

**MBCA Board Meeting APPROVED Minutes**  
**Thursday, September 10, 2020 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm**

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

**Regular Meeting Call to Order at 5:03 PM**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Bardwell	<input type="checkbox"/> Brian Hammer (advance notice)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arch McCulloch
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Fick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janet Johnston	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ruth Rieman
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pat Flanagan	<input type="checkbox"/> Sarah Kennington (advance notice)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laraine Turk
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meg Foley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mike Lipsitz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Marina West

Social media consultants:         Aimee Buyea         Stacy Doolittle

**Introduction of Guests and Board Directors**

**Agenda approval**

***Several additions were requested and the agenda was unanimously approved with the additions.***

**Minutes from July 9 (added) and August 23, 2020 BOD meetings**

Steve mentioned a discrepancy between the July and August minutes on the amount of the donation to NALC. The amount is \$4000 and will be corrected in the August minutes. Also, a correction will be made in the August minutes for the Denison Scholarship amounts.

***With the corrections, Steve moved to accept the July and August minutes. Pat seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)***

**Treasurer's Report**

*Finance Committee meeting*

Marina provided overall budget numbers of \$22,653.28 in the CD, and \$50,047.06 in checking, which the recent \$25,000 donation. Marina said our Tour revenues are down about \$1200 compared to the original in-person Tour budget. She is working on a more detailed summary for the Finance Committee. She added that so far we haven't spent as much as expected on the book mailings.

Steve asked for a summary of expenditures on the Virtual Tour. Marina said we haven't yet been billed by Heather for the final 25% of production cost, and don't yet know the added cost of the new combined video, which wasn't in the budget. She will work on those numbers for the Finance Committee meeting.

We'll talk in a later item about possible Board scholarships for the UCR Climate Stewards program. The Finance Committee of Meg, Ruth, Marina, and Steve are scheduled to meet next week. ***The Board accepted the Treasurer's report by consensus.***

**Capacity Building & Organizational Issues**

1) Nominations Committee - All

Steve announced that Marina will be leaving as Treasurer at the end of the year, so we'll need someone to fill the position. He added that Marina has set a high standard which has been much appreciated.

*Treasurer and Board members' terms – LT*

Laraine screen-shared the chart of Board terms which showed that Ruth, Meg, and Mike are in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year. *She will email the chart to all Directors.*

*DWL Committee Chair*

Steve added that Marina is retiring from the DWL Committee so we also need a new chair for this position.

2) 50th book: - Distribution list, mailing of book - LT

Laraine said that an onset of more urgent issues has resulted in the book mailing project being “on the back burner.” The first priority batch was sent in early summer to 2020 members, and to most of the important individuals listed in the anniversary book. Since there have been some new members since the mailings have been on hiatus, *Laraine will work with Sarah and Mike to be sure books are sent to the latest new members and donors.*

3) mbconservation.org /

*Social Media – Stacy and Aimee*

Stacy noted there has been a lot of traffic delivered to the website from the Facebook Virtual Tour postings; more than 900 people came to it recently. She reported that data show they spent a longer time than average on the website after landing there – nearly 3 minutes which is a couple minutes more than average. This has raised MBCA's profile. Laraine spoke about the wealth of web traffic data available but it's more than we need; Steve agreed that just knowing the number of people we are reaching is enough for now.

Aimee said there is good response on Instagram as well. People are reposting the videos and they are now on “Instagram TV” as a series and will be saved there for a while. The most popular locations of viewers are JT, YV, LA, 29, and PS. The highest represented age bracket is 35-44.

*Website appearance – LT, SK*

Laraine reported that part of the Web Team (Nora, Mike, Steve, Sarah, and Laraine—neither Cathy nor Marina could attend the Zoom meeting) reviewed 8 different “themes” available in Nationbuilder to update the look of our website. She used screen-share to review the proposed new Nationbuilder “Connection” theme that was preferred. We are grateful to Nora for engineering some of the features we liked from other themes into this one. Another decision the group is working on is choosing a color scheme. It will take a few months for Nora to complete all the work to make a “safe” transition to the new look.

*Comment letter history – LT*

Laraine said this is another project that has been on hold but will be restarted at some point this fall, hopefully as part of the website theme transition.

*(Item added) Inviting guests to our Zoom Board meetings - LT*

Laraine proposed that we make it possible for people to “attend” our Zoom meetings but is uncertain about the best protocols. Aimee suggested doing what the Joshua Tree Highlands Artist Residency is doing. Individuals can email their interest/RSVP by a deadline, then a meeting link is sent to them by email. This gives some level of control to avoid security problems compared to being open-ended. *Laraine will try this for our next meeting.*

4) Events Committee reports:

*Chair of DWL committee*

As Steve noted earlier, we need to find a new DWL Committee Chair.

