

## MBCA BOARD MEETING **DRAFT** MINUTES

Thursday, September 11, 2025 / 4:00 – 6:00 PM on Zoom

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Bardwell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pat Flanagan	<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	

### **Steve called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM**

- **Introduction of Guests and Board Directors**

Steve welcomed guests Ted Stimpfel and Beverly Tiner.

Steve spoke in remembrance of recently deceased long-time MBCA supporter Richard Schwartz. Along with his wife Phyllis, they were on the Advisory Board, and their home was on the Desert-Wise Landscape Tour. *Laraine and Stacy will create a website slider in memoriam.*

- **Agenda approval**

Laraine asked to add an item as #8 under Outreach and Organization to propose a revision of our Land Acknowledgement statement.

**Steve moved to approve the revised agenda. Pat seconded, and all were in favor. (10-0).**

- **Approve Minutes from July 10, 2025, BOD meeting**

**Sarah moved to approve the July minutes including some revisions from Steve. Bob seconded, and all were in favor. (10-0)**

- **Treasurer's Report – Budgeting**

Bob hopes to complete the changeover of all accounts from US Bank to the Banc of California by the end of this year. We currently have about \$22,600 in the USB and \$20,100 in Banc of CA (includes the \$10K grant for a greywater program from the [Frank McHugh O'Donovan Foundation](#)). Our CD was renewed in May and has value of \$50,475. We have \$16,900 extracted from the CD, available for any larger scale to-be-determined use.

All but one water agency (Golden State) have sent their Desert-Wise Living Landscape Tour program donations.

Our only large expenditure since July has been \$3000 in scholarships, \$1000 to each of 3 individuals. The Treasurer's report was accepted by consensus.

### **Outreach and Organizational Issues**

- 1) August Board Retreat Recap

Steve briefly reviewed some of the highlights of our productive August Retreat including some committee revisions and the intent to have more of our work done in Committees then reported at monthly Board meetings.

- 2) Presentation on Strategies for advocacy -SD  
*Stacy hopes to make the presentation next month.*
- 3) MBCA advertising MBCAC, Desert tourism magazine  
Laraine reported that with a short deadline we weren't able to submit an ad to the Desert tourism magazine. However, our ad in the Route 62 Arts Tour catalog ad is striking. Thanks again to Timothy Hearsom for use of the image (same as last year).
- 4) Bring back the MAC – SB  
Morongo Valley resident Ray Kennedy reached out via our website to meet about the MAC. Steve has been trying to reach him with no success as yet, and will wait for him to get back in touch.
- 5) Eco Summit at Harrison House -JJ  
Janet is seeking to schedule an informal gathering of folks who are interested in environmental education in the Morongo Basin, possibly at Harrison House in early November. There should be more focus on the elementary level.
- 6) Report on presentation to 29 Rotary Club -LT  
Laraine reported two highlights. 1) A Rotary member told Laraine she was extremely grateful for the DWL How-To videos and has used them extensively. 2) The advisor and president of 29 Palms High School's Interact Club offered student volunteers if we need them (maybe during the Tour?). *Laraine will make a connection with the group.*
- 7) Confirm attendance at Desert Discovery Day October 4 –  
Steve, Pat, Laraine, & Janet will be an ad-hoc committee and possibly add Jennifer Rendon and Caroline Conway. *Laraine will convene a Zoom meeting to plan.*
- 8) Revision to MBCA's Land Acknowledgement statement – LT  
With an addition of a sentence and a word change, the agreed-upon statement now reads (**new text in red**):  
*We acknowledge and thank the longest inhabitants of the desert lands for which MBCA advocates: The Cahuilla, Chemehuevi, Mojave and Serrano nations who have lands in California and Arizona. **We pay respect to their people: their ancestors, elders, and relatives, past, present, and emerging.** Through our mission we honor and support their stewardship of these lands **since time immemorial.***

### **Committee Reports:**

#### **Finance Committee** BW, SB, JJ

Bob reported that the Committee continues to work on a budget with estimates of revenue/expenses and regular tracking. They sent to the Board a preliminary version over the summer. In October they'll provide an updated version thru Sep 30 with projections of year-end totals. In November and December, they will present and ask approval for a 2026 budget. In addition they will develop mini-budgets and more refined reports on specific Committee-

focused projects, e.g. DWL Tour, Scholarships, and Housing & Community Outreach programs. Each has specific income sources and costs, and keeping track separately from the general budget will ensure funds are used as required.

