

## MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED** MINUTES

Thursday, October 19, 2023 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm Via Zoom

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

### Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:03 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 guests Helen Jeong, Allan Songer, Jennifer Rendon, Ted Stimpfel, Kim Pope, Kerrie Aley, Russ Kohn, and Shauna Tucker.

#### • **Agenda approval**

At Pat's suggestion, Renewable Energy was added under Climate Change and the COFEM event added to Outreach. ***Steve moved to approve the revised agenda. Pat seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)***

#### • **Minutes from September 14, 2023 BOD meeting**

***Steve moved to approve the September 14 minutes. Sarah seconded, and all were in favor. (10-0)***

#### • **Treasurer's Report** - accounting update, budget update, support for non-profit.

Cathy reported two donations this month, \$2000 from Karin Messaros to support next year's scholarship fund, and a donation in addition to a membership renewal. Our 7-month CD (\$60,696.99) earning 5% at Pacific Western Bank will mature on November 19. Cathy reviewed current options. ***After discussion Steve moved to roll the CD into a 5-month account at Pacific Western at 4.9%. Laraine seconded, and all were in favor.*** Steve and Cathy will coordinate the transaction in November.

Steve and Cathy recently met with Rarick Financial for a review of our account-keeping. They complimented our work, especially how we itemize our expenses (a system initiated by Steve and Marina West several years ago). Steve thanked Cathy for her excellent management of our accounts.

### **Climate Change**

#### 1) IDWG 30x30 status update – AM, PF

##### a. Carbon and the Desert update

The expert advisory committee (EAC) of the 30x30 plan seems to now recognize and support saving as much desert as possible for carbon sequestration. This is surprising based on their earlier neglect of the desert's importance and the change was likely impacted by the work of the Inland Desert Working Group (IDWG) on which Arch and Pat serve.

Arch said the recent 30x30 summit in Riverside was informative. Pat and others on the IDWG will work on some revisions to the desert section of the nature based solutions report to make it more accessible. Arch noted that the main point in the paper is to not put solar on pristine lands, and we "may" have won that battle. Pat explained there was little study of soils in the DRECP so dust continues to be a major problem with federal solar projects.

#### 2) Chuckwalla National Monument –AM

Pat will be sending the nature-based solutions for the desert report to Rep. Ruiz's office. Arch said that the Chuckwalla NM support group is now looking for desert-wide support beyond the Coachella Valley. He suggests MBCA get the message to Morongo Basin residents, non-profits, businesses, and government folks.

### 3) Air Quality – PF

Pat reiterated her concerns about dust in solar projects. *Pat is working on a comment letter on the upcoming Easley Solar Project near Desert Center/Lake Tamarisk.* Unfortunately, the AQMD districts accept the project developers' plans to just apply water for dust problems. Steve wrote a letter to the *Desert Sun* about last year's haboob and other air quality issues. It doesn't appear to have been published yet.

A Purple Air monitor should be suggested for the Lake Tamarisk clubhouse facility. *David reported there was an MBCA phone inquiry about us attending a November 28/29 DRECP meeting; he will forward this information to Pat.*

### 4) Joshua tree ordinance DF, LT

Administrative work is underway, taking input and creating regulations enforcing the legislation, hopefully done by December. *David will check with Jessica at MDLT to see if they have any updates and if they will again provide complete information on their website.*

### 5) Fire Safe Awareness – SB, SK

Sarah described the current Pioneertown mobilization, Justin Merino leading with CalFire and County Fire. MBCA supporter Max Thomas is also involved. There is a November 2 meeting for all residents with a Pioneertown zip code. There will be a meeting with Code Enforcement; the focus will be suggesting education to prevent problems.

The Supervisors' environmental justice agenda item was continued until October 24 but will probably be continued again. Ted Stimpfel is requesting LUS do a workshop in Lucerne Valley area and maybe in JT also. Ted has talked with Heidi Durant of LUS and he doesn't see a lot of interest, but they say they are open to communication about it.

## **Renewable Energy**

### 1) Update on solar projects in SBCO, Easley Project Riv. Co – BH, PF

*Pat is writing a comment letter about Easley. (See above Climate Change/3) Air Quality)* Brian reported that all County projects are on hold, with the Stagecoach project of most concern. The State Lands Commission doesn't seem to be communicating. Steve is worried that it might slip in under AB 205 for fast-track approval. Litigation is expected.

### 2) Solar Rights Alliance – AM, SB

Steve referred to the proposal being considered by the CPUC about net metering which would harm community solar's value. Locally, this would reduce the value of all the MUSD rooftop solar installed a few years ago. The power would be sold to Edison at wholesale, but the school district is paying retail. The item has been continued until November 2 at CPUC.

