

## MBCA DRAFT Minutes – July 9, 2026

### Via ZOOM

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

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|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Bardwell  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Erin Gatlin      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arch McCulloch |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stacy Doolittle | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Hammer     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joani Tremblay |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Fick      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janet Johnston   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laraine Turk   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pat Flanagan (excused)     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sarah Kennington | <input type="checkbox"/> Bob Wold (excused)        |

**Meeting called to order at 4:12 PM**

### **Introduction – Board Members and Guests**

Steve welcomed guests Wendy Wacker, Meg Foley, and Megan Pater.

### **Approve Minutes from June 11, 2026**

***Erin moved to approve the June 2026 minutes. Sarah seconded and all were in favor. (9-0)*** (prior to Brian's arrival)

### **Treasurers Report**

Janet in Bob's place reported a low activity month with no new memberships, donations, or major expenses. The US Bank accounts are closed and our accounts are now exclusively at Banc of CA. The CD was rolled over for 13 months at 3%. *Steve and Janet will continue to accomplish Treasurer tasks for the time being.* The Board accepted the report by consensus.

### **Suggested Additions to the Agenda**

- **There is an appeal of the 'Dry Camp' project that needs some discussion. August 4 is the hearing date. Wendy Wacker will be attending our meeting. She is the individual who filed the appeal.**

Wendy reported issues of concern including lack of fulltime supervision and uncertainty about handling wastewater. The area seems to have been developed without a permit, with a lot of dirt-moving that is likely to affect rain runoff for nearby properties. Campers have strayed onto private property and have fired weapons. Developers are stayed from further progress at this time.

Wendy is working with an attorney on an appeal on the basis of safety for locals and campers and that it's a commercial venture and not appropriate use of land for a rural residential area. The appeal to the Supervisors is scheduled for August 4, 10 AM, at the Supervisors' Chambers in San Bernardino – we're uncertain if there will be a Joshua Tree video site. Wendy will email talking points to Steve. The County stated during the CUP hearing that this is a precedent case; therefore we really need to fight this. Wendy noted and Steve reinforced that we want to appeal professionally without disparaging the County. Wendy will pursue opening the JT video site and if not, may look into hiring a bus to take people to the meeting. Getting bodies in the chamber is important. *Steve will put this topic into an eblast within a week or so.*

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\* See June 22 online vote record at end of these minutes approving Janet as Treasurer.

- **We have been contacted by Megan Pater and made aware of serious problems with dust from the Aratina solar project. Residents in Boron are experiencing asthma attacks and there is a case of Valley fever there. Megan Pater of the East Kern County Communities Foundation will be attending our meeting. They are looking to file a lawsuit.** (Brian joined.)

Megan Pater – East Kern County Community Foundation – Boron resident – This group is fighting the consequences of large solar projects in Kern County including the Aratina project. In this low income area there have been incredible dust storms with no County assistance and limited medical care. There are violations of mitigation protocols. They have tried to get assistance from Mojave Air Quality Management District with no results yet. Instead of using water to reduce dust they should provide gravel cover. Stacy suggests pursuing stronger and more media contacts, even LA and NY. *Steve will put Megan in touch with Chance Willcox of NPCA.* Additional suggestions for media were Sammy Roth, (Climate Colored Goggles podcast), Alex Wigglesworth and Melody Petersen (LA Times). *Steve asked Megan to keep us informed and we'll share information with our supporters.*

- **There is a community meeting on the Pioneertown draft overlay district in Pioneertown on July 14, 3:00-5:00 at the Sound Stage. Questions about the draft overlay remain. As written it would encourage development and many temporary Special Events that could occur concurrently.** The plan seems to open development, with little respect for the historical character of the town. Was originally headed by Mark Wardlaw, but now there's a new planner in charge, so it's losing continuity. *Steve will send everyone the draft;* there's been a lot of interest, involvement and concerns. They are still accepting comments.
- **The County Ad Hoc Energy Committee is still percolating.** They are focused on rewriting the RECE Element, seemingly to make it easier to put big energy projects in the desert. The video of the April 7<sup>th</sup> Supervisors meeting where the topic is introduced is [available](#). It's Item 56 on the agenda.
- **Chuck Bell of LVEDA has become aware of a 4,000 - 5,000 acre solar project near/in Johnson Valley. 'Candella Renewables'. Would be on State Lands and would utilize AB 205 for fast tracking.** Sarah noted it's in the Scenic Highway viewshed and the County has a corridor protection plan so it should at least be challenged. Jim Harvey in Johnson Valley is taking the lead on opposing. County seems to be greenlighting all RE in the high desert.
- **Sant Khalsa and Juniper Harrower, authors of the book Desert Forest living with Joshua Trees is hosting a meeting at the JT retreat center on September 26, 5:00 - MBCA has been asked to have a table.** Included will be the premiere of Casey Kiernan's short film on Joshua Trees. *We agreed to have a table but no one was assigned yet.*
- **Yucca Valley is looking to re-write their lighting ordinance. I have asked Curtis Yakimow if MBCA might offer insights.** There might be a first meeting in early August.

