

MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED** MINUTES

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

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

Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:05 PM

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Bardwell	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> Cathy Zarakov (advance notice)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pat Flanagan		

• **Introduction of Guests and Board Directors**

Steve welcomed Helen Jeong, Allan Songer, Jennifer Rendon, and Ted Stimpfel.

• **Agenda approval**

Pat asked to add purchase of reimbursement for a Purple Air monitor at Lake Tamarisk to the renewable energy category. ***Steve moved to approve the revised agenda. Pat seconded and all were in favor. (7-0)***

• **Minutes from October 19, 2023, BOD meeting**

Laraine noted some edits by Janet on two items not included in the version Steve sent. Steve moved to approve the revised September 14 minutes. Sarah seconded, and all were in favor. (8-0)

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

In Cathy's absence, Steve reported we have \$84,289.30 in our bank accounts as of October 31. There has been one new membership. We will be rolling over the CD later this month. The Treasurer's report was accepted.

Climate Change

1) IDWG 30x30 status update – AM, PF

Pat reported the committee continues to work on creating a more user-friendly version of the 30x30 desert sector report for the website and broader distribution. They are also working on a letter to the Expert Advisory Committee (EAC). The online [Desert Report](#) contains the [full document](#).

Pat said that Secretary Crow has not recognized the importance of the desert so far, but "they're learning." *Steve wants to make sure the Desert Report gets to the Secretary.* Sarah suggested we try to get Secretary Crow to talk about 30x30 at our annual meeting. Getting co-sponsors could enhance our chances, e.g. MDLT, maybe CDC and Friends of the Desert Mountains. *Steve will pursue this.*

a. Carbon sequester in the desert

2) Chuckwalla National Monument –AM

There has been a lot of effective Chuckwalla NM social media. Arch reported they are creating an ambassadorship program for it, with advocacy training.

3) Air Quality – PF

Pat said there are new studies connecting bad air quality with dementia. She

has been working with local volunteers at Lake Tamarisk, where they are surrounded by solar projects and dust, with more planned (Easley Solar). Pat introduced them to the environmental justice issue, so they're talking with US EPA, and Pat is working to find an EJ connection for CARB. They're on a sand transport path. Pat has suggested they add to their development code that if acreage limit is scraped, the developer must use the only effective anti-dust measure, placing 4 inches of crushed gravel on the site (expensive).

4) Joshua tree ordinance – D – No update.

5) Fire Safe Awareness – SB, SK

A meeting is set for December 5. The whole 92268 zip code has been invited.

Renewable Energy

1) Update on solar projects in SBCO– BH, PF

Nothing new. Stagecoach and the one near 29 Palms are the concerns.

Added: Purple Air to Tamarisk.

The local volunteer individuals mounted a Purple Air monitor at their own cost.

Steve moved that we cover the cost of the Purple Air module and installation at Lake Tamarisk, a total of \$347.94. Arch seconded and all were in favor. (8-0) Pat said they are very grateful for our interest and support.

2) [Solar Rights Alliance](#) - Virtual Net Metering, Elec Tax – AM, SB

The CPUC on November 16 is expected to consider a proposal to eliminate virtual net metering, which will especially affect places with multiple meters. Instead of offsetting the bill, the electricity generated would be sold to the utility at wholesale rates and the user would have to buy power at retail rates, thus discouraging rooftop solar.

3) [AB 205](#) – SB

AB 205 includes a graduated “electricity tax” that we opposed in a [group letter](#). There's also a new [letter](#) to the CPUC from 22 legislators criticizing the policy and the lack of public input. Sarah noted that the CPUC claims their approach enhances social justice issue, but social justice organizations don't agree. AB 205 would also facilitate the Stagecoach and 29 Palms proposed projects.

4) Bi-Directional EVs support [HB6178](#) -SB

This federal legislation authored by Julia Brownley (CA District 26, mostly Ventura County) would mandate that EVs be bi-directional, allowing a fully charged car to provide power to a home. Steve receives updates on this via [The Climate Center](#) in Sonoma. *Steve will get our name added in support.* [SB 233](#) was the California version that has been turned into a 2-year bill and will be considered in the next legislative session.

Water Issues

1) Cadiz – DF

David reported on a news story that seemed to connect Cadiz with San Diego County, but we determined this was a typo; there is no new connection with

SD County. Legal actions are likely to continue. Tonight Susan Kennedy of Cadiz is presenting to the Coachella Valley Association of Governments/CVAG.

2) MWA update – BH

Stacy reported that she will be giving her climate change presentation to Bighorn Desert View Water Agency at the end of the month.

