

MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED** MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, April 9, 2025 / 4:00 – 6:00 PM at JTRC and on Zoom

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Bardwell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pat Flanagan	<input type="checkbox"/> Arch McCulloch (advance notice)
<input type="checkbox"/> Stacy Doolittle (advance notice)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Hammer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laraine Turk
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Fick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janet Johnston	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bob Wold
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sarah Kennington	

Steve called the meeting to order at 4:12 PM

• **Introduction of Guests and Board Directors**

Online: Ted Stimpfel, Joani Tremblay, Dana Balicki and Ryan Schneider, and later, Steven Gjerstad. In person: Claudia Sall for about a half hour.

• **Agenda approval**

Bob moved to approve the agenda. Laraine seconded, and all were in favor. (8-0).

• **Minutes from March 13, 2025, rescheduled BOD meeting**

Pat moved to approve the March minutes. Steve seconded, and all were in favor. (8-0)

• **Confirmation of Art Tours full-page ad expenditure.** (The online vote record is copied as a separate page at the end of these Minutes.) The online unanimous vote on March 22-23 was to pay \$950 as half the cost. Steve confirmed today that we will share the \$1800 cost of a full-page ad with MBCAC, paying \$900.

• **Approve March 28, 2025 Online vote for Lovemore Ranch funding.**

(The online vote record is copied as a separate page at the end of these Minutes.)

The motion approved unanimously was: I make a motion for MBCA to contribute \$1,500 on behalf of Stop Wonder Inn, donated to MBCA from Stop Wonder Inn, to support the legal fees of Stop Lovemore Ranch.

Details were clarified by Bob: The \$1500 check was made out to Babak Naficy Law Firm in support of the Stop Lovemore Ranch. This check was funded in part by a cash donation of \$985 from the Stop Wonder Inn movement. The remaining \$515 was funded by MBCA.

• **Treasurer's Report** 990 filing, budgeting - BW

In March we received \$2645 in cash donations, including \$1000 designated for Lovemore Ranch expenses. The rest was 10 new memberships and modest donations. The biggest expense was a \$506 payment to our insurance broker, and \$1500 to Babak Naficy, attorney working on the Lovemore Ranch appeal. Our checking balance is \$13,542; our CD value is \$68,267, and expires in May. *We will vote at our next meeting about its future.*

The MWA grant application was submitted by the March 25 deadline; we requested \$9000, \$1000 more than requested last year (we received \$6000). We keep adding features so hope to receive the maximum.

Bob will take care of the 990 and 199 tax filings. Steve said the Finance committee will meet soon about budget.

The Treasurer's report was accepted by consensus.

Regional Land Use

1) Lovemore appeal Recap

We are all grateful especially to Janet and Steve for the many hours preparing the appeal and then presenting to the Supervisors, despite the disappointing outcome. David summarized the hearing (the recording with timestamps is available in the [News post](#) on our website). The State Housing push seemed to be the pivotal point for the Supervisors. What is needed is a thorough CEQA study (Steve). Also, the traffic review is almost 4 years old and wasn't a true traffic study. The attorney Babak Naficy has to wait for the County to provide paperwork that will allow him to go forward with a lawsuit by the Joshua Tree Village Neighbors. The radio story on Z107.7 said MBCA was filling the lawsuit – Steve made a phone call on the spot to get that [changed](#). We noted that Dawn Rowe asked David Wardlaw, head of Land Use Services, to in the future do more than the minimum on public notice of meetings. She also elaborated on the need for more road safety improvements in the area.

2) Scenic 247 – SK

Land Use Services was to hear from CalTrans, but hasn't. Further action will require a Plan amendment. Chuck Bell of Lucerne Valley may contact legislators to push on CalTrans.

3) Of-Land – SB

MBCA has agreed to fund rental of a room at the 29 Palms Community Center on May 31 for a meeting on the OfLand resort development in 29 Palms and the larger issue of development issues across the Basin. The funding support was requested by 29 Palms community activist Cindy Bernard. Pat sent Cindy the 2012 Priorities book and map and suggested using it in their arguments. *Pat also suggested bringing the large scale Basin maps that Steve has created for past meetings and Sarah agreed to work on that.*

Outreach and Organizational Issues

1) MBCA recruitment event follow up. More memberships– all

The Volunteer Recruitment Committee will do more follow-up in May with the volunteers who attended the brunch. Steve sent individual emails to attendees with encouragement and received a couple of enthusiastic responses.