## I. Old Business

### MBCA Administrative Topics

- - MBCA business cards –has everyone submitted the information to Steve?

Table to put information in:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1FPueOrKgZjDHc5xISTid3Ti9UHU56kPzA3Cjnhk5J8/edit?usp=sharing>

*NOTE: If you do not want business cards – put NA in the cell for your name*

- Need a naming convention for the folders on the MBCA shared folders – Stacy is working on this (from 6/11) -  
Stacy shared her work so far showing the categories. We discussed the organization and timelines; Stacy will continue to work on it with tweaking as needed. Get into the MBCA Shared Drive from your MBConservation email. Deleted files are saved for 30 days. *Erin asked that monthly committee reports be filed on the Shared Drive instead of email.* It will take some getting used to but will be worth it. *Erin has created Google Sheets for MBCA document development and will move it to the shared Drive.*
- Update from Obernolte's office on correction to our name. Thanks to Heather Norquist(?)

### **Scholarship Committee Meeting – Laraine**

Our (initial) concluding recommendations following our July 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting:

1. Maintain the \$1000 budget commitment for an MBCA Conservation Scholarship for a high school senior. (This is a temporary one-year commitment pending other changes.)
2. Use the already-committed \$1000 donation to fund the Steve Rieman Scholarship next year; however, use it for a CMC student rather than a high school student.
3. Laraine and Erin will consult with CMC's Foundation Director Sandy Smith to see how to fit into their scholarship procedures.

We'll have more ideas to discuss after the meeting with Sandy and the next committee meeting. Comments from the Board will be appreciated.

### **Grant Application**

Steve reported that donation invoices have been sent to the water agencies. There continues to be some confusion on timing of grants and expenditures between the grant's July-December fiscal year and MBCA's calendar year budget. *The income from the invoices sent now will provide reimbursements for the 2026 Tour expenses.*

### **Status of letters requesting grant funding – \$5500, deadline was July 8.**

MWA awarded MBCA \$8000 for 2026-2027, less than the \$9500 last year. We'll invoice for that amount next June. Steve has to sign an agreement letter accepting the \$8000 and send a W-9 form by July 28 to lock in the grant. Laraine emphasized that the grant is for Desert-Wise Living programs, not just the Tour. ***Does the Board agree we will accept the grant? Yes, agreed unanimously.***

- A common remarks document needs to be created for Thank You presentations. *Laraine and Stacy – status? - First scheduled thank you is September 8. Stacy and Laraine will get this done by late August.*

- Laraine to prepare a Funders Report modeled on past reports. *Status?* [Laraine will complete by end of August.](#)

### **Final Greywater Workshop TBD**

- Need a location in the Apple Valley area – coordinating with Neville (Steve to follow up with Neville and Nicholas for location and date) *Status?* Steve still working on it, no response. [Steve will check with Chuck Bell and LVEDA.](#)

### **Pre-retreat Friday, August 28 and Retreat – Saturday August 29, 2026**

Friday – dinner gather at 5:30; plan to eat at 6

- Location: the Gatlin's
- 56521 Chipmunk Trail, Yucca Valley

Yucca Kabob: <https://www.yuccakabob.com/Menu>

Decision: Family feast or order individually (~\$25/plate)

→ for 11, Pat not there. FAMILY FEAST. All are attending.

BYO beverages or have MBCA buy in bulk for the weekend? BYO plus extra.

[The group agreed to order Yucca Kabob for Friday and there will be a potluck on Saturday.](#)

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Saturday – Proposed: 8:30 – 4:00

Location: the Gatlin's

Potluck for breakfast and lunch (how has this been organized in the past?)