*DWL Committee –2020 virtual landscape film -SB*

Steve announced that the final edits on the combined video should be done soon and it looks very good.

*2021 Annual Meeting topic in conjunction with spring DWL*

We probably should assume an in-person annual meeting won't be possible, so video communication is the way to go. Miriam noted that moving imagery gets people's attention and that we can stockpile video information, then use as needed. Steve hopes we'll find new landscape venues for either an in-person or virtual tour. Stacy has been encouraging us to do more with video for a while and is glad we're realizing its value.

Ideas shared:

- If a Tour has to be limited by remaining safety concerns, perhaps have a small in-person tour that is recorded; or do some other kind of down-sized in-person Tour that is recorded and shared.
- If we go virtual only, we don't have to have a specific date.
- Alternate an in-person Tour with a virtual Tour every other year, doing virtual again in 2021 then in-person in 2022.
- Create videos of gardens/landscapes at various times of year.
- Janet mentioned that the Lester family may be amenable to a video tour; *she will check with them.*
- ***By consensus we agreed to plan for a Virtual Tour only in 2021.***
- Arch reminded us that if we interview people for the video, we should get a signed release.

*Topic for fall DWL program - speaker (?)*

Steve has continued to try reaching the recommended JPL woman.

5) *Inclusivity statement –MF, ML, AM*

The Committee of Mike, Meg, and Arch would like to get more input from other Board members. It's important to do something and be specific; actions are more important than words on a page. It's an opportunity to reinforce the link between environmental and social justice. Actions we take are and should be

environmental and social justice actions. We should emphasize that in the inclusivity statement.

Steve reported that he just sent comments to the County on environmental justice relative to the Countywide Plan. The last sentence emphasizes that environmental justice and social justice are inextricably entwined.

6) August 2020 Board retreat – recap

Steve said he felt that the previous inclusivity discussion was an appropriate recap.

Mike suggested environmental justice as a topic for a fall event or for the January Annual Meeting, perhaps a panel discussion. Aimee and Laraine watched a webinar a few months ago that might yield some speakers. Steve mentioned a professor of political ecology. Janet said the Governor’s office of planning has a new clearinghouse with relevant information. ([Adaptation Planning Guide page.](#))

### **Conservation Issues**

*1) CFGC Joshua Tree listing 9-22-20- All*

Comments at the upcoming Commission meeting must be related to the criteria for exceptions for incidental take during the study year. It is expected that the threatened listing will be voted in. Miriam noted that CBD and the Commission seem to be working on moving towards the larger scale to develop a phased plan and/or a NCCP plan. But here in the MB we need to have behavior and attitude changes, and to improve local ordinances, which are poorly designed. The most contentious issue will probably be about exemptions for shovel-ready projects. Steve noted that at the prior hearing, Commission members seemed to get the message from the many comments about Yucca Valley’s code violations that local jurisdictions are “getting away with murder.” We hope that message comes through in their decision and year-long review. CBD’s Brendan Cummings will likely send an advice email before the event.

*2) Air Quality Monitoring: Location of Purple Air units – SK, AM*

Many of us have been checking this site a lot in recent weeks due to smoke nearby fires. Steve said Sarah is still trying to get confirmation from Joshua Basin Water District that they will mount a monitor. Laraine has purchased a monitor and will set it up soon. Laraine will confirm that the Purple Air map link is on the website ([it is](#)). *Pat wondered if it could be a live link showing current conditions; Pat, Arch, and Laraine will investigate the possibility.*

*3) Solar projects*

Yellow Pine - SB

Steve believes the project will be approved, unfortunately creating another “slash to the desert.” Pat suggests checking [Basin & Range Watch](#) for helpful examples of how to investigate and analyze projects.

*4) Countywide Plan & Community Action Guides including EJ issues.–SB, JJ, PF*

The recently-distributed Plan is scheduled to be considered by the Planning Commission on September 17, and may just be rubber-stamped despite all its deficiencies. Pat and Brian wrote up a recommendation for environmental justice, which is to be considered at the same time by the PC along with all the other voluminous documentation. Pat and Brian's letter emphasized that Lucerne Valley should be an environmental justice focus area. *Pat will communicate with Steve about some other action pending about the Plan.*

Steve noted that at least it's all digital now. However, the community action guides plans (CAP) are very disappointing and unrealistic. Janet did some word searches and found surprisingly few references to important terms. She feels they're trying to prevent us from having any power over land use and we've lost what impact we had with Alta Mira. The earlier Community Plans were actually land use plans, but Community Action Guides are clearly not. There's nothing to enforce; rather, they are just suggestions. We all need to demand proper revision of the 2007 land use documents instead. There's a Senate bill that requires general plans to address climate change but climate change is only mentioned 3 times in this document, with no elaboration. That they're not doing what they're supposed to according to the state may be an angle to pursue, as well as the Attorney General's order about environmental justice.

