

MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED MINUTES**

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

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

Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:03 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		

- **Introduction of Guests and Board Directors**

Steve welcomed Allan Songer. Kerrie Aley joined later.

- **Agenda approval – All in favor (10-0)**

- **Minutes from November 19, 2023, BOD meeting**

Laraine noted minor edits by Steve. ***Steve moved to approve the revised November 14 minutes. Sarah seconded, and all were in favor. (10-0)***

- **Treasurer's Report**

Cathy reported several new and renewal memberships including the non-profit Outward Bound. We purchased a Purple Air monitor for the Lake Tamarisk group, and Cathy read a thank you to the Board from representative Teresa Pierce. Our Pacific Western (now Banc of California) CD rolled over November 19 for a 5-month period with a 4.90% APY (\$62,476.33). It will mature April 19, 2024. Cathy finally was able to get two banks to resolve a bank error and reported our US Bank checking account has \$23,631.79. The Board accepted the Treasurer's report.

Outreach and Organizational Issues

1) Board Nomination Committee – LT, SK, SD, PF

Sarah outlined the steps the committee took in following the recently-approved procedure. Beginning with over 20 possibilities, we spoke to 14 about their interest, and invited them to the October 23 gathering at Harrison House. Two people bowed out at least for this year. Following that we sent 7 invitations to join the Board, requesting a brief resume or letter if they were interested. Three people said it was not a good time for them to make the commitment (though one asked to serve on the Tour Committee), two people did not reply, and two agreed and provided the requested information. ***Laraine moved to approve Allan Songer and Kerrie Aley as new members of the MBCA Board of Directors in 2024. Janet seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)*** The two positions begin in year 2 of the 3-year term. ***December 15 CORRECTION – Both positions begin in year 1.***

2) Nominations of Officers for 2024 - SB

Steve proposed an officer slate of Steve as President, Stacy as Vice President, Laraine as Secretary, and Cathy as Treasurer. However, Cathy is planning to resign from the Board as soon as we find a replacement as Treasurer. She will continue as a volunteer on the Tour Committee. ***Laraine moved to approve***

the slate of Steve as President, Stacy as Vice President, Laraine as Secretary, and Cathy as Treasurer. Arch seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)

3) Events Committee reports:

a) Topic for annual meeting

Steve received a confirmation of our request for Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot to speak. The two dates available at the Yucca Valley Community Center are Saturdays, January 20 or Feb 3. The focus topics are Chuckwalla National Monument; 30x30; all the development pressures on the desert; the IDWG report; and what kinds of developments we should support.

Other speakers suggested were Jen Norris (formerly Crowfoot's assistant now in a new position); Dr. Allen and Robin Kobaly on carbon sequestration; Cam Barrows on biodiversity.

We agreed to invite other organizations e.g. MDLT, CDC to have tables. An Event Committee was assigned: Steve, Pat, Brian, and Arch to design the concept and program, working with Laraine and Stacy for organizing and advertising.

Kerrie joined the Zoom call and was welcomed to be a new Board member in January.

b) DWL Spring Tour

Stacy reported good progress about site decisions. The date is Sunday, April 21, with 6 or fewer sites, distributed across the Basin. We'll have an image-heavy article in *JT Voice* and Stacy welcomes us to send any high resolution Tour photos to her for possible inclusion. We'll also place an ad with them, and Mike Lipsitz will help with the writing. We're investigating having a billboard on Hwy 62. As our graphic designer Melissa has moved away, she recommended a replacement.

4) Educational Support

a) Funding for 3 scholarships.

Laraine reiterated that we are fully funded for 3 scholarships next year.

b) Field Trips – JJ

Janet reported there is still an unresolved conflict between the County and the School District about the Desert View Conservation Area (DVCA) field trip. There is a tentative date of March 19-22 for the bus tour, and March for DVCA. The Bus expense we are covering from the spring tour has not yet been billed.

c) Website and Social media updates.

Stacy met with Cole and when they reviewed Google Analytics, they discovered that we are reaching a lot of 35 year olds with our videos. Steve noted that Kerrie will be joining the Web Team.

Climate Change

1) IDWG 30x30 status update & Carbon sequester – AM, PF

IDWG has revised the report sent to the state to improve general readability. They received feedback that the 30x30 Expert Advisory Committee was pleased that we suggested where big solar should go instead of just being “against.”

2) Chuckwalla National Monument –AM

Arch hopes we can pull together a number of desert groups in support of Chuckwalla at the Annual Meeting. The timing is good to spread the word beyond Ruiz’s district and lower desert.

3) Joshua tree ordinance – DF - no updates.

4) Fire Safe Awareness – SB, SK

Steve and Sarah reported on this recent Pioneertown event. Justin Merino coordinated with the Desert Fire Safe Alliance, the Inland Empire Fire Safe Alliance, San Bernardino County Fire, and CalFire. Information was presented about defensible space and creating hardened homes, and encouragement for Pioneertown Emergency Preparedness Network to become a fire safe community.

Renewable Energy

1) Update on industrial scale solar projects in California – DF, BH, PF

a) Easley solar project – Pat.