→ Will need and August 13 regular meeting. Make it closed and focused more on the Retreat. [Board agreed unanimously.](#)

Proposed Schedule

**8:30 – gather for coffee and light breakfast**

**9:00 – Begin the Retreat**

**~11:30 – break for lunch**

**12:30 – Back at it**

**3:30 – Wrap up and Next steps**

**4:00 – Adjourn**

### **Potential Retreat Topics:**

*Note: I do not recommend we discuss all the topics suggested for the retreat. I suggest instead we focus on topics 1-4 with some discussion at the end related to additional topics*

- 1. Reconnecting with our mission / ice breaker** (Erin)
- 2. Decisions** – how do we make them? (lead?).  
→ We're now sending emails and voting online, an almost *ad hoc* process. We're stretched thin, where do we put our resources and be more intentional? Can we create a rubric or criteria for choosing issues to take on?
- 3. Organization** – what's working for us? What can we do better? New Roles and Responsibilities e.g., new chairs are needed for the DWL Tours, Social Media, Secretary / Comms (lead?)

→ Also note changes such as Laraine retiring from being Secretary. And what about DWL programming other than the Tour? Communication/Web/Social Media is very important and important to do it well.

#### **4. Preparing for the Strategic Plan (Erin)**

This is an event for the Board, how work with constituents, getting input , can talk about preparing at the retreat.

- Propose having a facilitator, multi-day event
- Survey of our stakeholders to support plan and 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
→ We should have celebratory pieces in place long before January 2029.
- Annual Meeting 2027: Strategic Plan (in whole or in part).

#### **5. Potential General topics – not exhaustive:**

Asking for leadership on these to prepare before Aug 13 and confirm preparation for August 29 Retreat. Other topics open.... Everyone should sign up to be involved and get info a week prior to the Retreat.

##### MBCA Management

Subscription to ChatGPT or similar – subscription adds more functionality.

→ Do we need this? It can be a useful tool. Joani noted that a paid subscription has better functionality.

MBCA subscription to Adobe – is it worth considering?

→ Useful for manipulating documents and PDFs. Brian – Adobe Suite is very comprehensive and effective, though expensive.

##### Communication

Future of the website – what should be there and who are the admins?

Google drive – not public facing and how do we use it?

How to manage social media going forward - people are engaging with it. How do we manage our presence going forward to make the best use of this tool?

##### MBCA Initiatives – Laraine and Janet

Future of MBCA Scholarships

What involvement should MBCA have going forward with initiatives that are related to housing?

Are there other initiatives we need to think about as well?

##### Issues to Potentially Address

Role – need to review the BOS and PC agendas and other notifications from SBC – Our relationship with the County...

Dawn Rowe's vague reference to a MAC-like body – what is this and how would it be organized.

**NEXT STEPS (need champions before end of the meeting)**

1. Confirm dinner menu for August 28 - *Erin will do the ordering.*
2. Confirm leads for topic areas - *Joani will do the AI topic; Laraine and Janet on Initiatives.*
3. Organize potluck for day of retreat – *Erin will put up a signup sheet on Drive.*
4. Organize and send out reading materials 1 week in advance of the retreat.

**\*\*\*STRONGLY SUGGEST STILL HAVE THE REGULAR BOARD MEETING ON AUGUST 13** so the retreat can be reserved for larger topics of discussion . *The Board agreed on this.*

## II. Updates from the last meeting

## III. Regular Agenda Items

\*\* The items discussed here should be committee updates **not** already covered in committee reports.

### Operation and Program Committees

Finance Committee (Janet) – Nothing new.

Committee Budgets

Desert Wise Living and Tour Committee (Stacy)

Web/ Social Media / Communication (Stacy)

→ Joani recommended hiring someone for the NationBuilder and Square Space interface. This will be necessary to maintain the archive and people information while using the new front of Square Space. She recommended Pamela Campbell, who does this kind of work and has worked with NationBuilder, and that we budget \$1700 for 20 hours as offered (the most reasonable pricing after asking about 15 people). ***Laraine moved to spend up to \$2000 to hire Pamela Campbell as a consultant to assist Joani, Stacy, Laraine and Nora with our website development using both Square Space and NationBuilder. We will ask her to also be available for additional consultation on an hourly basis. Steve seconded. All were in favor. (10-0)***

Education (Laraine)

Working with a Girl Scout Troup

→ Laraine will respond that we will include this possibility in planning for future activities as we enter a organizational planning period.

