

MBCA BOARD MEETING APPROVED MINUTES
Thursday June 10, 2021 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm Via Zoom
Black Bold Italics = Board vote Blue Italics = action commitment

Regular Meeting Call to Order at 5:05 PM

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|--|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Bardwell | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Hammer | <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 type="checkbox"/> Pat Flanagan (advance notice) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sarah Kennington | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laraine Turk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meg Foley (advance notice) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mike Lipsitz (connection trouble) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cathy Zarakov |

Social media consultants: ☒ Aimee Buyea ☐ Stacy Doolittle

Introduction of Guests and Board Directors

Agenda approval

Added Climate Change Stewards course to Climate Change item (Outreach #6) per Laraine's request & added Planning Commission Workshop to Housing Short Term Rentals topic (Outreach #3) per Janet's request. ***Steve moved to approve the revised agenda. Sarah seconded, and all were in favor. (9-0)***

Minutes from May 13, 2021 BOD meeting

Steve sent minor editing changes to Laraine, which she has incorporated. ***Steve moved to approve the May 2021 minutes. Sarah seconded, and all were in favor. (9-0)***

Treasurer's Report

Cathy reported income from 1 new individual and 2 couples' memberships, a \$75 donation, & \$6.18 from Amazon Smile. There is \$51,358.22 in our checking account and \$22,766.23 in the CD, which was rolled over for 6 more months. Cathy researched Mike's question from last month about penalties for withdrawal if we had changed to the 2.5-year CD category. For greater than a one-year CD, the penalty is the greater of one-half of interest earned or 3% of the amount withdrawn, also with a flat \$25 fee. We accepted the Treasurer's report.

Steve thanked Cathy for invoicing the water companies for their annual contributions to the DWL Series. She also worked on the financial arrangements for videographer Cole Gibson. We determined that IRS W-9 filings would be needed for Cole and Melissa Sabol.

Outreach & Communications

1) Flamingo 640 Glamping

Ruth provided a PowerPoint that she and Steve created, showing some Section 35 history and current views of the landscape. There are wildlife linkages through the land and toward the protected Flattops. Mojave Desert Land Trust and Wildlands Conservancy have been interested in purchasing the land but the price was too high. It is believed that MDLT is poised to purchase it if eventually it can be sold at appraised value. Brandon Cummings of CBD in an earlier online meeting thought conservation issues could stop it, or at least that the County would take the environmental issues into consideration. There could be a lawsuit, or there might be a drive for community donations to make up the excess cost of purchase by MDLT. Water access for the project would be via Bighorn Desert-View.

2) Cannabis cultivation in the Basin MAC resolution – SB, PF

Steve reported a discussion with Pat today vis-à-vis the 30-30 initiative. She sees these "grows" sort of like measles on the landscape, infected spots within the desert, which would otherwise be "virgin" and *should* be valued for the state's 30/30 initiative. It is reported

there are around 850 grows in San Bernardino County. Sacramento needs to be pushed to take action.

The Supervisors put \$10.4 million into the next budget for enforcement. At a recent HVCC meeting, Supervisor Rowe encouraged residents to push the issue to the state. Brian noted that if it becomes a felony as it used to be, property could be seized. Aimee wondered if water could be shut off. Brian said this was a big issue at a MWA Board meeting he attended today. There's been a lack of cooperation by the County. MWA has asked to become involved in permitting of wells before permits are issued, but the County won't allow it. Their legal counsel was very specific about this. Brian will send us a link to this morning's meeting recording. Other crops than marijuana are also grown in the area, and other users are also exceeding the allotted amount.

3) Housing Short Term Rentals & Planning Commission Workshop – JJ, SB

Janet said that a discussion about emergency actions for the STR issue was supposed to happen at the last Supervisors' meeting but didn't. Supposedly it will be on the June 22nd agenda. She is sending data and information to Supervisor Rowe. Today she received new information from JT Elementary that they are down 40 kids from average, probably due to both COVID and lack of low-income housing. Options are not there anymore.