Housing

1) Program 4 study update November 16 virtual meeting– JJ, SB

Janet just received [the report](#) and the conclusion is no significant affect of STRS on long-term housing in the Mountain and East Desert regions. Wayne Hamilton of MUSD is still trying to get data about families losing housing. There is strong anecdotal and empirical evidence. We need to have a groundswell of participation in the [upcoming meeting](#). Steve added that Kerrie is researching data she received via the Freedom of Information Act/FOIA.

2) Morongo Basin Housing Solutions Working Group – JJ

Janet attended the 29 Palms Planning Commission homeless committee meeting, but they continue to overlook what the ad hoc group has done and just keep “reinventing the wheel.” While the affordable housing project behind city hall is still planned, the housing navigation center isn’t moving forward.

County Governance

1) Update on projects (all of which are being handled by contract planners): [Wonder Inn](#) – We’ve learned that despite the excessive time passed without Supervisors’ review, the project will not need a new mitigated negative declaration.

[Flamingo 640](#) – The developers are going to appeal their original project to the Supervisors. A preparatory Town Hall is planned at the Flamingo Heights Community Center. The Supervisors will hear it on December 19.

[Eco Dome Landers](#) – This is another campground in a residential area and inappropriate; we submitted [two letters of concern](#).

Steve asked Helen for an update on the multi-purpose development her company is planning. She reported they have met with Marinna Wagner and Ben Loescher. They’ve learned the housing project is not feasible, but they have land elsewhere in the Basin for that. *Steve will connect Helen with Janet for working on the housing issues.*

[Joshua Tree Campground](#) -

This project does NOT include housing for employees. Arch recounted a pattern he saw in Mammoth (in which current LUS Director Wardlaw was involved), where employee housing is approved, but the developers then ask for an exemption and try to change local housing into employee housing by creating a “special district” to get around zoning, but the change reduces property values. Wardlaw has said he wants to visit Wonder Valley, and possibly the other contested sites.

[Yonder](#) – Pat reported that the company’s recent presentation about the Indian Cove project had a big turnout, but they would not take questions in front of the whole

group. It's in a wildlife corridor and there's a drainage pattern right through it. It's another inappropriately large intrusive development in rural living zoning.

- 2) LICA [Low Impact Camping Areas (aka HipCamp) – SB
This “dry camping” on a minimum of 2 acres is a concern in 29 Palms. It has health implications especially due to trash, wastewater, and human waste. It's a cheap way to make money if you have property. Stacy reminded us that some of these situations are beneficial when the owners manage things correctly.
- 3) Nov 20 Basin visit by Code Enforcement – SB
Kerrie and Steve and maybe others will meet in Pioneertown with Ignacio Nunez, chief of code enforcement, to hopefully share information and create some understanding and goodwill. A key focus is fire safety awareness vis-à-vis County regulations on fuel clearance; other topics are the light trespass ordinance, native plants, grading, and weed abatement.
- 4) Scenic 247 update -SK
Homestead Valley continues to press for the designation and there has been some communication with LUS. An issue now is different standards between the County and CalTrans on easements either side of median.
- 5) [Environmental Justice Ordinance](#) – SB
Consideration by Supervisors has been postponed.

Outreach and Organizational Issues

Laraine asked if these organizational issues that have recently been placed at the end of the meeting and therefore a bit rushed could be earlier in the agenda in December.

- 1) Events Committee reports:
 - a) Video production – SD, LT, SK, CZ
This year's videos are great and getting good play and are posted on our YouTube channel. *Stacy will be scheduling a Tour/Events committee meeting soon for next year* and suggests fewer videos next year for cost and time reasons. *Bob Wold will be added to the committee.*
 - b) Topic for annual meeting Event
The proposed date is Saturday, January 27. We will pursue Wade Crowfoot, but the Events committee will also look at alternatives. If he agrees to come, we must give him a Basin tour, hopefully over more than one day.

Laraine noted the Nominations committee will meet soon and will recommend new Board members nominated through the new process at the December meeting.

- 2) Educational Support
 - a) Funding – Laraine reported we have funding for all 3 scholarships this year.
 - b) Field Trips – JJ
There will be a visit to Harrison House in spring. There's nothing new about the County and MUSD waiver issue. Hopefully there can be two field trips by May.

3) Website and Social media updates.

Stacy has been mainly posting videos and she notes we continue to add new followers. *Stacy will give the Board a report on the video process.*

Adjourn 7:02 PM

Letters: Landers Eco-Dome Campground, Easley Solar project, CVAG Cadiz

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