

MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED** MINUTES

Thursday, October 9, 2025 / 4:00 – 6:00 PM on Zoom

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

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

Steve called the meeting to order at 4:05 PM

- **Introduction of Guests and Board Directors**

Steve thanked Allie Irwin for joining. Ted Stimpfel joined later.

- **Agenda approval**

Laraine moved to approve the revised agenda, which added items 8) and 9) under Outreach and Organizational Issues. Bob seconded, and all were in favor. (8-0).

- **Approve Minutes from September 11, 2025 BOD meeting**

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

- **Treasurer's Report – Budgeting**

Last month's donations included \$85 in memory of Richard Schwartz and a couples membership, and today we received a \$500 donation towards scholarships or other needs. (Donor prefers anonymity.) Our checking balance at US Bank is \$20,033, with \$20,400 at Banc of California (BC). The CD at BC is at \$50,635. We now have BC credit cards and will continue to work towards complete withdrawal of funds from US Bank. The Treasurer's report was accepted by consensus.

Outreach and Organizational Issues

1) Update on committee Budgets and Mission Statements

We reviewed the committee list from the Retreat and made some adjustments (see latest at end of these minutes). *Each committee will set a mission statement and submit budgets (if needed) by the December 11 Board meeting. Bob will work the financial requests into the organizational budget to present at the January meeting.*

2) Review Allie Irwin's thoughts

At Stacy's request, Allie reviewed our website and concluded that she didn't feel the website reflects how she sees us, i.e. the enthusiasm, passion, and great work that she knows we do. We need to engage the viewer more quickly with more graphics and photos as well as better organization and navigation, which Stacy has been working on and we discussed at last week's Web Team meeting. We will also align the website more with the strategic committees, using content from each committee and attractive images with rollovers to click on.

Steve notes we receive positive feedback about the detailed information

and analysis from some readers. He would like to retain some of that but also understands we need to distill it to be more accessible.

Janet asks for history content, as for instance the history and significance of the County forcing the change from Community Plans to Community Action Guides for unincorporated communities. Such a message might be effective as a mini-documentary. Another history topic could be the adoption of RE Policy 4.10 by the Supervisors. *Nora has already drafted a vertical historic timeline based on our 50th year history and is now further developing it.*

Stacy also wants to develop a training module to help citizen groups that come to us, e.g. "How to be an advocate for the desert." Brian will help.

- 3) Presentation on Strategies for advocacy – SD. Not addressed.
- 4) Purchase trees for distribution – SD
Stacy reported that the state's Cooperative Extension Service for Riverside and SB Counties and its Master Gardener program have a 5-gallon tree fall giveaway program and they might do one here but would need a \$2000 donation investment. Master Gardeners staff it. Trees are appropriate, e.g. mesquites, willows, & palo verdes. *Stacy will bring this to the Desert Wise Living Tour Committee for consideration in 2026.*
- 5) Bring back the MAC – SB
Steve reported that Ray Kennedy (MV) has been in discussion with the JT Retreat Center as a venue for a MAC. *Steve will follow up.*
- 6) Eco Summit at Harrison House - JJ
Janet continues to work towards hosting a meeting about eco-education in the Basin with District teachers (all levels if possible) and CMC. Pat is involved and hopefully we can engage Caroline Conway. A focus will be the arc of related training and careers available in the Basin, for adults as well as kids. The group would assess what's available and what's missing and how can we connect students into programs. A tentative date is Saturday, November 15, 9:30 – noon, at Harrison House. Presentations from each group would include academic paths, curriculum, and scholarships. *Laraine will place this on the agenda for the Scholarships and Field Trips Committee.*
- 7) Recap Desert Discovery Day October 4 – Steve, Sarah, and Laraine commented on the high attendance, mostly families, and interest in our stickers and our poster exercise. It was a valuable event for us.
- 8) Ad honoring Marines in *Hi Desert Star* – LT
The local newspaper is accepting content for ads honoring the Marine Corps on its 250th anniversary, with a *deadline of October 24*. **Steve moved to buy a 1/3 page ad for \$285 and pay up to \$200 in design fees. Laraine seconded and all agreed. (9-0)** We'll comment on their

work related to our mission, including tortoise, night skies, etc. *Laraine and Stacy will send ideas to Steve, and he'll proceed.*

- 9) Cindy Bernard's Indian Cove Neighbors group is looking for financial support for the OfLand fight, using a GoFundMe site. Should we place on our Social Media? *Steve will ask Cindy to provide more information at next month's meeting.*

Committee Reports:

Finance Committee – Bob

Banc of CA – changes were reported earlier. *The Finance committee will focus on a mission statement and incorporating committee budgets into the organizational budget.*

DWL - Stacy

1. Annual Meeting **1-24-26** Topic Greywater
Steve filed an application for YVCC Yucca Room and is waiting for confirmation. *Stacy will meet with Nicholas (lead speaker) next week.* The grant foundation has loosened its requirements so we will proceed as seems appropriate. *Steve will put this topic in Outreach and Org issues next month - everyone on the Board must help. Steve will contact LUS/Building and Safety Department about regulations, requirements, and enforcement, and hopefully we can get a speaker at the event.*
2. Spring Landscape Tour planning update – Stacy reported on the recent Committee meeting and that some committee members are visiting sites. Stacy has created a site list that can be used as a database, with a variety of sorting categories. *Laraine will send a historic list of all the hosts who have been on the tour over the years.* The Committee will add information as needed via Google Sheets – Stacy will train anyone who needs help. Keep moving the ball forward.