## **DWL SD**

### 1. Annual Meeting Topic Greywater

Stacy is working to connect with local greywater expert Nicholas Holmes to provide a major part of the program. Depending on availability of Yucca Valley Community Center, we'll schedule for January 24 or 31 (Saturdays). *Steve will check with the Town.*

### 2. Spring Landscape Tour planning update

Stacy reported that a committee retreat is planned for September 26, and a draft agenda is in place. The goal is to improve and incorporate new ideas initiated by Miriam Seger, and to start detailed planning earlier. Stacy also plans to revise the timing of working with videographer Cole Gibson to reduce some timing/scheduling problems that have occurred. Filming will be done this fall instead of waiting until spring, and there are benefits to a having new material with a focus on "planting in the fall."

## **Web, Social Media Communications LT**

Stacy shared comments from Allie Irwin on a review of our website. Allie provided a strong list of ways to improve viewer engagement, while acknowledging the great amount of information available. *Laraine will convene the Web Team to review the list and consider how to go forward.* Stacy added that one of Miriam's video shorts has 7000 views!

## **Scholarships/Field Trips LT**

All 3 of this year's checks have been sent (Thanks, Bob!) *The committee will meet later this fall to plan the spring advertising.*

## **Board/Volunteer Recruitment SK**

*The Committee will meet and in November will announce Board nominees, to be voted on in December and installed at the Annual Meeting in January.*

*Steve reiterated our commitment going forward, that Committees should meet regularly to distill their work & make summary presentations at Board meetings.*

## **Partnership Advocacy SB**

Steve continues to receive many requests. These are the most recent.

### 1. Wildlife crossings

The letter was to encourage federal government funding. Proposition 4 was approved and we hope will provide funding for the proposed Morongo Valley crossings.

### 2. SB 131 re: CEQA rollback – trailer bill on budget.

There were efforts to fix the problems but they failed in this legislative session. The rollback of CEQA review was primarily made to speed up housing but other things were rolled in, including allowing building of

hi-tech facilities, which can have major impacts. Also, tribal consultation was removed. There is a new push to have a rollback of these rollback changes (!) to be the first item for next year's session. 235 organizations signed on.

3. [DCP and CEQA re: water quality](#)

The Delta Conveyance Project is asking a waiver for CEQA analysis of water quality issues and a group letter was opposing this. After consulting with Brian, Steve determined we shouldn't sign. Brian explained it's a very complex issue and hard to untangle.

**Land Use Conservation**

AM

Steve asks that the committee consider these items when it can meet.

1. Renewable Energy

a. Soda Mountain

We wrote scoping comments that didn't get filed by the deadline but were officially received. Pat noted that a number of letters were submitted and it's in process to do an EIR after input.

b. [SB 942 defeated](#)

Arch reported that AB 942 would have allowed breaking the contracts with rooftop solar owners. The Senate gutted that bill and replaced it with language that basically says any household with an annual electric bill less than \$300/month won't get climate credit. Steve also discussed the status of NEM 2.0 and 3.0. CBD filed a lawsuit to request that the state Supreme Court should revert to a lower court jurisdiction on the NEM 3.0 case, and they did remand it back to lower court to make the decision on CBD's challenge to NEM 3.0.

