

MBCA BOARD MEETING APPROVED MINUTES
Thursday, June 13, 2019 / 5:00 PM

Regular Meeting Call to Order: 5:10 pm

<u>x</u> Steve Bardwell	<u>x</u> Mike Lipsitz
<u>x</u> David Fick	<u>x</u> Ruth Rieman
<u>x</u> Pat Flanagan	<u>x</u> Seth Shteir
<u>x</u> Meg Foley	<u>x</u> Laraine Turk
<u>x</u> Sarah Kennington	<u> </u> Marina West (notice given)

Introduction of Guests and Board Directors

Claudia Sall

Mickey Luckman passing

We remembered Mickey's long life of giving back to the communities in Joshua Tree and the Morongo Basin and opened the meeting in her honor.

Agenda approval

- Steve added as #8 in Capacity Building the topic of adding Board members in considering of losing both Claudia and Seth.
- Laraine said she'd like to add some comments on the Paradise Valley topic.
- Pat asked to add #9 to the Outreach category concerning Robin Kobaly's soon-to-be-published book.

Minutes from May 9, 2019 BOD meeting

Mike moved to approve the minutes, Meg seconded, and all were in favor. (7-0)

Treasurer's Report

We are grateful to Marina for providing nicely organized detailed reports in advance. Steve briefly summarized the reports and noted our total assets of \$50,111.85 and that all bills were paid. The Board accepted the Treasurer's report. Someone asked about membership income and *Laraine said she would make a membership report at the next meeting*. Steve noted that we received a Business membership from the Mojave Resource Conservation District via Chuck Bell.

<<https://www.mojavedesertrcd.org/about-us>> They may become a resource for us in the future.

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues

1) Grant status: DWL - Edison & AWAC – SB

Steve reported that in a discussion with SCE representative Jennifer Cusack, she shared her unhappiness that Edison didn't have a part in our January Annual Meeting "Energy Summit." On the positive side, Pat has recently made a contact with Jennifer related to helium balloon outage problems. We might try to intercede with helium balloon sellers to give the message to users to deflate them when done.

Jennifer offered their experts if we wish to connect with them for a program. Perhaps we could write something of that nature into future SCE grant requests. Steve noted that Edison is working on their equipment for fire safety all over their territory, including extensively in Pioneertown. *Sarah and Steve will craft a letter*

acknowledging Jennifer's request for more future opportunities.

The Edison grant application deadline is the end of June, and Jennifer has implied that it's not certain that we'll again receive a grant. SCE grant amounts have varied but last year it was \$2000. Our MWA grant for next year is \$5000, so coupled with the water districts' contributions, we can still cover DLW Tour expenses. Claudia suggests looking for grants as backups and/or for an alternative event, maybe a "Community Conservation Fair" including not just displays but lectures, workshops, and presentations. There was support for that idea.

2) Purple Air monitors: AQMD support & installation/location additional units-SB, PF

Pat reported that monitors are under consideration for CMC and Morongo Valley, and for the 29 Palms Water District's well at Mesquite Springs. We discussed the value of the data compared to data from EPA-approved expensive official monitors (such as the Park uses). Pat said the Purple Air monitor data has been studied and is legitimate and the best we have. Anybody can use them and it's a new/added measure. There are no longer air quality measurements being done on Base (per Pat). Sarah noted that the County "Action Plan" for Pioneertown used air quality measurements from the Base.

3) Events Committee reports:

- Members of events committee

Steve asked who is on the Tour Committee. This year it included Marina, Claudia, Ruth, Laraine, Cathy, Sarah, and Meg, and the President is always ex-officio. Membership evolves from year to year as needed.

- DWL Committee - Landscape Tour report, 2020?

Laraine reported that Marina submitted the grant report with data provided from the almost-complete Internal and External reports on the 2019 Tour. *Laraine plans to meet with Marina to iron out a few numbers and then both reports will be finalized.* The external reports are presented to funders, including presentations at Water District meetings.

- Fall event coordinate with CDPa celebration.

Steve reported that MDLT, along with a number of other organizations, will be involved in producing 25th anniversary events for the California Desert Protection Act. The date of our Fall event, September 28, is also Public Lands Day, so we should include some recognition as part of our program. *Meg suggested adding a page to our 50th anniversary Book. Steve and Pat will pursue a MAC resolution.*

4) 50th book – ML

Thanks to Mike for putting all the content together – there's a lot! Graphics will be important. The Book committee is meeting tomorrow and we'll be asking Melissa for a revised proposal and then handing over the content to her soon.

