MBCA APPROVED Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 14, 2021 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm
Via Zoom

Regular Meeting Call to Order: 5:11 PM
_x_ Steve Bardwell  _x_ Brian Hammer  _x_ Arch McCulloch
_x_ David Fick  _x_ Janet Johnston  _x_ Ruth Rieman
_x_ Pat Flanagan  _x_ Sarah Kennington  _x_ Laraine Turk
_x_ Meg Foley  _x_ Mike Lipsitz  _x_ Cathy Zarakov

Social media consultants:  _x_ Aimee Buyea  _x_ Stacy Doolittle

Introduction of Guests and Board Directors
Guests: John Sofio (1st time), Columba Quintero
John Sofio owns a number of properties in the Morongo Basin. He read about MBCA’s work on transmission lines and other issues and strongly supports our mission and wants to see careful and appropriate growth.

Agenda approval
Steve added item 5) under Conservation: The movement to have a 5-year celebration for desert monuments on February 12. Laraine moved to approve the agenda as amended. Steve seconded and all were in favor. (12-0)

Minutes from December 10, 2020 BOD meeting
Laraine displayed Marina’s proposed amendment to the motion appointing Cathy Zarakov as Treasurer, adding: “and to authorize Cathy Zarakov to become a signator on all banking accounts and ancillary services at US Bank, including but not limited to checking, savings, and banking cards.” There was unanimous agreement to the amendment. Steve also asked that the spelling of Annmarie Eldering’s name be corrected. Ruth moved to approve the amended December 10 minutes. Sarah seconded, and all were in favor. (12-0)

Treasurer’s Report
Cathy is just beginning her duties and will receive training from Marina and Steve. Cathy asked about the large amount of reserve funds in our accounts and our plans to use them. Steve explained that we had received two large donations within the last half year and agreed we need to address the use of our recently increased reserves. Janet strongly supports funding field trips for school kids when that’s possible, hopefully next fall. Cathy added that we could also contribute to other non-profits in our area with similar goals and missions. Pat reminded us that we have already designated $5000 of the $25,000 donation to the Native American Land Conservancy and that the other $20,000 was intended to provide funding for outside researchers when needed for our projects and comment letters. Sarah recalled that at our summer retreat we agreed we needed a “rainy day fund” to keep the Desert Wise Landscape Tours going in case at some point we can’t get funding from the water districts. There was consensus that we need to make a focused review of our budget. Meg noted we do have a reserves policy but it’s a good idea to review it due to our recent large donations.

Cathy also suggested putting some of the checking account balance into money market funds for a bit of extra income with relatively easy access to the funds if needed. There was general agreement, and we thanked Cathy for her good questions and suggestions.
Steve noted the significant donation from Claudia Sall via the Riemans, who gifted one of Steve Rieman’s sculptures to the Salls. Claudia chose to donate the value of the “Tree Hugger” to MBCA. Ruth previously sent us a video of the mounting of the sculpture.

*Steve, Marina and Cathy will work to set up a bank appointment for signature changes.*

We agreed to accept the Treasurer’s report.

**Capacity Building & Organizational Issues**

1) Nominations Committee - All
   - Steve again thanked Marina for her years serving as Board member and Treasurer.
   - Terms of directors
Laraine shared the chart of Directors’ terms. Mike, Meg, and Ruth all agreed to continue for another 3-year term. All officers agreed to their officer positions for 2021: Steve Bardwell as President, David Fick as VP, Cathy Zarakov as Treasurer, and Laraine Turk as Secretary.

2) 50th book: - Distribution list, mailing of book – LT
   - Laraine reported that she has sent a new list of addresses to Sarah to send books to recent members and donors. John added that he would be willing to distribute books, as he travels frequently across the Morongo Basin.
   - David asked when the book will be digitized. We have the resources now so will contact Melissa, the book’s designer, to get a quote for that process. Meg said that there will be some “on the ground” events among the Monument anniversary celebrations coming up in February. *Laraine will get some books to Meg for distribution.*

3) mbconservation.org /
   - Social Media update– Stacy and Aimee
Aimee and Stacy have both been working on and boosting social media posts with lots of good results and will boost the Annual Meeting post soon. Steve noted an Eblast will be going out soon. Aimee and Stacy discussed how they have set up social media to direct readers to the website to RSVP. *Aimee will help Laraine with managing the Zoom meeting.*

   - Website appearance – LT, SK
   - No new action.

   - Comment letter history – LT, ML, SK
   - No new action.