Meg added there are other bills specific to climate change. There's a new clearinghouse on the [Governor's page about adaptation planning](#). Meg said the County has a hazard mitigation plan but it needs connection with land use plans; there should be localized maps but there aren't. Janet added that Short Term Rentals are a critical new element that isn't addressed. *Meg will send a link related to the Office of Emergency Services.* Steve noted that the hazard mitigation document does include climate change.

Steve reminded us that public comments for the Planning Commission meeting have to be made either in San Bernardino or at the JT Government Center and we're limited to 250 words. We don't know how they'll be measuring that.

*Scenic 247 –SK, no report.*

*5) Dark Sky ordinance – update –SB*

Steve reported that the last unresolved issue relates to the use of string lights. They've become prominent in short term rentals and can add up to a lot of excessive and intrusive light. The written definition isn't helpful; it could allow a string of 60 watt exposed bulbs. Andy has agreed to put in a limitation of 50 lumens per linear foot and no more than 3000 lumens in a single installation.

*6) cell phone tower for MV – Meg*

Meg learned recently about a plan to install a new multi-user cellular tower on BLM land at top of the Morongo grade near the Sand to Snow Monument border. There was an internal scoping session with BLM, and the comment period was in February, but with poor information dissemination. A BLM planner told her they received few comments, although Basin & Range Watch

questioned its visibility in relation to Sand to Snow. There will have to be another comment period. *Meg is open to questions and will keep us informed.* Kevin Emmerich of B&RW has been of great help. There's been no notice to affected neighbors. BLM probably pushed it through as matter of concern about emergency response communication on the Morongo Grade. The original intention was to install equipment on existing poles but it evolved into a new tower and it's questionable whether that will even do what they hope. They may have to go back to square one. Meg continues to gather facts and hopes to get photos with the tower added to scale. They said the proposed land was heavily impacted by earlier fires but Meg has checked and it's recovering nicely.

*7) expansion of P-town hotel. - SB*

Proposal for expansion of Pioneertown motel to add 47 rooms, bunkhouse, retail, restaurant, swimming pool and spa, and community gathering area just north of current motel. This is proposed by the current owner. Steve will meet with owner and his architect tomorrow. This would be a substantially large development for Pioneertown. Steve thinks it's too big and reported that they show no consideration for climate change – they're not even planning for solar and there's no evidence of conscientious water use. If those issues are attended to it might not be quite so bad. Pat added the fire issue to the problems.

Janet spoke about the pre-application for a multi-family housing development between the Post Office and Sunset in Joshua Tree, right in the flood plain!

### **Outreach & Communications**

*1) Attendance at UCR Palm Desert Climate Stewardship class – SB, LT*

Both Steve and Laraine attended the first of two online introductory sessions, and both are interested in enrolling. Laraine showed some slides from it, and they will send us a link with the recording of the 2<sup>nd</sup> introduction. Laraine feels they are outlining the class very much in alignment with what MBCA does, combining education with advocacy for climate change awareness, looking to create climate steward activists. The course is mostly focused on the low desert but they said they are open to relevant alterations. We talked of possibly getting our Denison Scholarship winner Annie involved with the required capstone project. The cost per person is \$375 with some scholarships provided based on the number of full-payers. **Steve moved that MBCA will contribute up to \$500 of support for enrollment in the UCR Climate Stewards program to interested Board members. Laraine seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)**

*2) UC-CERT solar conference Sept 14*

The webinar link was sent this afternoon.

*3) CDC webinar 9-17-20 5:30-6:30 impacting local decision making -SB*

Their latest email contains speaker names. We are supporters of the event.

*4) MBCA support the 2020 BIG READ – Aimee*

Aimee said JTAG is open for book pickup 9-2 on Saturdays (the Big Read book [Lab Girl](#)). Aimee is open to placing any MBCA flyers or other handouts in the gallery. She will have our Virtual Tours on the monitors.

Laraine gave an extra thanks to Steve for all the MBCA work he's been doing lately – it's been extremely busy continuously for quite a few weeks.

**Meeting adjourned at 7:12 PM.**

**Letters signed onto/written:**

Comment re: CWP Environmental Justice

Letter to Cal Trans re: Xpress west rail project; Opposition to Eagle Crest bailout – another one!

Opposition to Gut and Amend bill - Poseidon De-sal project; Opposition to Pendley as head of BLM

**Next Regular Meeting:** Thursday, October 8, 2020, 5:00 – 7:00 PM – via ZOOM, invitation to come.