5) mbconservation.org / E-blasts SB & LT

In response to Stacy Doolittle's comments to Steve about improving our Eblasts, Steve has sent her the most recent one and asked her to demonstrate what changes

she would make. We discussed our take on Eblasts and agreed that our heavily-detailed Eblasts get positive response and fit with our mission, even if a more compact style is “preferred” in the general world of digital communication. But we’ll certainly review Stacy’s suggestions.

7) Board retreat – August 4, 2019 at Big Morongo Canyon Preserve
Confirmed: it’s on everyone’s calendar.

8) (added by Steve) Replacing departing Board members

A number of names were mentioned and we acknowledged that some candidates might not always be able to physically attend, so calling in to meetings may be necessary. One suggestion was to have a social meeting with candidates to discuss Board member duties and answer questions. We should look at MBCA volunteers and those who were on the Advisory Board. Seth offered to continue in any kind of advisory capacity, for which we are grateful. Names mentioned during our discussion included Janet Johnston, Miriam Seger, Rebecca Unger, Karin Messaros or Luke Sabala after they retire, and Michel Cicero, recent MAC appointee for Landers.

Laraine will send out a list of frequent volunteers, the Advisory Board list, and others with some track record of support for MBCA. We’ll further discuss at next meeting.

Conservation Issues

1) Paradise Valley EIR: Riverside Planning Commission 8/21/19 in Palm Desert SB, PF.

Pat shared that Robin’s book on “underground life,” soon to be published, will have value to fight the Paradise Valley development and other desert projects. See the March *Desert Report* article “[The Desert Under Our Feet](#).” Robin has spoken to the County Supervisors and Planning Commission, and we should work to distribute the information our local Town/City Councils and their respective Planning Commissions, perhaps partnering with MDLT on presentations to those bodies. Specifically for Paradise Valley, we should work with the Coachella Valley Habitat Conservation Plan group to distribute the information to Riverside County supervisors and planning commissioners. Basin and Range Watch is interested.

Pat would like to see MBCA be a main source of distributing the books, sharing them as a land use tool. Possible partners are MDLT, NPCA and maybe the Morongo Basin MAC. The MBCA Finance Committee would need to know the costs and money flow and what Robin’s plans are for outreach and distribution. *Pat will talk with Robin to begin a discussion.* Laraine and Ruth there is a precedent in MBCA distributing books, a planning book quite a few years ago and then the *Tortoise Through the Lens* book more recently. We purchased books and gave them out, asking for donations. In this scenario, the focus is on getting them to decision-makers.

The June 21st Riverside County Supervisors meeting with Paradise Valley on its agenda is a critical public comment opportunity. Robin’s book should be delivered to Riverside County officials well before the meeting. Gary Gray is spearheading the anti-PV coalition.

Laraine talked about the Joshua Tree National Park Association interest in doing some advocacy for the Park related to Paradise Valley. They may seek support from the Pasadena Garden Club, which has continued its support for the Park following its history with Minerva Hoyt and has visited recently. Support from beyond desert communities should be useful.

2) Solar projects

- Daggett on-site meeting – PT
Pat's letter "upset" the developer, who asked for meeting on the site. Pat was there with Chuck Bell, Fred Stern (realtor), and George Kenline (geologist). The developer maintained that they were not going to take the vegetation away, but "make it better." But poles in the ground ruin the root system. They kept saying, "although it's not in the EIR..." -- so they need a new EIR! They don't have true air quality data from the affected area, only from Barstow.
- Ord Mtn. Solar & Energy Project – PF
Waiting to see what the County does with comments towards the final EIR.
- Calcite – PF
Initial Study comments filed.

Pat noted that the County is way behind on all their planning work and their products are inconsistent and poor quality.

3) Countywide Plan & Community Action Plans

- Draft Policy plan, Land Use Plan, Community Action Guides released for public review.

Draft Plans were released but they look much the same as before. There were no changes in Joshua Tree Action Plan, which still suggests one of the action "champions" be the Chamber of Commerce, which doesn't currently even exist. In the Pioneertown plan a lot of the nonprofits are not correct. Lucerne Valley got the 2007 elements put into their new Action Plan by badgering the County. We still think the Action Plans are useless and the 2007 Community Plans should remain the guide.