4) Events Committee reports:
   - DWL Committee –2020 virtual landscape film–SB
     - [https://vimeo.com/500290257/e6f7120db7](https://vimeo.com/500290257/e6f7120db7)

The 19-minute video weaves together all the sites. *Pat suggested we offer the video to the water districts to add to their websites.* Stacy said she had suggested this to the JBWD last year, and hopes her position as a Board member will help make it happen this year. *Steve will get the data on a drive to Aimee to upload to our YouTube channel.*

2021 Annual Meeting –All
Steve will open the meeting with a brief talk about history and events of the past year. *Let him know if any Board member has a particular request for things to mention. Laraine will put together a new webpage with all of the 2020 comment letters for Steve to mention.*

2021 virtual landscape tour
The first committee meeting made good progress. Ruth reported that the decision was made to have it entirely virtual and we will focus on 5 sites, one each for the Basin’s water districts, since we get support from them and they also represent the different climatic environments of the Basin. *Sarah and Ruth are working on completing a full outline by February 15 and are investigating possible sites.* Steve spoke with the Wolds in Joshua Tree and notes they have a lot of great features to highlight.

Conservation Issues
1) JT listing as candidacy as threatened – SB,PF,LT  
Steve reviewed the one-year candidacy period situation. The County requires a site inspection for any improvements within 40 feet to prove there won’t be damage to a Joshua tree. Yucca Valley also needs to set its policies.

2) Utility scale solar update – BH  
Brian reported that we’re waiting for a draft EIR for Aurora Solar. Everything else is unchanged. Regarding the Daggett Solar Project, Pat heard they may not own all the land yet so this may be on hold. Steve noted that UCR’s CE-CERT program and Riverside and San Bernardino Counties are working on developing the 2 Counties as a “Solar Valley Consortium” to make Inland SoCal a renewable energy hub. Among their discussions, a key part seems to be getting renewable energy from the Calcite Substation as a hub. There’s a *workshop* coming up that Pat, Ruth and Steve have signed up for and they’ll update us. Pat feels that such an expansion of solar development will destroy Lucerne Valley. Brian added that SB county has little say, because the planning will go through the CEC. Permission to build will require CEQA approval. Trying to get the substation built has been a rider on every project since Ord Mountain.

3) Air Quality Monitoring: Location of Purple Air units – SK, AM  
Nothing new but *Sarah will try again with JBWD.*

4) Dark Sky ordinance update – SB  
In Steve’s last conversation with Dawn Rowe she said she’s committed to passing the light trespass ordinance to control objectionable lighting. *He will start nudging LUS and Terri Rahhal about this.*

5) Invasive plant – stinknet AM, LT  
Arch noted that his comments as reported in the December 10 minutes need to be revised to reflect that this plant has been found in the Morongo Basin. (Changes made-LT) The best information can be found via I-Naturalist and we need to keep it from becoming established.

4) DRECP – PF  
The feds want to remove protection on ACEC’s to allow more areas for renewable energy. The BLM announcement will be filed in tomorrow’s Federal Register. *Mojave Watch* is taking a detailed look at it. It will be a big issue. Karen Douglas of CEC published a very strong letter opposing this amendment of the DRECP. Sarah suggested Steve put links to CEC statement and Mojave Watch in upcoming Eblist. Meg said it may affect BMCP, but she hasn’t had a chance to carefully review it yet. *Laraine will put a news update on the website.*

5) (added) Five-year celebration of desert national monuments.  
Groups including MDLT, NPCA and others are planning to celebrate the 5-year anniversary of the Sand to Snow, Mojave Trails, and Castle Mountains Monuments being designated.
Outreach & Communications

1) Countywide Plan & Community Action Guides - SB, JJ, PF
Janet will work on this with Steve and Pat. There are some discussions on NextDoor and Facebook about proposed projects. Janet will talk with David about the JT Community Plan issue. Updating the County’s Housing Element is required this year so we should attend to that. Steve and Sarah looked at the Planning Department’s list of applications: there are so many in the works, it’s astounding, including glamping sites, hotels, and resorts. Janet noted we don’t want to be anti-everything, but need to work on balance. Steve saw that the AutoCamp development at Sunburst and Hwy. 62 is enclosed and seems ready to start soon. Miriam met with that project manager and suggested they get in touch with us about native plants but there’s been no contact. "The Gold Rush is on."

2) milesforclimate.org; Hannah Bacon
She’s now in Tucson or farther east, raising awareness about climate change and taking donations for the Sunrise Movement. (We donated $100 in December.)

3) Conglomerate Mesa, Friends of the Inyo – SB
Steve is impressed with Friends of the Inyo (Independence, Lone Pine), who are worried about a gold mine development at an unusual geologic formation in their area.

3) UCR climate change activist – LT
At our next meeting, Laraine will make a presentation of her final project from the Climate Change Stewards course.

Letters signed onto:
MBCA letter re: Desert Conservancy Program. This was originated by Kim Delfino to encourage Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia to sponsor a bill to create a Desert Conservancy Program under the wildlife conservation board. There were significant cosigners. There is a News Update about this.

David reminded Board members to update their membership as required in the By-Laws. Laraine will send out a reminder with the link.

Columba will give us an update on her group’s activities (Native American Land Conservancy) at our next meeting.

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, February 11, 2021  5:00 – 7:00 PM via ZOOM - stay tuned!