

MBCA BOARD MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

Thursday, June 12, 2025 / 4:00 – 6:00 PM at JTRC and on Zoom

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

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|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Bardwell | <input type="checkbox"/> Pat Flanagan (advance notice) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arch McCulloch |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stacy Doolittle | <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 | |

Remembering Bobby Furst

Steve called the meeting to order at 4:08 PM

• Introduction of Guests and Board Directors

Steve welcomed online guests including Ted Stimpfel, Steven Gjerstad, and Janeen Duff (left around 5:45) and Eric Menendez present in person.

• Agenda approval

Laraine moved to approve the agenda. Bob seconded, and all were in favor. (9-0).

• Approve Minutes from May 8, 2025, BOD meeting

Steve moved to approve the March minutes. Sarah seconded, and all were in favor. (9-0)

• Treasurer’s Report – Budgeting

Report of the unanimous online vote of May 20 re: banking changes is recorded at the end of the now-approved May 8, 2025 minutes. Bob explained the rolling over of the previous CD and the in-process additional changes re: banks and credit cards etc. There is now \$28,727 in our checking account.

Major recent expenditures were for: 1) our ad in the Fall MBCAC art tour catalog, and 2) Z107.7 Tour ads. We have finished paying Tour bills, including \$4000+ to Cole Gibson, and \$595 to Martha Weir. There were a couple of new memberships in May, and a generous donation by Kevin and Aliya Chen in memory of Steve Rieman. The Treasurer’s report was accepted by consensus.

The Finance Committee (Bob, Janet, Steve) plans to present a Budget by the next meeting.

Bob has submitted the required report to MWA summarizing our use of the \$8500 grant, and expects to receive notification soon of approval of our 2025/26 grant, hopefully \$9000, to cover the 2025 Tour. (Note: On 6/13 Bob confirmed receipt of the 25/26 MWA grant approval.) Bob will invoice the water districts for their financial commitments to the Tour. Laraine noted for clarification that the MWA grant has been intended for “desert-wise living” education, not just the Tour, whereas the water district grants are specifically for the Tour.

Outreach and Organizational Issues

1) Bring back the MAC - Discuss creating a Shadow MAC

Steve announced the intention for MBCA to create something similar to the prior County-sponsored Municipal Advisory Council, by renting a room and scheduling regular community meetings. There was extensive discussion about this and what it should be called.

Ideas/comments about organization/structure/purpose:

- Solicit input from Morongo Basin communities about their concerns
- Advising the County and Supervisor about those concerns
- This purpose matches the original government-sponsored MAC
- Reporting to the communities on County actions, e.g. Planning Commission
- Ask for Sheriff and Fire Department presentations
- Quarterly would be better than monthly (near each equinox/solstice perhaps)
- Give Supervisor and/or staff an opportunity to present
- Include Zoom access and record each meeting

Name suggestions (we would like to have “MAC” as part of it):

- Municipal Advisory *Committee*
- MBCA MAC
- MAC2 or MAC II
- Community MAC
- C-MAC
- Community Advisory Council
- Our MAC
- Power MAC
- Shadow MAC
- Morongo Basin Consortium
- Morongo Action Champions

Steve has checked with the JT Community Center for rental costs, which would be about \$100 each time. We should ask the County to contribute or at least strongly make the point that a non-profit is paying for this community service.

How would community representatives be chosen? Communities should include Morongo Valley, Yucca Valley, Pioneertown, Landers, Joshua Tree, Copper Mountain Mesa, 29 Palms, and Wonder Valley. We could approach representative groups like the Copper Mountain Mesa Association but not all communities have one. The County’s Community Action Guides that replaced Community Plans set up a framework mentioning “community champions” and that’s what we’re doing.

An ad-hoc committee will further develop a budget and details for this: Steve, Janet, Stacy, and Eric as a volunteer. Stacy noted we have a pool of great volunteers with skills that might help. Steve added this could be a revenue generator.

- 2) Local business improvement district efforts
The JT Arts Business and Culture group is dark for the summer per David. Eric mentioned that the County has launched a website for small business, the [BizHUUB](#). User accounts can be set up for businesses and organizations.
- 3) Events Committee report - Not addressed.
- 4) Landscape Tour – The Committee has a review and planning meeting set for June 27 9 AM, location TBD. Stacy reported that volunteer Committee member Miriam Seger has some strong ideas about “upleveling” the Tour. Laraine noted that the committee always has a post-Tour review and Miriam’s ideas will be part of the group decision. Stacy commented that we can always use both “seasoned” people and “new blood.” We need to focus on which Tour aspects have the greatest impact. For instance, by number of views, the video “shorts” have more impact than longer ones and serve as

triggers for further viewing. She is working with Cole to create more.

5) Educational Support

a. Scholarships

Laraine reported posting a Press Release and [News Post](#) announcements about the scholarships. Committee member Meg Foley awarded them at the Yucca Valley scholarship night. The website has been updated with a generic [MBCA Scholarship Program](#) page with a subpage of [past winners](#) including this year's recipients. We distribute checks upon receiving a copy of their fall schedule.

b. Field trip report

Janet said many of the Field Trip volunteers attended a large Volunteer Thank You event at La Contenta Middle School. She mentioned that several of them told her they very much appreciated the complimentary Tour tickets from MBCA.

The Environmental Eco Summit Janet organized was a gathering of educators doing environmental education and hopefully there will be another.

Janet's son is working on videos of the field trips, and she is working on future event planning, possibly connecting with other school district events. The timing of next year's field trips is not yet known.