As noted above, the Lake Tamarisk community is grateful for our Purple Air monitor donation. They have set up a [Save Lake Tamarisk Go Fund Me](#) in case they have to file a lawsuit. Steve will mention it in the next Eblast. ***Steve moved that MBCA donate \$100 to the Lake Tamarisk Go Fund Me. Sarah seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)***

b) Central Valley focus for CA renewables- DF

At the Association of California Water Agencies meeting, David attended a session on Westlands Water District in California’s Central Valley and learned they are paying for a transmission line to eventually connect to 100,000 acres of solar. This farm area is next to I-5 between SF and LA. Lack of water for irrigation has led to solar development. Brian added that a state groundwater act is holding water districts to account in the Central Valley. David added that the districts intend to reclaim the land for ag if they can get water, so it may be a lot of leasing rather than buying the land.

c) DRECP-Cultural Landscape Studies -SB

BLM has announced that funds from the federal act will be used toward this.

2) Solar Rights Alliance – Income Based Utility Tax – AM, SB

There is ongoing conflict on the AB 205 proposal.

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

MBCA is officially in support of this legislation.

Water Issues

1) Cadiz – DF, SB

At the water conference David talked with a Cadiz representative and corrected her on some of her facts. They're trying to focus on how they GIVE the water rather than where they GET the water. MWA had a Cadiz review during a Board meeting, and there were a lot of "uninformed passionate water district people" thinking Cadiz would save their water quality. Stacy reported that Cadiz now says they're only distributing water in SB County.

2) MWA update – BH

Reservoirs are pretty much full. It may or may not be a good El Nino year. The state's initial allocation was very conservation at 10%. MWA continues to put water into the ground as fast as they can until December 31.

Housing

1) Program 4 study update December 19, BOS – JJ, KA, SB

Kerrie has been working on a detailed letter in response to the Program 4 Study and its erroneous conclusion. The Letter Committee is doing a final review before sending (very soon). We hope our facts will keep the report off the December 19 agenda. Janet is getting in touch with JP Rose from the Center for Biological Diversity, hoping for a letter from them. There's been communication with reporter Beau Yarbrough of the *SB Sun* but no interview yet.

Kerrie believes that based on comments from LUS Director Wardlaw and Heidi Duron, they're sending this technical memo out for public comment, will make changes, and then make a recommendation to Board. MBCA's letter traces the 4-5 year history of the problem. There is some indication they're taking credit for STRs as low income housing. Kerrie believes we need a moratorium on any new permits; 70% are owned outside the Morongo Basin which is against the CountyWide Plan; profit is leaving the Basin. Janet thinks Granicus sees it more like we do and problematic.

2) Morongo Basin Housing Solutions Working Group – JJ

Janet reported there's been dialogue but no concrete results to report.

3) MBCA Support for [Ben Allanoff](#) art install re: housing – SB

Ben received a grant from Cal Arts Council for installations brining awareness to the issue of unhoused/homeless/housing in the MB. One has been completed and Janet suggests we offer support for the next project in JT, along with the TAY Center. *Steve will ask Ben to attend our next meeting to provide more information on the JT project.*

County Governance

1) Update on: [Wonder Inn](#), [Flamingo 640](#), [Eco Dome Landers](#), [Joshua Tree Campground](#), [Yonder](#), Reset Hotel

Flamingo 640 is on Supervisors' agenda December 19, and the Save Our Deserts group is urging as many people as possible to appear in San Bernardino as well as at the JT Government Center. Pat will be focusing on CEQA in her comments. She and Brian are making maps. It's in a wildlife corridor and so is the EcoDome, which expands the negative effects including visibility issues. There's a huge cumulative impact.

The “Bubble Hotel” off Yucca Mesa appears to be going bankrupt due to a major investor pulling out.

We discussed zoning issues and definitions e.g. the County’s problematic definition of “campground.” Comment letters are important to give us standing for possible future legal action. Steve noted we must do careful research on what we are challenging. CBD’s letter about the deficiencies of the ordinance and inconsistency with EIR of the County Wide Plan provides the kind of basis we need for eventual action.

2) [Minute Land](#) – SB

This recent issue is where undeveloped land can be leased to someone as their own personal campground. There are a few in SB County and many in Nevada. Human waste is an issue. Each site is supposed to be responsible for meeting all County codes so we should present the concern to Rowe and see if code enforcement is aware.

3) Recap Nov 20 visit by Code Enforcement – SB, KA

Kerrie, Allan, Steve, and Eric Hamburg met with Code Enforcement Chief Ignacio Nunez in Pioneertown. He was receptive about their concerns and took notes about fire safety, some jurisdictional confusion, light trespass to be enforced starting January 6, and OHV enforcement. *They’ll put together some notes to Ignacio and express appreciation for his visit.*

4) Scenic 247 [Traffic vs Scenic vs Safety](#)

There’s a proposal for a Barstow distribution center that would link with Port of LA along with Amazon’s Desert Hot Springs warehouse, implying a huge increase of traffic on 247 between Barstow and DHS. Justin Merino wrote a letter to CalTrans that they need to look at the consequences. It is likely to be brought up at Supervisors’ meeting related to Flamingo 640 along 247.

Adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Letters: Petitions re: State Marine Protected Area and State Marine Reserve, Sign-on to letter in opposition to “Groundswell” to reduce environmental analysis req’s for Cadiz project

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, January 11, 2024, 5:00 – 7:00 PM - zoom
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