

MBCA BOARD MEETING **DRAFT MINUTES**

Thursday, July 12, 2023 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm Via Zoom

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

Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:05 PM

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Bardwell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Hammer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arch McCulloch
<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		

- **Introduction of Guests and Board Directors**

Steve welcomed and thanked returning guest Helen Jeong.

- **Agenda approval**

Steve moved to approve the agenda. Sarah seconded and all were in favor (10-0).

- **Minutes from June 8, 2023 BOD meeting**

Steve moved to approve the June minutes. Sarah seconded, and all were in favor (10-0).

- **Treasurer's Report**

Cathy reported several new memberships and a renewal, with extra donations of \$60. Checks from all Landscape Tour agency supporters have arrived: Golden State \$750, JBWD \$1000, TPWD \$1250, BVWA \$1250, and HDWD \$1250, totaling \$5500. We also received notice from MWA for a forthcoming check for \$6000. We asked for \$8000 but were told to expect \$5000, so the extra is a nice surprise. The main recent expenditure was the remaining \$4000 to videographer Cole Gibson. Cathy noted that since our video production is increasing beyond the Tour, she changed the expense category from a subcategory of the DWL Tour to a separate Videography category. Our checking balance is \$19,495.04, and the \$60,000 CD matures on November 19. The interest received so far for the CD totals over \$500.

Outreach & Communications

1) Land Use in the Morongo Basin

Steve listed points we might include in a letter to the County about our ongoing land use concerns.

1. We're not anti-growth but in favor of appropriate growth.
2. The County should recognize the unique Small Tract Act history that makes our area different from other County regions.
3. Planning Commissioners should be provided opportunities to become more knowledgeable about regional differences.
4. Consider creating Planning Commissioners for each region.
5. Bring to their attention again Terri Rahhal's 2019 letter noting it costs the County more money to have housing in unincorporated areas.

6. Recognize the unique character of unincorporated communities and pay attention to Community Action Guides in decision-making; this could prevent the time-consuming delays of mass opposition.
7. Get public input on amendments to Land Use tables, especially on commercial uses in RL districts.
8. Remind them that the EIR in the Countywide plan says our area should have limited growth because of limited infrastructure.
9. Pay attention to Climate Change.
10. Concentrate commercial development to minimize extensive traveling over great distances.
11. Recognize and respect wildlife corridors.
12. Continue to research STR impacts and increase enforcement.
13. Do a better job of enforcing all ordinances already in effect.
14. Mandate a pre-construction hearing to attend to issues and avoid delays.
15. Keep native soils intact.
16. Protect native plants in general, not just Joshua trees.
17. Adopt a procedure where all building permits must be posted on every site (this happens in Santa Fe).
18. Recognize the value of carbon sequestration in desert soils.
19. We are not obstructionist but concerned.

Pat noted that these issues are also related to the County's [RCIS](#) (Regional Conservation Investment Strategy), though it is just advisory (also see #5 under Conservation issues below). Pat and Sarah suggested group study of the extensive document, to familiarize several Board members with it and decide how to comment.

There was a suggestion to first put some of the LUS points in a public media soapbox statement to raise public awareness before sending a letter.

David reported that Chris Carrillo is running for 3rd District Supervisor.

2) Housing

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

Janet reported 140 new STRs have been approved since January, practically one a day. Wayne Hamilton of the School District is still getting calls from about 2 families a week in need of housing. Janet was told that Granicus, the consultant for Program 4, will be at Supervisor Rowe's August 24 Open House at the JT Sportsman's Center.

Janet continues to communicate with leaders of the West and East Valley Regional Steering Committees. Health plans including the Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP) are investing in housing issues. Local non-profit [ARCH](#) has signed on to be a provider for IEHP; there are many IEHP members in this area. A location in the surplus land list (from the Housing Element) is being investigated as a possible site for several housing services. Some housing resource dollars are flowing better. Twentynine Palms continues to work on local affordable housing. Janet is making some connections with relevant

activists in mountain communities. Janet has a good impression so far of the County's new Director of Community Development and Housing, Carrie Harmon. *Steve will check with the Supervisor's office about Granicus being at the August Open House.*

Request for interview KCET Earth Focus – SK - Nothing new.

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

There was discussion about how such a video might fit in with 30x30, and a reminder that at the last meeting we seemed to have consensus about a wider content video. From the approved June minutes:

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.

Stacy asked for clarification as she is our videography leader. We agreed to continue to explore it gradually, perhaps by developing chapters.

4) Recycling (NOT) in Basin – SB - Nothing new.

Conservation Issues

1) JT listing –DF, BH

Brendan of CBD is expected to provide additional information by the end of July. The amount of mitigation fees is a main issue; the fees within the bill are far lower than what would really be needed. The fees are subject to review in 3 years. David will send a draft of the latest information from Brendan but asks that it not be sent outside the Board.

2) Industrial Solar - All - No updates on Lucerne Valley areas projects.

3) Cadiz –DF - Stock price dropped \$.50 since last report.

4) MWA update re: water – BH

Brian reported that MWA is “putting water everywhere we can put water.” The trend will probably continue through the year. Stacy reported that JBWD is developing a policy for future water imports and asked about MWA monitoring water in Pioneertown. Brian replied that it's been discussed but they haven't yet done it. He added that the drilling of new wells has slowed down from a few years ago. He also noted that 22 acre feet of water went into the Ames/Reche Recharge area last month.

