seems to be wanting to incorporate more rural commercial zoning, which Kerrie said started with a Mane Street overlay. Supervisor Rowe is unaware of Land Use Services doing this. A permanent Director of LUS has still not been appointed. There was also a change to the camping ordinance that suddenly appeared but hasn't been implemented. If there's no Director, it's unclear who is pushing these desert development initiatives.

*Steve suggested and others concurred we need to have a good showing at the May 31 Supervisor's Open House in Joshua Tree to ask questions about these issues.* Steve received an email from Heidi Duron, asking for input on how to establish housing displacement from STRs. Janet reported lots of changes on the interagency homelessness council.

Steve commented that a push for rezoning toward commercial development would be in contradiction to the EIR for the Countywide Plan that states an expectation of limited additional growth in the high desert. It appears they are sidestepping that to encourage more development here. Kerrie and Janet both have seen STR applications and approvals continue to rise. Are they approving all applications?

Steve noted that in the County's policy review related to development the word "environment" does not appear; there is not a single environment reference – it's all development focused. Brian suggested we update the STR video to get people involved again. *Kerrie suggested investigating all recent STR applications to show they're approving everything. Brian can map these if provided addresses.*

Janet viewed the West Valley Steering committee meeting and they're noting the same problems seen by the East Valley group she regularly attends. The County doesn't share County homeless data until it's on the HUD database a year later. Numbers continue to rise. *Janet plans to do more research about STRs in other County areas.* Wayne Hamilton (MUSD) is still getting a few calls each week from families seeking help with housing. Kerrie brought up that new rentals seem to be "cannibalizing" older ones, so per-property rental rates are likely going down, so additional available rentals do not necessarily generate more TOT money. We are still uncertain about the use of TOT income; it appears it is used as general fund augmentation with no connection to the effects of STRs on communities. *Brian suggested we make a public information request to get that information. Steve said that Supervisor Rowe asked for that data last year – we could ask her again.*

Another message to the County should be the lack of employee housing and thus potential loss to businesses. Janet spoke about County responsibility for the 95% of the County that is unincorporated. There have been housing issues across the region, including incorporated municipalities. There has been recent reporting in the *SB Sun* where the County blamed non-profits for housing relief money problems. Yet the County sat on HUD money for 17 months before releasing it for proposals. We

know there's a lack of staff, and there seems to be uncertainty about who's in charge. But the problems also appeared to be deliberately quashed. The non-profits are seeking redress in the press from the inaccuracies presented by the County.

## 2) Housing

### *Program 4 JJ*

There's been no news on hiring consultants for the Program 4 report. Steve has asked Heidi Duron to contact him about it.

### *SBCO Housing Trust JJ*

Steve reported that this concept has fallen by the wayside. *We should get people to regularly ask Supervisor Rowe about this and other housing issues during general comments at every Supervisors meeting (via the Joshua Tree link). Kerrie suggested we also ask for a regular update on STRs and Housing to be on each meeting's agenda.*

*Pat suggested we need a strategy meeting outside of this meeting to plan how to carry these messages.* This is also an environmental justice issue and we need to get our concerns to the state level, to the Attorney General's office and the Housing and Community Development Department, as the people who need help aren't getting it from San Bernardino County. We need to "nag" and get the message out that the County is four years behind in developing real housing due to their total acceptance of STRs. Shauna wants to be kept apprised about the Housing Trust Committee.

### *Short Term Rentals –Mandate tabulation of STRs; Tax STRs SB 584 – JJ*

(See discussion on STRs in Item 1 above, Land Use in the Morongo Basin.)

### *Request for interview KCET Earth Focus – SK*

Sarah & Janet have both tried to contact the filmmakers. *Steve and Sarah have a neighbor who's part of it and will contact him.*

## 3) Consider production of video re: desert soils

This relates to the \$25,000 Fred Stearns donation from several years ago that Pat enabled. Pat agrees we should create a short YouTube video about soils and dust problems. But she'd also like to see us donate to Basin & Range Watch who are following solar projects in Nevada and their significant effects across the desert.

*Laraine will post on the website the recent letter on the Golden Current project.* There was consensus to make a B&RW donation but no specific motion on the amount.

*Steve will contact Bonnie Hawthorne about producing a desert soils video.*

Laraine asked for clarification on whether we still have \$20,000 or \$25,000 of the Fred Stearn donation. Pat reminded us that the \$5000 of it that we had committed for a tribal event in the minutes two years ago was never spent because of COVID, so there is still \$25,000.