## **Water Issues**

### 1) Cadiz – DF

Steve, Pat, and David recently attended a Zoom meeting hosted by Chris Clarke of NPCA, discussing the proposed 220-mile gas pipeline Cadiz wants to use for water transmission. Cadiz is mounting a PR campaign about serving underserved populations. The Torres-Martinez Tribe endorsed the project (the only tribe that did). Brian reported that there is an

upcoming MWA workshop where the Board has requested a presentation from Cadiz. Public comments will be accepted. *Brian will inform us of details when he has confirmation.*

## 2) MWA update - BH

They are still actively purchasing water and putting it into the ground – a record year.

## Housing

### 1) STR study update – JJ, SB

Janet reviewed the complex and confusing titles of the series of groups involved in County housing discussions. The East Valley Regional Steering Committee is still key to our Basin. They are trying to change the name to “East Desert Regional Steering Committee”. Curtis Yakimow of Yucca Valley and Astrid Johnson of ARCH will bring this to the County level. For HUD grants, we’re part of a 13-city consortium, providing more confusion at the County level.

Program 4 wasn’t mentioned at the EVRSC meeting. Wayne Hamilton, homeless liaison for MUSD, plans to compare STR permits with addresses from the school district database to try tracking the results of STRs. The Interagency Council on Homelessness is working on funding and money distribution.

### 2) Morongo Basin Housing Solutions Working Group – JJ

Health agencies and companies such as IEHP, Molina Medicare, and Kaiser are beginning to understand the relation between health and housing. Janet continues to work with Kymberly McClain to get MB ARCH operational as a “Community Supports Provider” for IEHP. Instead of only depending on grants that can take close to a year to receive funding, IEHP is a monthly bill-per-service system. This could potentially help increase the capacity of services that ARCH provides.

Kerrie submitted a public records request for data related to Program 4. She’s concerned that they’re using 2020 for the first review, because it was 2018 when the problems started. She will contact Janet and they may contact Heidi and Colin about this. Janet has had more interviews with local realtors about people moved out of long term rentals. Wayne did a driving survey and found over 1400 people living in RVs and tents etc., and he was conservative in counting.

### 3) SBCO Housing Trust, SBCO Transportation [questionnaire](#) - No discussion.

## County Governance

### 1) Update on Wonder Inn, Flamingo 640, Eco Dome Landers

An Eco Dome is proposed for east of the Integratron. It’s referred to as a hotel but is being processed as a campground with a mitigated negative declaration. There is a comment deadline soon. The County must change its “campground” definition. Pat noted that there is no on-site supervision in the proposal. *Pat will write a comment letter.*

The Wonder Inn proponent is past deadline to communicate – hopefully because they can’t answer the concerns.

### 2) [Environmental Justice Ordinance](#) – SB

*(See above Climate Change/5) Fire Safe Awareness.)*

## Outreach and Organizational Issues

### 1) Letters signed onto – See listing of letters

a) What are we FOR. Steve reminded us we need to do more supportive letters.

2) Events Committee reports

a) Video production – SD, LT, SK, CZ

Stacy said there has been a good response to our new Landscape Tour video introduction protocol, loading vertical mini-videos on social media to attract attention. The most popular is the Miriam Seger video talking about boulders in the landscape. Stacy also promoted the CDC Summit, shared events and news, and suggested we consider recording Board meetings.

b) Topic for annual meeting Event

Ideas mentioned included conservation of species, including why it's necessary, understanding threats, and creating wildlife corridors. Another topic proposed was the status and future of rooftop solar perhaps with Bernadette del Chiaro, Executive Director of California Solar Storage Association, who has been an exemplary speaker in several webinars. Guest Jennifer Rendon added some suggestions for future MCBA work to combine efforts with JTNP and MUSD for education, adopting tortoises, and creating gardens with native plants or food plants at schools.

3) Educational Support

a) Funding

We have funding for three \$1000 scholarships again next year for MBCA's Conservation scholarship; for the Rieman scholarship via the Paul and Mary Livio donation; and for the Women's STEAM scholarship via the Karin Messaros donation.

b) Field Trips – JJ

Janet summarized last May's La Contenta 8<sup>th</sup> graders field trip. We plan to repeat it this spring as well as develop the first Desert View Conservation Area field trip. There are problems about liability waivers between the County and MUSD.

4) Website and Social media updates.

*(See above Outreach and Organizational Issues/ 2) Events Committee/ a. Video Production.)*

Laraine mentioned some future website content additions and improvements.

5) COFEM event

Pat received an invitation from COFEM to have an information table at their October 28 event in Coachella. No one was able to cover this.

**Meeting Adjourned 7:07 pm.**

Letters: SB County RCIS; Support for Bond for 30x30

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, November 9, 2023, 5:00 – 7:00 PM - zoom