Janet spoke more about the tie to the Housing Element update. She sent a letter to state housing agencies urging them to add a STR housing status category. They currently label STR houses as unfilled when they're really just not available. In the SB County Housing Element there are references to Community Plans in lots of locations, but those Plans have been repealed. Hopefully these issues will come up at the Planning Commission Workshop for Development Code Updates next Thursday. Short term rentals are not consistent with the housing plan or the general plan. Janet continues to feed information to Supervisor Rowe.

Breana Violante, who shared information at our May meeting, has been contacting small businesses to find out about STR impact. The County doesn't seem to acknowledge the connections among planning, STR enforcement and the housing element. Steve agreed; the County doesn't seem to have good data or a sense of reality about this. And, it's happening across the state. Pioneertown has recently experienced a lot of new applications for STRs, possibly because they've heard about a possible emergency declaration.

Steve is planning to continue contacting LUS about the trouble we've had in getting the full video from the Planning Commission's LTO Workshop, and will also ask about access to the video from the upcoming PC meeting. Brian noted that there's no state-level reason why the recording can't be done and made public, since there's still the emergency order in place.

Steve asked Janet to put together some guidelines for public comment for the PC meeting. The County's work on the housing element has been confusing and not reflective of our issues. Janet said that the desert region section of the plan has some good language, but they seem to be doing away with regional content. So, we lose the specificity of the deleted 2007 Community Plans and the planning now is Countywide, generic, and therefore far less useful to us. Arch mentioned a recent article in the *New York Times* noting that San Bernardino and Riverside Counties are a big part of the housing bubble. It may be that such an uncontrolled market is partly driven by the STR issue. *Janet agreed to try creating some talking points for the PC meeting.*

4) Request from Jen Kolm of JTNP for possible assistance – PF

Pat not present.

5) Support for other non-profits.

Steve said we will have this discussion during our August retreat.

6) Climate change. Include topic our website. – All –

Laraine said the Web Team had discussed this as a summer project; everyone will be notified and asked for input.

Climate Stewards class. – LT

A new Climate Change Stewards course is set for July 10 – Sep 18. Laraine suggested MCBA offer a full or partial scholarship for a Director or member. It's \$375. We discussed possibilities. *Laraine will place the information sessions on the Calendar.*

Later discussion on this: At the end of the meeting Cathy asked that we revisit the topic of the UC Climate Stewards course offering a scholarship. This fits well with our educational mission. There was consensus to move forward. *Cathy, Sarah, Arch & Laraine will have a Zoom meeting to create a recommendation for the Board about course scholarships.*

Janet mentioned the San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative that she's read about and suggested they might be a possible program at our next Annual Meeting. Sarah is aware of them and said they're doing a great job.

7) Keystone death.

David noted that Steve Volker, who has been the lawyer for the Desert Protection Society for 22 years (David is President) was the lead counsel in opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline, working with lawyers from CBD, Sierra Club, and others. Good to have such a successful major player on our side!

Conservation Issues

1) Update on JT listing as candidacy for threatened – DF

If the listing is approved, it will affect the Flamingo Heights glamping project as there are many Joshua trees on that land. Steve noted that YV and the County fought the threatened status, but if it goes through they'll have to deal with it.

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

Stacy sent us a Facebook post about recent poor air quality, wondering if it's coming from the warehouses and trucks in the Inland Empire. Should we add this issue to our agenda? Arch has been looking for reliable historical data from Purple Air monitor owners, and will continue. We viewed the current Purple Air map for the Morongo Basin and there are very few monitors. Arch suggested we try to encourage more and especially try to have clusters of them. The JBWD monitor wasn't showing. Arch said sometimes there are WIFI problems but there's no alert; it takes monitoring. Units are about \$200 & require both power & WIFI.

