

MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED** MINUTES

Thursday, June 8, 2023 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm Via Zoom

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

Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:11 PM

<u> </u> Steve Bardwell	<u> </u> Brian Hammer	<u> </u> Arch McCulloch
<u> </u> Stacy Doolittle	<u> </u> Janet Johnston	<u> </u> Laraine Turk
<u> </u> David Fick	<u> </u> Sarah Kennington	<u> </u> Cathy Zarakov
<u> </u> Pat Flanagan (~5:30)		

- **Introduction of Guests and Board Directors**

Steve welcomed return guest Helen Jeong.

- **Agenda approval**

Steve moved to approve the agenda. Laraine seconded and all were in favor (9-0).

- **Minutes from May 11, 2023 BOD meeting**

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

- **Treasurer's Report**

Cathy reported we received one renewal membership and a \$1000 donation from Paul and Mary Livio for the Rieman scholarship next year. Expenditures for the Tour so far were \$4000 for the first half of video production, \$1040 for graphic work, and \$500 for KCDZ ads. We paid \$715.65 as half of the cost of last fall's workshop with CDC. Grant checks from water agencies are expected soon. Our checking balance is \$17,923.24 and the CD at \$60,000.

Outreach & Communications

1) Land Use in the Morongo Basin -
Pioneertown overlay petition

The [overlay proposal](#) is for the Mane Street commercial area, and supporters are asked to send comments to the County. At same time, the County will publish zoning maps online at a time yet to be established, one map for all land uses for unincorporated areas and another for zoning. The maps must be consistent to comply with State requirements.

Flamingo 640

Heidi Duron of Land Use Services emailed Steve in April to note that the Planning Commission was going to consider refinements to the campground definitions within the Rural Living Zoning. However, after pushback from HVCC and LVEDA, the item was pulled from the agenda.

Pat and Steve may meet with the developer of Flamingo 640 in late June. The scope of work may be changing and a new Planning Commission review might be needed, or a Supervisors' review, depending on the extent of plan revisions.

Note from Dawn about hiring a new LUS Director.

Steve received notification of the appointment of Mark Wardlaw as new director of Land Use Services. Arch and Pat reported there have been concerns about his fairness related to public input in at least two prior positions, and a record of nit-picking opposition details and then dismissing that input. Stacy sent an email to the author of the news article Pat sent us, asking for more information.

Sarah reminded us of the County's earlier comments in the Countywide Plan EIR about buildout, that growth between 2016 and 2040 would focus on Bloomington and Rialto housing, with little to no growth expected in other areas due to water availability and other constraints and the desires of other residents. We've referenced this in comments, but need to keep repeating it.

David and Stacy shared information about the Joshua Basin Water District connection fees increase from \$8000 to \$12,000. It hadn't been updated since 2007 and might have some effect on controlling growth in Joshua Tree.

Janet reported more over-grading in the Friendly Hills area. She reported the incidents, but the County seems to continue to ignore their own code. *Steve suggested we pursue the issue by an introductory letter to the new LUS Director.*

2) Housing

STRs Program 4, SBCO Housing Trust, Homeless, SB 584 - JJ,

Janet reported there was an East Valley Regional Steering Committee short-notice special meeting related to a grant. Our local homeless program ARCH is going through a process to include County approval for the HHAP 3 - Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention Round 3 Grant. Carrie Harmon is the new head of the County's Community Development and Housing department. Janet added that some of the federal housing money is "flowing faster," possibly in part due to recent news reporting on the issue. Twentynine Palms is actively working on housing issues.

There is legislation related to tax collection on STRs ([SB 584](#)). Steve said that at Supervisor Rowe's recent open house she reported there is a consultant, Granicus, being hired for Program 4, with a late October completion goal.

Janet reported that ARCH is trying to establish a housing navigation center to survey what we have and connect people with available housing. Several local groups attended a recent USDA meeting to find new funding programs. There is no news on the County Housing Trust.

Request for interview KCET Earth Focus – SK

Sarah has sent a follow-up email with no response yet.

3) Consider production of video re: desert soils – PF

Our discussion started with the focus on desert soils. We progressed to agree that a more general video to help people understand the complexity and value of all desert ecosystems would be more valuable, especially for those in favor of "big solar." The video structure could be by level – underground, ground level, air, night sky. We should engage MDLT and Robin Kobaly. Such a video could be submitted to the Rose Foundation film contest for greater exposure. *There was consensus to pursue such a film/video; Stacy, Pat, Steve, and Arch will work on it.*

4) Recycling (NOT) in Basin - SB

Different experiences regarding recycling at County dump sites were shared. We understand that very little actually gets recycled beyond CRVs. *We could contact Burrtec, County Public Works, and Glen Harris to find facts and share on our website. (current page).*

5) Trailer Bills (30x30; Brightline wildlife crossings; Western JT;)

We signed onto [the letter](#) concerned with environmental issues in trailer bills. It's more expedient for the governor, but legislators need to object. However, most legislators also use trailer bills occasionally to achieve their goals.

Brian reported that the Joshua tree bill passed the Assembly and was forwarded to the Senate. If it doesn't pass, the Governor could still put it through as a trailer.

Conservation Issues

1) BLM Rulemaking prioritizing wildlife and intact - All

Laraine watched the webinar and reported the BLM is proposing more focus on resilience of public lands, although constantly balancing that with their "multiple-use and sustained yield" mission to provide "food, energy and fiber." There's an intent to do more information gathering to make better decisions. There was no specific focus on the desert – more on grazing issues.