## **Conservation Issues**

### 1) Cadiz – SB, DF

Steve participated in a conference call update on Cadiz and called attention to the very "slick" promotional video linked in the title of this agenda item. It enthusiastically promotes mining desert water and connects it to environmental justice. The conference call group is trying to get to LA's Municipal Water District's agencies to argue against the Cadiz plan. Alan noted there's a lot on the video

extolling farming benefits, but that's a red herring. They now have the rights to the old El Paso gas/oil pipeline from the desert towards Bakersfield for moving the water. What about water contamination from the pipeline?

2) JT listing –DF, BH

Yucca Valley passed a resolution against any Joshua tree legislation. Brian reported it's still a trailer bill, so unless it's pulled it will be acted on within budget decisions.

3) MWA update re: water – BH

Brian reported they are buying water and putting it into the ground as fast as they can. The series of modest storms along with snowmelt was optimal for groundwater recharging within their service area. Christy reported there is a 100% allocation this year, delivering water to the Morongo Basin and into the Mojave River.

4) [Save California Solar](#) / NEM 3.0;

The California Public Utilities Commission approved the new standard and it's in effect as of mid-April. There is a lawsuit against the new regulation by Center for Biological Diversity and another group. Steve has communicated with Save California Solar's Dave Rosenfeld. There's a proposal before CPUC to limit virtual net metering which would eliminate much of the renter benefit. *Dave would be willing to make a presentation to us, possibly at next meeting, for an update.*

[Solar Valley Webinar](#) on Rooftop solar June 8;

This event offered by UCR's Center for Environmental Research and Technology will include pro-rooftop speaker Bernadette Del Chiaro. *Steve asked to put Sammy Roth's Boiling Point article that Laraine had sent out onto the website.* Laraine feels that Roth provides a lot of good information about the pros and cons of rooftop and big solar and points out the hard questions. Pat feels differently and has concerns about his reporting, especially after she and Robin met with him and he has continued to ignore desert carbon sequestration in his reporting.

Update on [SB 233](#); SB, DF

This would mandate all electric vehicles be bidirectional so power can be fed into the house as well as house to car. It will be heard on May 15 at the Appropriations Committee.

5) Scenic 247 – SK

Sarah reported that the Homestead Valley Council continues to push for Supervisors to apply to CalTrans for a corridor protection plan. Steven Valdez is the new contact person. He reached out to the BLM Barstow office and BLM replied that this creates a lot of problems for the BLM. At least they're communicating.

6) Air Quality update – AM, SK,

Contact Erin Rode - SB and Raul Ruiz re: Haboob - ? Nothing new.

7) 30x30 update – SB 337 - AM, PF

Arch reported that the desert is still not as high on the 30x30 agenda as it should be. So far there has been no desert representation on the state commission, but recently there was agreement to add Tim Krantz in that role. However, there has been no formal announcement or seating of him yet. The Inland Desert Working Group needs to push this – soon.



At a meeting in Sacramento, Moises Cisneros met with representatives Padilla, Ramos, Carrillo, and Garcia. He asked Arch for a list of Inland Desert Working Group priorities related to 30x30 sorted by the 4 Congressional Districts. Arch was able to do the information and Moises was grateful; he reported a positive meeting.

Steve noted that SB 337 would put 30x30 into law. Arch added that expected state budget cuts will impact any 30x30 implementation.

8) Chuckwalla National Monument - AM

The boundaries are not yet public as there has been concern from the Coachella Valley Water District; they don't like the boundaries but are not specifying why. The coalition of groups forming the steering committee is still looking to get the best outcome they can with input from the Native American Land Conservancy and tribal representatives.

9) Dark Skies - Presentation in Wonder Valley 4-14-23 – PF, SB

On June 7 commercial compliance is required by the Light Trespass Ordinance. Unshielded lights on commercial properties should be reported. This doesn't include STRs until residential compliance comes into play later in the year.

10) Desert Issues from Sierra Club Meeting

Laraine reported on a San Geronio Chapter meeting that was focused on desert issues presented by Moises Cisneros. We are up-to-date on all the issues he reported. She was impressed by several young participants in the meeting, and two of them are part of our supporter list. Two points Moises emphasized for success on desert issues were partnerships and having knowledgeable spokespeople.

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*Christy told us that MWA would like to have our garden tour videos on their website. Steve will make the connection.*

**Adjourned 7:05 PM**

Letters: MBCA Letter re: Golden Currant Solar

**Next Regular Meeting:** Thursday, June 8, 2023, 5:00 – 7:00 PM - zoom