Board and Volunteer Recruitment (Sarah)

Highlights from committee meeting

### Strategic Committees

Partnership and Advocacy (Steve)

- Consider feasibility of legal challenge based on SBC decision to site solar development along Lear without following any of the proper notification processes etc. – collaborative effort?

→ Steve suggested we could support a lawsuit filed by Indian Cove Neighbors or any other group. Erin is continuing to research this. Without

County review, it would be entirely federally managed with no County input.

#### Land Use and Conservation (Arch) Updates on

##### 1. Music Valley Mine

Arch sent notes from a recent meeting. This is a rare earths mining claim by an Australian company in Pinto Mountains which is visible from 29 Palms Park entrance (and vice versa). Additional acres are in an ACEC in Riverside County. This is critical habitat for desert tortoise and desert lily and includes California Desert Conservation Lands in the 30/30 Plan. They haven't been good stewards at their Coliseum Mine in the Mojave Preserve, expanding beyond the claim area for roads and pads for equipment. The Music Valley project goes through a 29 Palms neighborhood and Park land. 29 Palms business owners are mostly against it, as 29 has been emphasizing and expanding its tourism economy. MDLT is working with NPCA via Krystian Lahage and Chance Wilcox and there are multiple information opportunities forthcoming.

##### 2. Morongo Tower project – consider donation to Friends of Morongo Valley to support legal challenge

Meg reported that Friends of Morongo Valley/FMV (successor to Residents Against The Tower) have filed for 501c3 status. The lawsuit cost is estimated at \$100K, and pledges have been received for about 80%.

A long discussion followed about MBCA donating to the FMV to fight the Tower Project, where the following points and questions occurred:

- Do we have enough money to do this? (\$1000 was the first recommended donation)
- Where does this fit into our strategic goals?
- What is our process for deciding how to donate to other non-profits?
- Yes, we should donate: part of our mission is to fight against a federal agency imposing on the community against their best interests when a better alternative is available.
- This would likely open up more development in the area.
- Note that the County was rather supportive of Morongo Valley's position – letters in their favor were sent by Dawn Rowe and Paul Cook.

#### ***Arch moved to donate \$2500 to Friends of MV, Steve seconded.***

Discussion points:

- We need to address how we do this before deciding, such as setting up standard amounts or comparing value with other expenditures.
- We shouldn't wait – we need to be proactive as we get “hammered.”
- Steve reminded us that \$25K of the amount in the CD was given by an individual in Newberry Springs that we were to utilize for lawsuits. We could pledge the amount now and complete the transaction after we

decide on procedures at the retreat. Meg said that would work because there are 45 days before a decision.

***Erin moved to pledge \$1000 to the Friends of Morongo Valley now for fighting the Tower, with additional donations to be considered later. Steve seconded and the motion passed 9-1, Stacy opposed. Erin initiated additional discussion and there was consensus to develop a policy before completing this donation.***

3. SBC Planning Commission Meeting related to local permitting of mines on federal land. This is of course connected to the Music Mine issue.

→ Brian commented on water issues: El Nino may be “really one for the record books this winter.”

MBCA Response to Santorini Development

→ This is the H1B Visa project and another example of the County ignoring cumulative effects.

Housing and Community (Janet)

→ Once again information from the County is unclear on plans to handle loss of funds. A developing organizational chart will help clarify responsibilities.

#### **Director's Comments**

***Adjourned 7:01 PM***

**Next Board Meeting: August 13, 2026**

**Board Retreat: August 29, 2026**

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MBCA Online Vote approving Janet Johnson as Treasurer – June 22, 2026

***Steve nominated Janet Johnston for the position of Treasurer of MBCA effective immediately upon the positive vote of the Board. The nomination was seconded by Bob Wold. The unanimous online vote was concluded on June 22, 2026. (12-0)***

|           |       | Yes | No | Abstain |
|-----------|-------|-----|----|---------|
| Bardwell  | Steve | x   |    |         |
| Doolittle | Stacy | x   |    |         |
| Fick      | David | x   |    |         |
| Flanagan  | Pat   | x   |    |         |
| Gatlin    | Erin  | x   |    |         |
| Hammer    | Brian | x   |    |         |

|            |         | Yes | No | Abstain |
|------------|---------|-----|----|---------|
| Johnston   | Janet   | x   |    |         |
| Kennington | Sarah   | x   |    |         |
| McCulloch  | Arch    | x   |    |         |
| Tremblay   | Joani   | x   |    |         |
| Turk       | Laraine | x   |    |         |
| Wold       | Bob     | x   |    |         |