2) SB County RCIS Comment deadline 8-4-23 - SB, PF

This has been a long-time process to create a Resource Conservation Investment Strategy for the County. It would be a comprehensive guidance document, but not regulatory and therefore voluntary only. Comments are being sought by August 4.

3) Cadiz - SB, DF

David reported the stock price dropped again, now at \$4.75.

4) JT listing -DF, BH

The bill is both in the Senate and within a trailer bill.

5) MWA update re: water - BH

Brian reported the good news that MWA is taking as much water as allowed, as much as 500 acre-feet a day. David asked about the rising price of water even though it's more available. Brian suggested that part of it is in energy costs, delivery, and infrastructure. Brian added that the state water project is the largest user and generator of electricity in the state and noted that MWA put a micro hydroplant on one of their pipelines.

6) Save California Solar / NEM 3.0; Solar Valley Webinar on Rooftop solar June 8; update on SB 233; SB,DF

Steve, Pat and Laraine viewed the Solar Valley rooftop solar webinar which had some good information. *The recording will be provided to Directors when available.* Bernadette del Chiaro of [CalSAA](#) is a great force for rooftop solar. SunRun is developing a new system pairing rooftop and batteries but batteries are for home backup, not for grid resilience connectivity. NEM 3.0 reduced rooftop solar interest so this is what they feel is their necessary response to keep business going. Used solar

panels are considered hazardous waste in California. This is wasteful – they can and should be reused not trashed.

7) 29 Palms Solar project and AB 205 - PF

Pat reported on the developers' presentation to the City Council. They say they'll create 54 MW on 175 acres, but *Pat will be inquiring about that* because she figures they'd need 378 acres for that much production. It's probably because AB 205 says to qualify you have to produce 54 MW. They are planning some environmentally-conscious measures: stationary panels, which helps reduce lake effect that attracts birds; they don't intend to scrape but they are on a sand transport path, so will need to stabilize soils; they'll use wildlife conscious fencing. Still, it looks like they'll need to be larger which is a problem.

Brian sent us a copy of the latest solar project update. Ord Mountain is on hold by the applicant. Sienna's status is not clear and of concern. Aurora/Stagecoach (state lands) by the Sawtooths is uncertain. Steve noted that the Calcite substation is a critical element and is pivotal. Only grandfathered projects should be considered. Stagecoach sidesteps the limits because it's state lands commission. Steve thinks AB 205 trumps any local prohibitions on solar. Brian pointed out there will likely be court cases that will in the long run create the final reality of implementation.

8) 30x30 update - SB 337 - AM, PF

- Arch said there has been no action on the Inland Desert group's recommendation that Tim Krantz be added to the 30x30 group as a desert representative.
- In response to a request by BLM, Arch sent them a wish list of desert lands to preserve. An earlier list was sent to 30x30 but BLM wanted to "compare notes." They may be looking for the level of public interest in particular places.
- It was reported that JPL has technology that can do dust analysis, and this is being pursued.
- *There was a Pathways to 30x30 webinar on conservation easements; Arch will forward the link when it's available.*

9) Chuckwalla National Monument – AM

Laraine posted on MBCA's calendar the June 13 Virtual Open House. They are working to get more tribal engagement. Ruiz wants to see 1000 signatures but we're not sure if that's of his constituents or general supporters.

10) Dark Skies - SB

June 7 is the compliance deadline for commercial properties; the residential deadline is in about 6 months.

11) Air Quality update - Contact Erin Rode - SB and Raul Ruiz re: Haboob - ?
No action taken.

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues

1) Events Committee reports: Spring Landscape Tour and Video production - SD, LT, SK, CZ

Stacy reported that 3 of the 4 videos are complete. MDLT's is especially good. *Stacy will send Carl's plant list to Arch to double check with plant names in the video.*

Laraine is working on the DWL Tour Funders Report to cover 2020-2023 since the last report published was 2019. The Thank You Luncheon is Saturday, June 24. David noted our STR video is up to 12,000 views.

2) Educational support

Scholarships - LT, JJ, SK, SB

Directors were at each ceremony and the [Scholarship webpage](#) with photos is up.

Field trips - JJ

Janet gave a great overview at our last meeting.

4) Social Media and Website updates - SD, LT

Google Analytics reported 451 users in May. Stacy noted that Native Plant Nurseries got a lot of views in May, Scholarships had 38 views, and there were 41 views of the Inspiration Contest winners page.

Laraine will create a news post with the updated solar projects list that Brian sent. Brian will see if he can create a "heat map" version of the projects.

5) Draft policy for nomination of Board members - LT

Sarah, Stacy, Pat and Laraine plan to meet.

6) Inventory MBCA equipment

Sarah has begun this project. *Directors should send her information about any MBCA equipment or materials they have.*

Tents we funded for Cindy Zacks' ecology classes have been returned to us now that Cindy has retired. *Suggestions were made to donate them to an outward bound nonprofit (David) or the MDLT WISDOM program.*

Adjourned at 7:10 PM.

Letters: Concern with Trailer Bills process; Support Rock-hounding in Mojave Trails; Support AB 1573 limiting use of non-functional turf;

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, July 8, 2023, 5:00 - 7:00 PM - zoom