We discussed possible actions. Urban areas have signed onto the Action Plans but they aren't realistic in our local communities. The Steve Mills letter helps to make the points we are concerned about, but maybe another letter with more specifics should be created. The County provides a matrix of where policies are included. Sarah and Pat will be attending the Homestead Valley Community Council meeting next Monday, where Dawn Rowe is expected to attend. Communities need to be clear that they don't accept the County's unreasonable action plans. Steve: get all the "champions" together. Could the MAC make a statement? Remember we are an economically disadvantaged area. Meg noted that even the old plans had no "teeth" – it's enforcement of the development codes that's important. They have done very little with the information we gave them. Consultants got money and we got nothing valuable. Should suing the County based on CEQA be considered?

- Draft EIR re. response to response from Jerry Blum SS, SB
After the several letters back and forth to Jerry Blum crafted by Steve, Seth and others, the issue remains that the County is not using data sets to evaluate soils, wildlife corridors, etc. They maintain that the data “is not sufficiently granular,” and can only be used to “inform” planning, not as support data.

4) Cadiz water harvesting proposal – SB307 Richard Roth Riverside – SB

The legislation that could affect the project is moving through committees. Ruth has heard that Cadiz is wooing Mission Springs Water District (DHS).

5) Dark Sky ordinance –MBCA to continue as partner working with Chris Clarke. SS, LT.

Laraine provided a handout (attached) with an overview of the current work of the Third District Dark Sky Committee. In addition to making progress with the County on changing the lighting ordinance and the definition and measurement of light trespass, a targeted Dark Sky Tour is planned for August 1. Several County officials have confirmed their attendance. Laraine presented a request from the Committee for funding for John Barentine of the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) to travel from Tucson to attend the Dark Sky tour. Also, there was consensus that as a co-leader of the Dark Sky initiative with Chris Clarke of NPCA, MBCA will make the dark sky issue a more prominent part of our agenda.

Laraine moved that MBCA support travel and accommodation costs for John Barentine’s visit up to \$300. Steve seconded, and all were in favor. (9-0)

6) Scenic 247 - SK

Sarah and Jim Harvey met with Yucca Valley Town Manager Curtis Yakimow, who invited Jim and Sarah to make a presentation to the Town Council as an off-agenda item next week, apparently to prepare the Council for possible policy issues for the Town. Karen Watkins continues as County liaison. New Horizons to Aberdeen is in the YV sphere of influence and is really scenic. Hopefully they'll support at least that.

7) Eagle Mountain pumped storage – SB772 fails -DF

The project is still in litigation, and the failure of SB 772 helps.

9) WEMO – PF, SK

We can now take this off the agenda. We're glad for some improvements. Steve and Sarah sent a letter with concerns about certain areas near the Buttes, encouraging BLM to designate some as street legal only and turn one of the “roads” into a hiking trail. They referenced the Presidential proclamation and cultural sites.

Laraine will put their letter on our website.

Outreach & Communications

1) CDPA 25-year celebration MDLT is coordinating area wide celebrations – SB, PF, MF. *Handled earlier under Capacity Building #3, Event Committees and Reports.*

2) CMC SLR net zero and Solar Valley - RR

A meeting with Professor Martinez-Morales is scheduled next week (Steve, Ruth, and Laraine). The goal is to encourage CMC to go net zero, using the SLR bequest. We'll need to bring this to CMC's new President as soon as possible. We've had good support so far from Meredith Plummer (CBO) and Sandy Smith (Foundation).

3) NEPA workshop wrap-up and review – Claudia Sall

Claudia provided a summary handout (attached). The workshop was focused on NEPA only, but there was some overlap for CEQA in practice and they may do another one focused on CEQA this fall. There was very good evaluation response rate and helpful comments. They plan to develop teams and mentoring for commenters, using social media and community connections. James Peterson (formerly Dianne Feinstein staff) offered to present information on how to work with legislators.

4) FP-5 fire tax - SB

Supervisors voted down the increase and told County staff to come up with alternative plans for funding fire-fighting.

5) MAC - SB, PF

No report.

6) Chambers of Commerce – YVCC officer's installation June 27. SB, PF

FYI in case anyone can go.

7) Ruth Denison scholarship – SB

Steve and Sarah gave scholarship to Isabel Ortega at Yucca Valley Scholarship Night.

8) Seth is leaving us!!!

We are glad he wants to keep in touch and thanked him for his service as a Director.

9) (added by Pat) Robin Kobaly's book. *This was handled in reference to Paradise Valley, Conservation issues # 1.*

Meeting Adjourned at 7:20 PM

Letters signed onto:

Steve Mills' draft County Wide Plan comments letter May 2019

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, July 11, 2019 - 5:00 – 7:00 PM YV Community Center / YV Community Center / Mesquite Room
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