

MBCA Board Meeting APPROVED Minutes
Thursday July 9, 2020 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm

Regular Meeting Call to Order: 5:08 pm Via Zoom

Blue Italics = action commitment

Black Bold Italics = Board vote

Board of Directors

☒ Steve Bardwell

☒ Brian Hammer

☒ Ruth Rieman

☒ David Fick

☒ Janet Johnston

☒ Laraine Turk

☒ Pat Flanagan

☒ Sarah Kennington

☒ Mike Lipsitz

☒ Meg Foley

☒ Arch McCulloch

☒ Marina West

Social media consultants

☒ Aimee Buyea ☒ Stacy Doolittle

Introduction of Guests and Board Directors

Tour Committee member Miriam Seger

Agenda approval

Janet asked to add a topic about possibly funding busses to get kids out into nature. It will be #7 under Outreach and Communication. ***Approved by consensus.***

Minutes from June 11, 2020 BOD meeting

Laraine requested some clarifications. ***Ruth moved to accept the June minutes including the clarifications. Meg seconded, and all were in favor. (12-0)***

Treasurer's Report

2020 Budget

Marina shared the mid-year budget balance: \$22,653.28 in our CD and \$24,693.73 in checking, for a total of \$47,347.01 on hand. She responded to a few questions for clarification and then reviewed our budget status. At halfway through the year we're short about \$1000 in funds usually received during the Tour. In 2019, that total was about \$4240. Currently we're under \$3000 in income but may gain donations and memberships from the upcoming Virtual Tour and possibly other programs. All Grant funders met their earlier commitments. There is a bit of money left in grant funding, perhaps for a fall program.

We need to check whether this year's \$500 Denison Scholarship is the 4th or 5th year; *Laraine will research and confirm.* We had agreed to provide it for 5 years then review how to use the remaining amount. Note that \$5000 of the original \$10,000 bequest was used towards the 50th anniversary book, so there will be about \$2500 remaining after the 5th scholarship. *We should include this topic on the retreat agenda.*

The Book cost was projected to be \$8000, but to date costs have included \$8758 for design and print and \$379 for postcards, mailing and supplies. We want to send additional copies to some organizations and individuals, so we need an increased allocation.

Other items included in the budget were coverage for Pat's future work with schools (~\$250). Aimee and Stacy are comfortable with the \$2400 allocated for social media (\$325 for promotional fees, plus hourly wage to Aimee and Stacy, about \$2065). We

hope to increase donations and memberships via the Virtual Tour, possibly a fall event, and maybe announcement of a new webpage with all our historical Comment Letters. Even with being about \$1000-1500 short we're really doing better than many other organizations and we're only halfway through the budget year. ***Laraine moved to approve the budget including an increase in the Book budget from \$8000 to \$9250. Ruth seconded and all were in favor. (12-0)***

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues

1) 50th book: - Distribution list, mailing of book

Laraine reported that from the list of people who are either 2020 members or are listed in the book, 140 books have been given or sent, about 8 are being researched, and there are about 50 not yet sent, many of those being one-time docents from the early years of the Tour. *Sarah and Laraine will next develop a list of organizations and individuals that should receive books as information/PR or to give out.*

2) Business cards - Melissa Sabol re-design

Mike's personal delivery of the cards was much appreciated. Mike has asked Melissa to send an invoice.

3) mbconservation.org / E-blasts / Social Media – Stacy and Aimee

Steve intends to send out another Eblast soon.

Aimee has recently posted about the Joshua tree listing and has shared posts from other organizations, including a webinar on racial equity in the outdoors and one from Anza Borrego. She reported that the contact data generated by Facebook are positive, and with Instagram we are reaching the younger demographic we wanted. She will do extra postings for the virtual tour video. Laraine asked whether we should prioritize getting the 50th book available online, but Aimee suggested waiting, and Stacy noted she'd like to see the book presented as a searchable document rather than just a PDF. This will take planning and time, and there would be a modest additional cost.

Comment letter history - LT, SK, ML – develop an attractive, accessible page.

Sarah, Mike and Laraine will meet to develop this project.

4) Events Committee reports:

DWL Committee –2020 virtual landscape tour update

Marina reported that Heather continues to work on the editing and we should hear from her soon. Stacy added that the project should be final by the end of July. Steve noted how much we appreciate Stacy's and Heather's work on this project.

DWL 2021 date April 10, 11, 2021 – SB

After a meeting about whether to partner with MBCAC's Art Studios Tour next spring, it was decided to hold our 2021 Tour a week before theirs, Saturday and Sunday, April 10-11, hopefully live but virtual if necessary.