2) Events Committee reports:

Status of 4-27-25 Landscape tour

Laraine reported that the committee is on target; sites are chosen, online registration set up, volunteer docents recruited, publicity ongoing, Tour book being designed. New this year is hiring 2 people for traffic safety management at the Panorama site which has a steep dirt road and difficult parking. *Steve and Sarah will serve as “rovers” on call during the Tour.*

3) Educational Support

Scholarships – The deadline was extended to April 18 due to the 2-week spring break at the school district. We have one application so far.

Field trip report – *Janet will get the field trip volunteer emails to Laraine to add to the Tour comps list (a thank-you for their time).* She is sending receipts to the school and thank you's to those involved and is planning videos. Caroline Conway, who has a great deal of environmental education experience, attended and will help next year. There is a developing plan for MBCA to work with the school district on an informal summit about environmental education in the Morongo Basin, including the College, Harrison House, and Pat's school environmental curriculum.

4) Website and Social media updates – LT, SD

Steve would like to see a review by some of our tech-savvy volunteer recruits of our digital platform and operations. He asked Joani to be involved and Jenni Lanicca, who already volunteered in response to his post-volunteer brunch email. *Laraine will work to connect Joani and Jenni together to do a review.*

5) YV HDNM Earth Day event confirmed 4-19-25

Stacy has agreed to handle the table and sell Tour registrations. Maybe Cathy could help?

6) CDC [NEPA workshop](#) 4-12-25 at CMC 9:30-2:00

Claudia Sall encouraged Board members to attend. The presenter is knowledgeable and powerful. It was suggested to have a follow-up CEQA workshop, especially as [AB 609](#) is trying to change CEQA.

7) Presentation to 29 Rotary Club

This is a repeated request to MBCA for a speaker on a Wednesday at noon. *Laraine and Janet have agreed to do a presentation.* Pat may join. *Laraine will follow up with the Club.* Janet has also received a request for speaking at Toastmasters. Steve mentioned that Stacy and Arch will be on the Z107.7 UpClose show on April 18 about the Tour and related issues, and Laraine will briefly address scholarships. *Laraine will add it to the Calendar.*

8) Local business improvement district efforts

David was at the latest meeting of the Joshua Tree Alliance for Business and Culture, seeking status as a 501(c)(6) organization similar to a chamber of commerce. Board members include Amanda B'Hymer, Seth Zaharias, Thomas Fjallstam, Sarah Taylor, and Cindy Daigneault. They are planning a "Friendraiser" on May 8 and are building towards official filing and approval. A subgroup working on branding suggests calling it the "Joshua Tree Collective." They are exploring a model similar to the [TBID in 29 Palms](#).

9) [Naming](#) of New Old-Town Yucca Valley development- 5-1-25

Steve – Yucca Valley is looking for names for their "sustainable development" park next to Luna Bakery.

- 10) Bring back the MAC - Many requests were made at Lovemore Ranch hearing.

Housing

Morongo Basin Housing Solutions Team (Working Group) – JJ

Janet attends the East Desert Regional Steering committee official group on homelessness and housing. The various agency participants provide continuing care, social services, and anything related to housing. Janet chairs the more action-oriented local Housing Solutions Team/Working Group. About 18-20 people have been attending as nonprofits trying to work together. At two recent productive meetings they have discussed mapping of services, fundraising, and conversing with other groups in the region. At the West Valley meeting she learned there is the possibility of funding for a consultant to facilitate a regional strategy. This is important because the desert group “gets left out too often.” There is little to no grant funding for administrating active programs. Steve thanked Janet for how much she has brought people together to move forward on housing issues for the desert region.

Climate Change

- 1) OHV - WEMO rejected by judge – updates.

We'll work on putting forward this issue in May with Steve Gjerstad. Steve B. sent out Steve G's information to a wide array of people and had a reply from a Burns Canyon resident. Steve G joined on Zoom just now. He has communicated with the Burns Canyon woman and they are exchanging useful information. Steve G. is working on a letter to the judge by next Tuesday including information such as tortoise sightings; there's a hearing next Friday. He hopes the suit doesn't settle because he wants to intervene as a plaintiff in the lawsuit. He wants the 2 judges to see his detailed material to understand why he wants to intervene. If he's admitted as a plaintiff, he would join the Parks and Rec lawsuit as a defendant. The Commissioners were taken aback at his information about routes on private property and that the Director hasn't pursued the issue.