5) County [RCIS](#) Comment [deadline](#) 8-4-23 – SB, PF

Steve explained this effort is trying to create an overall evaluation of environmental resources within the County. They didn't want to include

consideration of the Joshua tree. Sarah suggested it is simply aspirational and Pat noted it is not mentioned in 30x30 plans. It is not a high priority issue.

6) [Save California Solar](#) / NEM 3.0 , [SB 233](#); SB

Arch reported he watched a recent Solar Rights Alliance seminar and will send a link to the video when available. It was a good overview of financial and logistical issues on batteries tied into the grid. We previously [commented on SB 233](#) regarding EV batteries feeding back into the grid.

7) 29 Palms Solar project and AB 205 - PF - Nothing new.

8) 30x30 update – SB 337 - AM, PF

Arch reported that the desert working group is still locked out and it is too late to put Tim Krantz on the Board. But staffer Jennifer Phillips will accept a report to the leadership group (Arch is working on this). The 30x30 plan is for preservation of 50% of *public undisturbed non-military* desert lands, which would include BLM, Forest Service, State and Parks lands. The other 50% would be available for industrial renewable, etc. Considering the extent of public desert land, 100% preservation is the better goal, based on carbon sequestration needs. Pat noted that she will have more to report next month.

9) Chuckwalla National Monument - AM

Outreach and consensus building is occurring in Ruiz's district, especially with Spanish-speaking community groups via [COFEM](#) and [Alianza](#).

10) Dark Skies - SB

As of June 7, all zoning categories other than residential must comply with the ordinance. Steve contacted the Supervisor's office to report that the version of the code on the County website was not the final signed version. ([Now fixed.](#))

11) Scenic 247 – SK

There is renewed interest on the corridor protection plan and someone in LUS is assigned but there is no reportable news.

12) EDF Renewable Wind Testing Johnson Valley - SB

The testing towers are up for this application in Johnson Valley. Katrina Symonds has retired, and the replacement BLM head seems less in our camp.

13) Air Quality update – Contact Erin Rode - SB and Raul Ruiz re: Haboob - ? Nothing new.

14) Ash Meadows near Death Valley

[Friends of the Inyo](#) warns that test borings for lithium near [Ash Meadows Wildlife Refuge](#) could be dangerous to the underground springs ecosystem. Steve signed onto a general letter on behalf of MBCA insisting that more complete environmental analysis is needed. CBD and Amargosa Conservancy filed a lawsuit. Drilling could start next Monday.

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues.

1) Events Committee reports:

Spring Landscape Tour and Video production – SD, LT, SK, CZ

We are delaying launch of the 4 videos (3 are still being edited) until September to urge fall gardening. We will use very short vertical videos on social media to entice more views. Each will have a link to the full length video on YouTube (rather than our website, but all videos will eventually also be on our website).

We discussed issues of seemingly excessive water use on Carl's video (filming began before we knew the high usage of 525 gallons/day). It could be leakage or the wrong calculation. Alternative ways to handle this could be to include messaging when releasing the video or edit the vertical and regular video. *Stacy will investigate and ask the Water District to help assess true usage.* We agreed this needs to be clarified before publishing Carl's video.

Fall Event - We will discuss at the Retreat.

2) Educational support

Field trips - JJ - Resource page.

Laraine and Janet will work on a website page with information and resources related to the Field Trips. Janet is also working on logistics and funding and reported that the more nature and activity-focused Conservation Area trip would be in fall and the trip to Harrison House and the College in spring.

4) Social Media and Website updates – SD, LT

We are reviewing an improved email format now offered by NationBuilder.

People are responding with comments to Stacy's recent posting of the Top Ten Tips which she shared with other sites and promoted. There was one negative post that she hid but others were positive. The Web Team had a good meeting focused on both problem solving and future improvements.

Stacy is working with Melissa to develop a generic MBCA rack card about our priorities & activities; we could add the Top Ten Tips or do a separate one.

5) Apply for Basin-Wide Non-profit of the year - LT

Laraine sent an earlier email with a proposed nomination statement. The deadline is Monday, July 31. No nomination guidelines were given, so *Janet will ask Astrid if she'll nominate us; if not we will self-nominate.*

Cathy noted the Board received an invitation to the 25th Basin Wide Foundation dinner on Thursday August 24, which is the same day/time as the Supervisor's Open House that may include Granicus. *Cathy suggested we join BasinWide Foundation; Steve will add it to the Retreat agenda.*

6) Draft policy for nomination of Board members – LT, SK

Stacy, Pat, Sarah, and Laraine are working on procedures and possible candidates, with consideration of our needs and candidates' skills. *They will make recommendations to the Board about a procedure at the Retreat.*

7) Inventory MBCA equipment – SK, CZ, LT

Laraine and Cathy have submitted lists to Sarah; she asks others who may hold MBCA property to send their lists. Sarah will keep the separate lists and periodically ask for updates.

8) Set date for August Retreat

We'll meet at Steve & Sarah's from 9-3 on Sunday, August 27. It will be a potluck lunch, details TBD. Janet asked to *add discussion of the MAC to the agenda. Laraine will check recent minutes for reference to Retreat topics and share them and will also send last year's retreat notes.*

Stacy is making a climate change presentation to JBWD on Wednesday, July 19 via Zoom or in person. The [meeting](#) begins at 5:30 p.m.

Letters: Public Lands Rule

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, September 14, 2023, 5:00 – 7:00 PM - zoom