2021 Annual Meeting topic in conjunction with spring DWL

We can't yet be certain whether we'll have a live event or will need to have it online. Ruth explained her idea about a program that places the Landscape Tour in the context of climate change, focusing on what to expect for our plants and gardens. Potential speakers could be Cam Barrows, Madena Asbell, Lynn Sweet, etc. Cam

would be especially good since he has so much background that relates. Laraine suggested we also include a local connection, maybe have someone from the Base who could share the military climate change perspective, which might also bring an additional audience. Brian added that he viewed a useful online webinar that provided a series of separate-but-related talks and suggested that as a model to use. *He'll send us the link as an example.* Miriam spoke about viewing a Theodore Payne Foundation online presentation that was in an episodic format. The content was cumulative but people can just watch what they want. She suggested there's value in having more than just a one-time virtual event that people seldom return to for full repeat watching. Also, a donation request can be made at the end of each segment, and there's a carbon-saving aspect to skipping an in-person event.

Topic for fall DWL program - JPL speaker (?)

Steve is still working on connecting with the suggested speaker.

5) Inclusivity statement –MF, ML, AM

Meg noted that the preliminary draft was shared with Steve, and will be sent out to everyone tomorrow for input. *We will discuss it at the August Retreat and we should include Aimee in that discussion for some millennial-age perspective.*

6) August 2020 Board retreat

Laraine explained for new Board members that the Retreat has traditionally been focused on future planning and setting goals, with less focus on specific issues than a regular meeting, and has usually been a 3-4-hour in-person meeting. Since it will be virtual, she suggested splitting into two sessions to avoid burnout. The idea of 2 hours on Saturday, August 22, with a wrap-up meeting on Sunday, August 23, was suggested. *Steve will communicate with us on details.*

Conservation Issues

1) CFGC Joshua Tree listing

Miriam reported that the California Fish & Game Commission continued the topic to their August meeting. Another comment period should happen and she'll share details when known. Pat suggested using David's detailed historical recollection of the Joshua tree destruction that Yucca Valley has permitted in order to demonstrate that there really isn't protection for them in Yucca Valley as the current Town Council members and local realtors are saying in their campaign against the listing. Janet, Miriam, Steve, and David described past and recent incidents and lack of County interest. *MBCA should compile a demonstration of lack of compliance which photographic documentation. Brian offered to put together a timeline and photos.*

Miriam believes it can be very effective to share these kind of stories in public comment to help show that even current protections are not being applied. Sarah suggests we encourage our supporters to participate in the Commission online meeting in August. Miriam cautioned against too many people so as not to dilute the critical message. We can provide points for written comments in advance of the meeting. Sarah suggested contacting Ed LaRue for a comment, as he was employed in the Sage Estates Joshua tree decimation. Since Ed's focus is on desert tortoise (per Pat), Miriam suggested calling on him in October because that's when desert tortoise listing will be on the Commission's agenda (CBD is trying to change its status from threatened to endangered).

2) Air Quality Monitoring: CARB update. Location of Purple Air units – SK, AM
We had decided to ask local water districts to add monitoring units. Sarah hasn't heard back from an email sent to Kathleen Radnich at JBWD. *Marina will check with HDWD.* Pat talked to CMC and they will get one. *Pat also has a contact regarding the 29 Palms Cemetery and will ask for one there.* Pat noted there are already monitors in Morongo Valley, 29 Palms, and Desert Heights, and if JBWD and CMC are added there will be good coverage in our area. She noted that AQMD prefers locations such as businesses or buildings and is less interested in individual residents' monitors. Miriam is willing to put one on her downtown JT building. *Pat will help Miriam contact AQMD.* Personal monitors are also reported on the [Purple Air map](#) – Arch has one.

3) Solar projects

Overview – BH

Calcite project remains on hold – no change.

Daggett appeal - does MBCA have standing?

Newberry Springs is ready to settle with the developer but there is an individual willing to provide \$25,000 to MBCA to carry the ongoing lawsuit rather than let it be settled. He has already written out a check for that amount to us. Pat said we have standing but we may be too late. We also don't know for sure if the CSD has actually completed an agreement; Pat will find out tomorrow. There is fear that allowing the Daggett project will "open the flood gates" to other large projects in this area, ignoring ancient creosote rings and the extensive carbon sequestration along with a lot of other issues.

Friends of Newberry Springs as a party to the action no longer exists. There was conflict and a legal situation between the CSD and the Friends group.