- 2) Western Joshua Tree Conservation Plan – Fish & Game Commission hearing *Laraine will put this April 16-17 event on the Calendar.* Deadline for comments by email is Friday but comments will be accepted at the Zoom meeting. *Steve asked Pat to sign MBCA on to the MDLT letter in support of the Plan.*

Renewable Energy

- 1) Effort to break rooftop solar contract

The Governor continues to act against rooftop solar owners, trying to break the current contracts for NEM 1 and 2, harming current solar system owners. A CBD lawsuit is pending on NEM 3.

Water Issues

- 1) Cadiz – BH

Brian reported that during the recent presentation by Cadiz to MWA, their future plan phases indicated access to MWA pipelines – which was news to MWA! Their latest scheme is adding hydrogen production to their plans.

- 2) JBWD update – DF

There are continued problems with having a quorum for meetings. They are

moving Board meetings to 4:00PM instead of 4:30.. Smaller water agencies are considering legal action about the Chromium 6 situation.

3) MWA update – BH

Looks like winter precipitation is done for our region. It has been between 29% and 38% of an average year, based on last 30 years, less than half of the median.

Director comments

Pat strongly recommends the book *Desert Forest: Life With Joshua Trees*, available at MDLT.

Adjourned at 6:04 PM

Letter Wildlands re: David Meyers, CEQA works letter sign-on, Oppose SB 375 (Grove),

See next 2 pages for online votes noted earlier.

Next <u>Regular</u> Meeting: Thursday, May 8, 2025 4:00 – 6:00 PM – Zoom

MBCA Online Vote March 22-23, 2025 – Purchasing full page ad in Highway 62 Art Studio Tour Catalog.

Background explanation and motion are in this email from Steve Bardwell on March 22, 2025, 9:13 AM:

After speaking with John Henson of the Art Tours Board about our advertising in the catalog, he has again offered for MBCAC to split the cost of a full page ad. I like the idea. We would be featured at the beginning of the catalogue:

I move MBCA allocate \$900 towards the purchase of a full page ad in partnership with the MBCAC in the 2025 art tours catalog.

Sarah Kennington seconds.

A subsequent email clarified an increased cost:

Just as I sent the motion, an email came in from John Henson asking if we are on-board and the cost would be **\$950.00**.

I amend the motion to: I move MBCA allocate \$950 towards the purchase of a full page ad in partnership with the MBCAC in the 2025 art tours catalog.

Sarah seconds.

All remaining Board members voted yes by email by 8:51 AM on March 23, 2025: Stacy Doolittle, David Fick, Pat Flanagan, Brian Hammer, Janet Johnston, Arch McCulloch, Laraine Turk, Bob Wold

MBCA Online Vote March 28, 2025 – Funding Lovemore Ranch appeal.

Background explanation and motion are in this email from Steve Bardwell on March 28, 2025, 6:12 PM:

Pat has been in contact with the Stop Wonder Inn group in Wonder Valley, They have \$985.00 in cash and another \$470 via a check (\$1455.00 total) from the Wonder Inn effort they wish to contribute to the Lovemore appeal cause. The proposal is to utilize MBCA as the vehicle for getting the money into the mix via a Go Fund Me website. \$1,455 plus a 3% handling fee would equal approx \$1,500. Pat will pick up the cash this weekend and Bob will deposit into the bank on Monday. The check for \$470. would be forthcoming in the future (Pat is running this down). Here is the link:

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/stop-lovemore-ranch-in-joshua-tree-california>

I am in favor of this approach and ***I make a motion for MBCA to contribute \$1,500, Via Go Fund Me to support the legal fees of Stop Lovemore Ranch.***

Do I have a second?

Sarah Seconds the motion.

All remaining Board members voted yes by email by 7:46 AM on March 29, 2025: Stacy Doolittle, David Fick, Pat Flanagan, Brian Hammer, Janet Johnston, Arch McCulloch, Laraine Turk, Bob Wold