6) Website and Social media updates – LT, SD

Stacy continues to post news and promote (\$) events on social media. She will contact Bob Stephenson to get the video of the Finding Balance Town Hall Meeting onto our YouTube channel.

Stacy has created a new acronym for our social media posts. Projects like Lovemore, OfLand, etc. are **IDP's** = Inappropriate Development Projects. We should be asking people to donate more often, encourage membership, maybe have a campaign. Bob noted we need to be explain "what you get" if you become a member, beyond "a good feeling." Stacy mentioned the successful email membership campaign we did a few years ago. *Laraine will send the letters we used in that effort.*

Stacy asked for short and correct summaries of items sent to her to be posted. It would help her to get out more and quicker posts. Stacy attended a good session on grassroots advocacy at a conference and would like to share content at our Retreat.

7) Presentation to 29 Rotary Club

Janet and Laraine are scheduled on August 27.

Regional Land Use

1) Lovemore appeal status

JT Village Neighbors filed, are waiting for next action, and continue to request donations.

2) Scenic 247 – SK

Sarah received an email from LUS with the many-times-repeated message that it's being reviewed by CalTrans, needs to go through a County committee, and finally to the Supervisors. David mentioned that CalTrans is working on widening 247.

- 3) Of-Land development – SB
The project will be on the 29 Palms Planning Commission on June 25; *Steve will attend to comment in person* based on the extensive [comment letter](#) Pat created.
- 4) 5-31-25 Town Hall Recap (“Finding Balance”)
Bob, David, Pat and Laraine attended and were impressed by the knowledgeable comments and intense interest. Our [website post about it](#) includes links to good coverage by Z107.76 (Hilary Sloane) and The Desert Trumpet. *Steve will send files of the wall maps he developed for the event to Laraine to be posted on the website.*
- 5) Participate [LUS Open house 6-25-25](#)
Begins at 5 pm. It seems geared towards specific individual projects and situations.

Housing

- 1) Morongo Basin Housing Solutions Working Group – JJ
Janet has met with both with [Reach Out Morongo Basin](#) (based in 29) and the other [Reach Out](#) organization that has one of its offices in YV. Janet was invited to the National Innovative Communities Conference, where topics were mostly health/medical related. Reach Out is active in Jurupa Valley, which is “a city of communities” where all public services are contracted.

Our local Point in Time homeless count seems very underreported for our area, but the County wants to emphasize the lower count. Janet talked more about counting practices and the complications. Other County irregularities are very frustrating for housing issues, along with agency budget cuts.

- 2) Discuss producing homeless video
Comments from Stacy and Janet focused on about whether to bring awareness by showing individual cases or to do a harder-hitting video using a theme of conflict with pointed messages about funding and governmental actions/inactions, how many unhoused are in our communities and how it affects us, and how unincorporated communities have become “dumping grounds” because of lower cost of living. Bob suggested the target audience and goal is providing awareness and asking for financial support from community members.

Other issues discussed included: What level of priority for us is this? How much would it cost? (about \$5000) Is there another group we can partner with? Should our role in this be like the LoveMore Ranch and Wonder Valley Inn issues, where we support, but the other group is the lead? Especially for housing-related land use issues, what can we be FOR? We’re not getting the vision across to the County of ideal housing here - are there other examples we can promote?

Climate Change

- 1) Western Joshua Tree Conservation Plan – F&G hearing re-cap
Development including housing projects must also provide protection for ecosystem, not destroy them. Steve reported that at the Fish & Game Commission hearing, they postponed making a final decision on the WJT plan after receiving a lot more comments. The new deadline is July 10 for comments and at the August meeting they’ll make the decision. Dawn Rowe spoke of how “we love the desert but we hate this plan.” Some of the limits of the Plan are due to the legislation, which has to be followed. Some of the ineffective details (e.g. distance around the trees that can/can’t be disturbed) were discussed.

2) SB-607 CEQA Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation update
CEQA still under attack, more discussion next time.

3) OHV - WEMO rejected– updates.

Steve B noted this issue was mentioned in the JT Conservation Plan hearing. Steve G said that two settlement conferences have been scheduled and then changed. They are moving away from CBD and BLM negotiations and are asking for proposals for settlement. CBD’s proposal is due by July 12, and BLM will have time to respond. The next hearing will be in November.

Steve G. has been working on reviewing Route Tables. Wherever routes are placed through private property they eliminated them from the tables. On his property and in similar areas, there is tortoise habitat with signs, but they aren’t included in the route tables. He noted BLM falsified documents and the Parks & Recreation agency is violating statutes and the state constitution. He's preparing a letter for the Judge and will file a motion under civil procedure, providing that people affected (they are allowing damage on private property) can become a plaintiff. Steve B suggested incorporating the Western Joshua Tree issue into it. Steve B thanked Steve G for staying on until the end of the meeting to report, and *promised to schedule this topic earlier in the agenda next month.*

Renewable Energy

1) Break rooftop solar contract AB-942 – Still in limbo.

Water Issues – Will be updated next month.

1) Cadiz – BH

2) JBWD update – DF

3) MWA update –BH

Director’s Comments

Arch: Conglomerate Mesa has been fast-tracked. Friends of the Inyo is requesting sign-ons to a long detailed letter against approval that Arch will send to the committee for approval.

Adjourned at 6:18 PM.

Letters: re: Rancho Lucerne, Ofland, Power in Nature – Include deserts, Oppose Trailer re: Delta Conveyance Project, Oppose SB 607,

Next *Regular* Meeting: Thursday, July 10, 2025 4:00 – 6:00 PM – In-person and Zoom