

MBCA BOARD MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

Thursday October 14, 2021 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm Via Zoom

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

Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:06 PM.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steve Bardwell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janet Johnston (~6:30)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laraine Turk
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> David Fick	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sarah Kennington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cathy Zarakov
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pat Flanagan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arch McCulloch	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian Hammer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ruth Rieman	
<u>Social media consultants:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Aimee Buyea		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stacy Doolittle

Introduction of Guests and Board Directors

We introduced ourselves to online guest Gary Stiler of Morongo Valley, and he introduced himself and spoke of his 10 years in the area and interests in common with MBCA.

Agenda approval

Steve moved to approve the agenda. Sarah seconded and all were in favor. (9-0) (Janet not yet present and Stacy not yet voted in.)

Minutes from September 9, 2021 BOD meeting

Steve moved to approve the Sep. 9 minutes. Arch seconded, and all were in favor. (9-0)

Treasurer's Report

Cathy had sent us the current financial details before this meeting. She noted a donation of \$100 from a resident who appreciated MBCA and complimented Steve as President, but is moving out of the country. We made a \$300 donation to the Desert Protection Society. Our checking balance is \$54,998; the CD is \$22,766. Cathy and Laraine met and worked out the source of differences on recent-year income totals between bank records and Nationbuilder records. Cathy recently filed the California "Statement of Information" required for MBCA. By consensus the Treasurer's report was accepted.

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues

1) By Laws and Board Handbook up-date and director terms

Director retirements, new directors mbconservation.org /

Laraine went over recent and projected changes to the 6-page Board Handbook.

Steve, Cathy, and Pat will work on a climate change statement to add to the Goals.

Ruth noted that focusing our January meeting on climate change would help us meet our new goal. *There was consensus on the proposed Handbook changes and to publish it when they are revised.*

Steve nominated Stacy Doolittle as a new Board member. He cited our By-Laws' authorization to fill an empty position and Stacy's extensive support for MBCA both in the past and very actively in the last year or so, especially with the two Tour videos and social media, which have both been extremely beneficial. ***Laraine seconded the nomination, and all were in favor. (9-0)*** We officially welcomed Stacy to the Board!

2) Social Media update – Aimee / Stacy

Website – LT, CZ, SK

Stacy reported that we recently promoted the Calendar and the Plant Spotlight and had some uptick in activity from both. Analytics show that last month more than 800 people were on the website, compared to 575 in August, and 32 returned in September. Key visitor sources are referrals and directly typing the URL, some through Google and Bing, and a few through YouTube. Steve noted that keeping up the calendar is a great resource. Gary offered assistance with some new resources regarding climate change and also suggested a website section on apps that might entice more young people. He also suggested looking at the website “thisclimatedoesnotexist.com” which describes future climate change effects.

3) Events Committee reports:

a) 2022 landscape tour – DWL committee

We’ve agreed to a hybrid 2022 Tour, both virtual and in-person. Bob and Judy Wold are interested. *Ruth has the list of those we looked at last year and will put together an agenda and set up a committee meeting in November.*

b) Thank you to water agencies – CZ, PF

Steve is working to schedule the last two presentations and thanked Cathy, Pat, and Ruth for doing the other ones. Golden State didn’t serve any of last year’s sites but Steve recommends we should still meet with them to enlist their support, as we have had several sites in Morongo Valley over the years. *Arch will check with Golden State and with Steve and make the contact.*

c) Topic for annual meeting

Ruth has reached out to James Hansen, a Columbia scientist who in the late 1980’s was one of the first to go public about climate change. He’s finished his book [Sophie’s Planet](#) that he was writing when he earlier turned us down. We might consider another hybrid meeting, get the large room at Yucca Valley to allow social distance but also broadcast. We might encourage him by noting the previous “big names” that have been speakers for us. Gary added we could make a YouTube video of his presentation and make it available to schools and groups, for more focus on youth. Ruth noted that it sounds like our meeting theme has become climate change and youth and she will pursue that with the committee. We could purchase a number of his books for local distribution and encourage contribution to his non-profit. Maybe he has a curriculum packet related to the book. Steve thinks having him as a virtual speaker would be the best way unless he chooses to be here for some reason. *Ruth will open the conversation with him to determine possible event scenarios.* We might partner with other conservation organizations to increase his interest.

Another Annual Meeting option could be a presentation about the threats to rooftop and distributed renewable energy from the big utilities, as NEM 3.0 will be considered by the CPUC around January.

Steve and Janet have talked about a topic of “waste” for an Annual Meeting.

4) Educational support

a) Denison Scholarship – SK, LT

Our 5-year commitment has been completed and we still intend to create another or additional scholarships. *Sarah and Laraine will bring together the Scholarship committee and meet again with Karin Messaros.*

b) Field trips CSA 20 - JJ

Janet not present yet.

Outreach & Communications

1) Cannabis cultivation environmental impacts – BH

Brian's finished research was published at two meetings. In the MWA service area there are about 1000 sites, up about 85% from about 8 months ago. Most sites use small amounts of water, and MWA can only pursue the large users and they can only deal with water use. During the MAC meeting the Sheriff's representative provided data on [Operation Hammerstrike](#), and encouraged people to call in, as they now have more tools after the County raised the fines. Brian said MWA data hasn't been released to Sheriff yet. "Major" water use for MWA is over 10 acre feet to draw a difference between backyard orchards and major users. While there has been some discussion of changing this figure, it remains for now. Pat asked whether the chemicals they're putting into the groundwater should be reported to California EPA. Brian suggested instead the Dept. of Toxic Substances Control that regulates pesticides and poisons.