Issues arising in discussion of whether or not to agree to take this on included:

- What if costs go over \$25,000? Pat says the donor insists he can provide additional financial resources if needed. Pat thinks we should take this on.
- Sarah noted we shied away from a similar request a few years ago and wondered what ethical and/or legal conditions might come with the \$25,000. Pat feels certain there are none. "We're just defending CEQA."
- Meg was also concerned that there are so many unknowns and risks and wondered if there is another way to address it without going to a lawsuit but Pat said there isn't.
- Brian is strongly concerned that this is a gateway project and it will trigger another series of projects. "If we don't stop them who will?" He is very interested in MBCA becoming involved.
- Ruth wouldn't want this to take time from our other projects.
- Steve Mills hasn't read the documents yet but could become involved and we are confident in his abilities.
- Laraine expressed some concerns with how it puts us in a new category in the public view.

- Steve feels we need to know if there are funds beyond the initial \$25,000 and what cost range might be expected.
- What are our commitments? Pat said the judge's decision will be to confirm whether CEQA requirements have been met by the project proponent. Stacy suggested asking local resident and CBD attorney Brendan Cummings if he has any perspective to offer.
- Would this increase our income reporting requirements and non-profit oversight beyond our current (lowest level) 990 category? No, as the increased income reporting level starts at \$50,000 per year and that's unlikely.
- Arch asked if we could be sued by the CSD if our involvement negatively affects them.

Pat will report to Steve tomorrow the results of her conversation with the attorney on these questions:

- 1) What is the timing of our decision and any formal actions?
- 2) Confirm that we have standing.
- 3) How much is it likely to cost?
- 4) Does it open up any potential risks for MBCA?
- 5) Confirm that the donor can go beyond \$25,000.

Steve will email us the information tomorrow and we'll call for a vote if needed. Laraine sent Pat the 5 questions.

- 4) Countywide Plan & Community Action Plans – SB, JJ, PF

No countywide plan

Scenic 247 – SK – nothing new.

- 5) Dark Sky ordinance – update –SB

In emails with Andy Wingert, Steve was told that the deputy county counsel is reviewing the ordinance. One issue relates to holiday lighting (the draft allows 60 days per year). Steve hopes to hear something definitive soon.

- 6) BLM head replacement vs importance of understanding Federal Register – BH

Thanks to Brian who sent a document about understanding the Federal Register.

Laraine will add it to the website.

Outreach & Communications

- 1) CMC SLR – RR, SB, LT

nothing new.

- 2) MBCA support the 2020 BIG READ – Aimee

Steve moved that MBCA contribute \$250 to support the County's Big Read event this fall. Laraine seconded and all were in favor. (12-0)

- 3) Support for NALC for NuWuvi, Birdsong, gathering of tribes - PF

NALC is applying for a grant and Pat hopes we can provide support. Other expected partners include the 29 Palms Inn, City of 29 Palms, NPCA, and others. We should be involved as we sponsored the original event in November 2016, and it's another commitment to diversity. We discussed how to determine an appropriate donation

and decided on a rate for Pat's time plus a pure donation. **Steve moved that we contribute 100 hours of Pat's time at a rate to be determined as an in-kind contribution and allocate \$3000 in cash to the event, for a total donation of up to \$4000. Marina seconded, and all were in favor. (12-0)** We'll be asked to write a letter stating our intended contribution to justify the grant. *Steve and Pat will work out those details tomorrow.*

4) Local community response to future disasters – SB, SK
Tabled due to time.

5) Friends of the Inyo – conglomerate Mesa – SB, LT
Tabled due to time.

6) Desert National Wildlife Refuge vs Air Force - MF
Steve thinks we should write a letter on this issue.

7) Consider funding busses to take children out to nature – JJ
Added to agenda but not addressed due to time.

Letters signed onto/written:

Opposition to AB 235 (Mayes re: CESA) – we signed on.

Miriam explained that the local spin is that AB 235 would allow Joshua trees to be removed during consideration of their status; it would be the opposite without AB 235. But Miriam talked with an LA state representative who says the bill would not do that; it is more focused on CESA. The bill will have to go back to the Senate's natural resources committee before it gets to senate floor and will probably be delayed. LA City Council will write a resolution to oppose it because it would open up to interpretation a lot of CESA regulations. Progress will undoubtedly be delayed beyond the August 18 CF&G meeting. The local messaging is in error about its consequences.

Opposition to Gut and Amend bills – special interests.

Opposition to Eagle Crest bailout (A gut and amend type bill)

Adjourned at 7:46 PM.

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, September 10, 2020 5:00 – 7:00 PM Hopefully at Town of Yucca Valley stay tuned!
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