3) Light Trespass ordinance update –SB, LT, PF

The Eblast including the video of the LTO presentation went out today. Steve & Luke's presentation was well-received and we are hopeful that it made a difference. Sup. Rowe has expressed concern about opposition from Paul Cook because he so strong on property rights. However, his appointed Commissioner Jonathan Weldy seemed positive.

Pioneertown is very concerned. Steve reported that the new owners of Pappy & Harriet's want appropriate light and he'll meet with them. Luke did a really great job in the presentation.

Pat sent a newspaper article about new lighting being planned for the 29 Palms athletic field, asking that we try to find a contact to educate them about appropriate lighting.

4) Carbon sequestration in the desert. – PF. BH
Nothing new.

5) Big Morongo Canyon Preserve – MF(?)
Steve reported that Meg will hopefully be back at the end of June.

6) AB 1139 Rooftop solar
The defeat of AB 1139 was a good “David v. Goliath” victory. Arch received an email from the Solar Rights Alliance reminding supporters that utilities are now shifting battle their battle to the PUC and we need to keep track of this and fight back again.

7) AB 1183 Desert Conservation Fund
The bill made it out of the Assembly; it’s a positive outcome from our letters.

8) DRECP
Steve forwarded an email to us about a Zoom conference on July 1 at 10-noon for an update on DRECP. *Ruth and maybe Arch will attend.*

9) RCIS (Resource Conservation Investment Strategy)
Steve sent the notice of this June 22 virtual meeting. He described the group’s goal as “HCP light.” How will the listing of the Joshua tree be a part of this?

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues

1) mbconservation.org /
Social Media update– Aimee
Aimee reported analytics from the website: 643 visits in May; down a bit in users; average time on website is up. Facebook traffic is down a bit but we’re saving promotions for the landscape tour. We’ve had some new followers from several new posts this week, including the *LA Times* article about Joshua trees. Instagram is up 77.1%, with 350 followers.

Website – LT, CZ,
Laraine reported good response to today’s Eblast; many people are clicking on the link to the presentation video. Nora is now taking responsibility for loading the Eblast into its new more streamlined format under MBCA News. Laraine has updated the paper copy binders (we’re into a second binder now) of our Comment Letters aka “MBCA Takes a Stand” or TAS letters. Nora is still interested in helping us to devise some sort of “issue status” page where people can look to see the status or outcome of our issues (a summer project).

2) Events Committee reports:
2021 virtual landscape tour
Update on videography of sites - The Tour videos are almost finished. Cole has done a great videography job and Stacy has been great at organizing it all.

Invoicing and thank you to water agencies - Cathy has written invoices to water agencies. We received an emailed question from Kathleen Radnich about how their donation would be used so Steve sent her a rough cut of this year’s JBWD site (the Wolds).

3) Educational support
Denison Scholarship – SB

Steve awarded the scholarship to Kahlena Alcantar at the the YVHS scholarship ceremony. This is the last year of the Scholarship. *This will be a topic for our August Retreat.*

Karin Messaros grant - Janet has some more input from teachers about the field trip program. *Laraine will set up a meeting with the group that met with Karin last time (Janet, Steve, Sarah, Meg, Laraine)* to discuss both the scholarship and field trip projects and bring recommendations to the Retreat.

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We discussed when to have the Retreat. Everyone agreed we'd like to have it in person. *It is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, August 29 at Steve and Sarah's.*

Steve will check with Yucca Valley to see if we can meet there in person for our July 8 meeting. We'll set up a phone call or Zoom for Brian.

David said he's had several MBCA phone calls that he has forwarded to Steve, but also described one difficult person. This person was known by several Directors and they advised David not to engage any further.

(Cathy asked again about the Climate Stewards program scholarship at this point; see above in the Climate Change item #6 in Outreach/ Communications.)

Adjourned at 7:07 PM.

Letters signed onto :

Letter in support of AB 1183 – Desert Conservation Plan

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, July 8, 2021 5:00 – 7:00 PM ZOOM **stay tuned!**