2) Housing Element of CWP – JJ, SB

The draft letter about STRs crafted by Janet and Steve to State and County agencies was sent to all Board members. A longer letter of 25-30 pages is under construction to the County bringing up a lot more specific issues. There is an extension through February for the County to submit its Housing Element. Additional input from Board members is requested ASAP as they would like to send it no later than Monday, October 18. The County added enforcement instead of limits or a moratorium, which made things worse not better. Janet recited similar STR growth in the mountain communities that resulted in decline of family housing that caused a school closure.

3) Cadiz - DF, PF, SB

David commented that Cadiz Stock is at \$6.66. It has been as low as \$1.80 and goes up and down according to legal judgements and oversight regimes. Cadiz could affect the extreme eastern end of JTNP which is why NPCA keeps an eye on it.

4) Info sheet to Realtors - CA welcome center

Cal Welcome Center has a series of recommendations targeted toward new residents in the Morongo Basin area. Steve suggests framing our Top Ten Tips for the Welcome Center to use in some way. Stacy hasn't yet received a reply from MCAGCC about anything they send to new Base-related owners/renters. Gary said he and Gayl Swarat and Mark Lundquist discussed this a few years ago and suggested restarting with new 3rd District staff member Steve Reyes. Steve will introduce Gary to Steve Reyes.

5) MBCA advertisement Desert Moon Pictorial – SB

They published our ad, the same used in Southwest Stories, a simple graphic image listing our website. For the next version let's ask people to join. Sarah suggests

asking Melissa to prepare something to be ready for the next opportunity. We're also planning to improve the current "donate" website pop-up to get people to join. Steve will get the specs from Desert Moon and send to Melissa.

6) Support for Desert Protection Society – DF

David thanked us for providing the \$300 towards D&O Insurance coverage. The Eagle Crest issue is in a federal court in Oakland. David will be creating a DPS website soon.

Conservation Issues

1) Update on Joshua tree listing as candidacy for threatened – DF

At the State Fish & Game Commission meeting today a 90-day extension of emergency regulations was approved beyond the one-year evaluation period. (Item #12 on [this document](#).) Pat added that a judge said Fish & Game didn't do a thorough report, and there is confusion about state vs. federal environmental reviews. David heard the next review would be next June. Unfortunately, the Aratina solar project was approved and they'll have to put up over \$1 million for Joshua tree destruction.

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

We need to find out if the units can be powered by USB. *Sarah will find the AQMD contact person to ask.* Arch said the website addresses this but isn't too clear on figuring out how. The connection to the unit is micro-USB. There are some Wi-Fi problem areas in the Basin. We'd like to get more units to fill in blank spots on the Morongo Basin map.

3) Light Trespass Ordinance, – SB, LT, PF

The Ordinance passed the Planning Commission and will be presented to the BOS per Heidi Duron, with a tentative date of November 11. Through Magda Gonzalez we've received some communication from Big Bear looking for connection with other dark sky advocates.

New lighting for 29 Palms athletic field

No updates. *Steve? Pat? will try again to connect with Ann Congdon.*

4) Carbon sequestration in the desert. – PF, BH

Pat reported that the recently released Nature Based Climate Solutions draft from the [California Natural Resources Agency](#) "is terrible when it comes to the desert." It describes the desert as "sparsely vegetated lands." Suzy Boyd, Joan Taylor, and Moises Cisneros (and Laraine) have been attending the pre-draft online workshops and trying to make sure the desert gets mentioned, but it's shocking how this draft product has ignored the desert.

5) Scenic 247 – SK

Sarah reported that more information is needed, although LUS has finally taken it on. A corridor protection plan needs to go to the Supervisors. Karen Watkins wants to complete the project before she retires. She & CalTrans are "on the same page" and know what needs to be done. We are hoping for protection from some solar projects with the designation. There may be a workshop on it at an upcoming

Planning Commission meeting. Public input is required, but it seems likely CalTrans will approve it.

6) Save California Solar NEM 3.0 - SB

Investor-owned utilities are still pushing to “not encourage” rooftop solar through their comments on NEM 3.0. *Steve will try another Eblast to encourage comments to the Governor.*

7) AB 1183 Desert Conservation Fund signed!

The bill will provide funds for conservation programs in the California desert.

8) [HR 5355 Desert Community Lands Act](#) - BH, SB, PF

Congressman Obernolte introduced this bill in September. It proposes to transfer quite a bit of federal land to various jurisdictions in the 29 Palms area (and other desert regions), allowing access to ORV activity. It would open up 80 acres in a part of 29 Palms that isn't now open to ORVs. There are no maps in the bill! More information is needed and then maybe we'll send a comment letter. Gary added that there are likely some significant archaeological sites important to Chemehuevi people being affected. We hope NALC is working on this.

Adjourned at 7:05 PM.

Letters signed onto:

Opposition to Oberon Solar Project, Riverside County, Opposition to Aratina Solar project, Kern County

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, November 11, 2021 - 5:00 – 7:00 PM in person?
stay tuned!