Web, Social Media Communications - Stacy

A long list of tasks came out of a great web committee meeting. As mentioned earlier, we will do some redesign. *Stacy is working on some problems with posting photos in Instagram and will work with Laraine on a FB posting issue.*

Scholarships/Field Trips - Laraine

1. May 20, 2026 will be Scholarships award night at Yucca Valley HS. *Committee will meet in November to review scholarship process and plan for 2026.*
2. Eco Summit – See Janet's report #6) in Outreach and Org.
3. Janet is trying to schedule the 8th grade Field Trips, but with a new CMC Day event for 8th graders recently added at La Contenta, there may be some alterations to avoid duplication. [Reach Out Yucca Valley](#) has developed a lot of similar programs in their Jurupa Valley office, but not yet in YV, but perhaps there's a partnership possibility. *Janet's son is still working on the 2025 Field Trip video.*

Board/Volunteer Recruitment - Sarah

Sarah will set a Zoom meeting soon to move forward and report next month.

Partnership Advocacy & Advertising!- Steve

1. Power in Nature purchase Tortoise habitat from Prop 4 funds
We support asking that available funds be used to purchase tortoise habitat. Arch also sent another letter for Prop 4 funds for trails in Imperial County. *Arch will send again.*
2. Track effect of Govt shutdown
This [form](#) has been created for individuals to report negative effects of the government shutdown on public lands.
3. AB 1083 to fix SB131 re: CEQA
[AB 1083](#) has been introduced to improve CEQA protections in response to the recent reductions in environmental protections for housing developments. It also seeks to delete the exemption for manufacturing and to require tribes to be consulted.
4. Roadless Rule rollback
The federal Administration plans to roll back restrictions on forest roads. MBCA submitted a [comment letter](#) protesting the action.

Land Use Conservation - Arch

1. Renewable Energy
 - a. Newsom Veto VPP
Despite unanimous passage by both branches, Newsom vetoed the Virtual Power Plant bill [AB 740](#) that would have required collaboration to develop distributed energy resources to be integrated into the system, e.g. to monitor rooftop solar. He said it would add cost to CEC's operating funds which is already having financial problems. Unwillingness to change the power companies' business model is probably the real reason. EDF and others supported the bill. This sets California back from keeping up with renewable energy technology.
 - b. Soda Mountain
Neither Arch nor Brian has seen any updates.
2. Water
 - a. MWA – nothing today.
 - b. JBWD – David spoke about the ongoing Chromium 6 issue, and that JBWD is part of a group of small water districts protesting the new requirements. California is requiring the parts per billion to be under 10, whereas the federal (EPA) maximum level is 100. JBWD measurements are around 22-25,

topping out at 35 but usually lower. The huge difference doesn't make sense. It would cost the District \$50 million for the 5 wells. Households could install reverse osmosis devices for about \$1500. Fall 2027 is the deadline. Brian noted there are also waste stream and bottled water issues. Legislative relief is somehow going to be necessary.

3. Development Proposals

a. AB 98 Truck routes

Steve reported that AB 98 was passed and requires warehouses to pay more attention to effects on communities, and to track and mediate community effects. The Planning Commission had a study session today. We sent a [letter](#) in January 2025 and Steve sent an [email](#) update recently, mostly concerned with the continued increase in truck traffic on Hwy. 247. Steve Reyes of Supervisor Rowe's office is tracking. There is a hearing on October 23.

b. [Pioneertown Motel Expansion](#)

Arch described the expansion as quite dense, covering a lot of the main parcel and adding development on other parcels, including 47 more units plus spa and meeting space etc. The current parcel is commercial, but the other 3 are rural living and jut out into a rural neighborhood. It's out of scale with current Pioneertown. Adding paved streets was a concern, but local resident Ben Loescher (working with the developers) suggested stabilized earth as an alternative. Opposition may be low because of the low number of fulltime residents.

c. [Cactus Club Hotel](#)

Located in Joshua Tree across from the west side of CMC, the project is on 4 parcels, with one parcel densely developed, with 20 rooms, 2 restaurants, a wine bar, club room, café and spa. It's being processed as a hotel but seems more like a resort. It's on the edge of a rural residential neighborhood. The CUP understates the number of homes nearby. Steve noted that the developer, Evoque Modern, owns 80 parcels in the Basin for STRs, especially in the country club area.

d. Landers Lodge comments due 10-21-25

Steve will check with Mike Lipsitz and will try to attend the meeting of Landers Community Association next Monday. Maybe MBCA will sign on to the Landers letter.

e. Summit on dust 11-6-25 UCR Palm Desert

Arch and Pat hope to attend. This seemed more lower desert but still relevant.

f. Joshua Tree Village Neighbors are having a LoveMore meeting Janet October 15 at the Beatnik.

4. WJT conservation Plan [FAQs](#)

New and helpful FAQ updates have been distributed. There is a presentation from CA Fish and Wildlife in Yucca Valley on October 15. The Town has fanned community outrage by using the most difficult situations as typical instead of exceptional. Maybe eventually there will be more relaxed standards by F&W. There have been some concerns about CalFire Firewise principles and the JT Conservation Act, but Steve said it's being addressed by getting permits for trees close to homes.

Housing and Community - Janet

The Working group meetings are going well, with 15 or so people attending, and the county team is doing well with outreach. Issues being addressed include behavioral health, adult protection, and public health services. They are working toward a central communication service through Discord, getting participation from service providers centralized, with different channels for specific needs, e.g. motel vouchers or bed space, to better match needs with available services. A potential website would have a page for each provider with updates done regularly. Better communication could really make a difference.

Director's Comments

Stacy shared that former MBCA Board member (and Treasurer and early website developer) Leslie Thornburg recently passed away.

Meeting adjourned at 6:13 PM.

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, November 13, 2025, 4:00 – 6:00 PM Zoom