2. Water – [TROUBLE! 9-7-25 LA Times](#)

The article touches on higher temperatures, overdrafting (especially in the Central Valley) as well as concerns about flooding and effects on California's critically important farming industry.

a. MWA

Brian noted there's subsidence at Lucerne Valley Dry Lake but in inches not feet.

b. JBWD

Stacy spoke about a County effort to take over developing any future wastewater system in Joshua Tree. They would pay for, install, manage, and run the system, with the clear goal of more development.

David commented that Chromium 6 studies are underway, with a future possibility of contesting the CA level requirements.

David reported that the well being used for the Aratina Solar project is affecting other well owners. [Brian asked David to](#)

*inform and keep him posted on this issue.*

3. Development Proposals NEW LUS DIRECTOR

a. [Pioneertown Motel Expansion](#)

The Notice of Intent describes an expansion of the Motel, merging 3 parcels, adding 5.79 acres, with 47 cabins, a bunkhouse, horseback riding, day spa, outdoor pool, retail buildings, a 3000 sf restaurant, and a guest-only event venue. Would require zoning change to rural commercial. Steve received an email from Mike French (co-owner/developer), asking if Steve would like to meet to discuss it. Comments are due September 29. Steve and Arch will try to Zoom with them in advance of the deadline. A key issue is consideration of the overall effects of development to the small Pioneertown community. *Laraine mentioned a recent [LA Times article about Pioneertown](#).*

b. [Cactus Club Hotel](#)

David reported that this recently filed proposal is for a 20-room 2-story hotel near the Panorama Heights area at the SE corner of Hwy. 62 and Mile Square Road. They propose development on the east end of 4 parcels, so there would be 3 empty parcels between them and the coffeeshop/bar Mas O Menos. Access is on the highway, which is a point in their favor compared to OfLand. Arch commented further that there would be 2 restaurants and a health spa, all on a 5-acre parcel, so 7.5 acres would remain vacant as it looks now.

Steve commented that since the County has been notifying *us* about projects more frequently, we should respond for this one and the Pioneertown project, and others as they arise. Pat added that since we suggested Ofland be closer to the highway, as this project is, we should comment on it as an example.

*The Land Use Conservation Committee will draft these letters.*

c. [Ofland](#)

Arch reviewed the recent history and 29 Palms City Council approval. CBD and Indian Cove Neighbors filed a lawsuit on CEQA grounds. Pat reported that 29 Palms intends to do the rezoning.

4. WJT conservation Plan

There is a [meeting](#) in Yucca Valley to go over the regulations in detail.

**Housing and Community**

JJ

Steve commented on all these commercial developments that keep arising, but where are the working people going to live? We need to bring attention to that.

Janet is keeping a focus on policy developments as various groups work more

directly on homelessness. The County placed a new ordinance of a camping ban with fines if on County land on the consent calendar with no consultation with the County's continuum of care group (nonprofit providers working on homeless issues). Janet asked Supervisor Baca, who is chair of county level continuum of care board, asking him to pull the item, but it passed without comment. There may be an ACLU lawsuit (via Peggy Lee Kennedy).

The County wrote a letter of opposition to SB 634, meant to protect homeless service providers.

The Working Group we helped support with room rental is going well, with about 12-15 people including service providers attending. This is good progress, sharing communication about activities and policies and flow of funding.

The County used numbers from the wrong year of the Point-in-Time count to do calculations and Janet pointed out their error, so that funding for the East Desert Region should be increased as a result. *Steve urged Janet to add some of the people she works with to the MBCA Housing Committee.*

Janet attended the Community Coalition meeting of Reach Out Yucca Valley who do mobile shower and resources in MB. There is mutual interest in working on a video to educate people about the wide range of homeless people, including the employed.

### **Director's Comments**

UC Dust Report – Pat says they got it all wrong in the desert.

David suggests covering Janet's transportation costs as she has been traveling extensively on behalf of our housing interests. *Steve asked Janet to put together a budget for her housing committee including mileage estimates.*

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, October 9, 2025, 4:00 – 6:00 PM – In-person (TBD) and Zoom