

MBCA BOARD MEETING **APPROVED MINUTES**

Thursday, December 9, 2021 / 5:00 – 7:00 pm

Mesquite Room, Yucca Valley Community Center plus Via Zoom

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

Regular Meeting Called to Order at 5:02 P.M.

Steve Bardwell Brian Hammer Ruth Rieman (prior notice)
 Stacy Doolittle Janet Johnston Laraine Turk
 David Fick Sarah Kennington Cathy Zarakov
 Pat Flanagan Arch McCulloch
Social media consultant: Aimee Buyea

Introduction of Guests and Board Directors

Guest Helen Jeong from Lake Elsinore attended; she just joined MBCA recently.

Board members introduced themselves. Also guest Gary Stiler returned.

Agenda approval

Laraine moved to approve the agenda. Sarah seconded, and all were in favor. (10-0)

Minutes from November 11, 2021 BOD meeting

Steve moved to approve the November minutes with one small edit. Arch seconded, and all were in favor. (10-0)

Treasurer's Report

Cathy mentioned new members Jane Spider Fawke, Kerwin Klein, and Paul Chakalian, who is head of Joshua Tree Distillery. There were also a few gift memberships. *Cathy will work out reporting the gift memberships separately in the financial reports.*

Cathy sent monthly financial reports to Board members prior to the meeting, but reported some of the details. We received \$9.70 from Amazon Prime. Expenses included the \$500 payment to the 2021-22 Denison Scholarship Winner, Kahlena Alcantar. Our CD value is \$22,766, and checking is at \$54,713. We discussed an invoice received for \$80 for membership to 29 Palms Chamber of Commerce. We had decided at the Retreat we wouldn't join all the chambers. Sarah commented that the impacts on the local economy due to STRs give us engagement with the business community via that issue. Gary added that when he had been on the Morongo Valley Chamber at one time, most members were real estate interests. Stacy suggested if we are members we should ask to make a presentation about our MBCA work. Laraine mentioned some prior discussions about joining chambers where the annual cost of joining all was deemed too high. Cathy noted we should be involved regularly if we're going to join. However, we can request to make presentations without being members. There was no decision; we can revisit this. The Board accepted Cathy's Treasurer's report.

Capacity Building & Organizational Issues

1) Nomination to Board - SB

We were scheduled to name a Nomination committee in November but we're doing it belatedly. Janet, Arch, and Steve agreed to be on that Committee. December is the month to nominate new Board members. Gary Stiler is knowledgeable about Morongo Basin issues and has been coming to our meetings for several months. ***The Committee nominates Gary Stiler as a new Board Director. Arch seconded and all were in favor. (10-0)*** We welcomed Gary to the MBCA Board of Directors.

2) Recap of 501(c)(3) constraints

By Laws and Board Handbook up-date Climate Change - CZ , LT

Steve has reviewed the 501c3 limitations, where we can advocate for issues but not advocate for political candidates, and our advocacy for STR restrictions is not a problem. *Laraine will send around a summary of the 501(c)(3) "restrictions"*. Arch suggested we review this once a year to be sure we don't cross the lines.

The Document Review/Letter Writing Committee is one way to keep a check on how we frame the stance we take on issues, especially when we choose to sign on to a letter on short notice. Steve noted that Ruth will no longer be on the Committee as she will resign from the Board in January. Arch, Pat, Steve, Brian, and Gary are on it; Steve asked Janet to be added and she agreed. Having six has the advantage of finding at least three even on short notice.

Laraine and Stacy will work on putting the Climate Change statement on the website and work on further development of the "ways" later.

MBCA Native Lands statement –PF

Pat ran it by Cliff Trafzer who made some edits that Laraine has incorporated. *Steve will seek review by the Native American Land Conservancy and we can hopefully confirm a final version at next meeting.* Gary suggested to ask NALC whether to use the anglicized versions or authentic tribal names or both. We should also check for which maps to use if we add them.

3) Social Media Website update– Aimee / Stacy

Stacy reported a lot of traction on the Light Trespass Ordinance post and that we've been mentioned by MDLT on their Facebook page for the first time in relation to the LTO. Numbers from the Google Business Profile were: 1215 searches and 1371 profile views. 48 people asked for directions to MBCA. Metrics reported 644 users; 867 sessions; with 3:23 minutes average time per session.

NationBuilder upgrade to Leadership Plan– SB, LT, CZ, SK

We have upgraded to the higher level that NationBuilder offered us, at about \$500 more per year. *Cathy will see if the account has been charged. Cathy and Laraine and Nora will be meeting soon about the new membership process.*

4) Events Committee reports:

2022 landscape tour – DWL committee

Steve reported that at their recent meeting, the Committee confirmed the intent to have a combination Tour of virtual and in-person, with several specific educational sessions. The in-person tours will be Sunday, April 24, just after Earth Day. We're in the process of selecting sites.

Topic for annual meeting – DWL Committee

We've received an emailed commitment from Dr. James Hansen for the January 29 Annual Meeting. He was one of the first people to be broadly recognized as calling attention to climate change. Steve and Laraine will be meeting with him online to prepare for his virtual presentation at the YV Community Center Yucca Room. Chris Clarke has agreed to be the moderator for the Q&A. We will also contact partners e.g. MDLT, NPCA, JTNPA, etc. for partnership support and to spread the word for high attendance. We usually get a lot of memberships and hope that will be high as well.

Thank you to water agencies – SB, AM

Steve made a presentation to JBWD and is working to schedule one for MWA. Arch is working to contact Golden State Water Company. Gary asked about County special water districts but Steve explained we're focused on agencies that make donations to our Desert Wise Living programs.

Potential Fundraiser with Ken Layne - SD

No additional information yet.

4) Educational support

Scholarships – LT, JJ, SK, SB

Janet reported on a recent Zoom meeting including donor Karin Messaros. We will offer two \$1000 scholarships for academic year 2022-23, one donated by Karin in honor of her mother and the other the new version of what was the MBCA Ruth Denison Scholarship. They will both be intended for graduating high school seniors. We will try to find new avenues to advertise, including [AVID classes](#), to educate students about possible career paths and education requirements on a wider basis. We also plan to create a rack card to advertise the scholarship to send to Basin high schools both public and private.

Field trips CSA 20- JJ

Janet noted that educating students is also part of the goal of the field trips. The plan is intended for 7th or 8th graders, with hopefully follow-up activities in subsequent years. The right conversation at the right time and casting a wide net will help.

Outreach & Communications

1) Cannabis cultivation environmental impacts – BH, SB

Brian said that MWA is looking for grows over 10 acre feet per year. The County continues to take out many grows each week. Sarah reported that Chuck Bell through LVEDA posted that there were hundreds of hoop houses for sale, which could indicate fewer grows are now being set up, which is a hopeful sign according to the Sheriff.

Stacy mentioned the recent [article from the San Bernardino Sentinel](#) about Bill Postmus and marijuana grows in the County. Gary expressed concern about the low-paid workers being out of work. David heard some are being offered jobs in legal grow houses; it's certainly a social and economic justice issue. Arch is on a subcommittee of CNPS about this issue. Most counties have legalized marijuana growing but there are continued land and water issues and also pesticide use. CNPS has a lobbyist at the state level *and Arch will be glad to be an intermediary for any concerns MBCA would like to convey to that person.*

2) Short Term Rentals – JJ

Yucca Valley will end its STR moratorium. The County did not introduce a moratorium. Twentynine Palms and Yucca Valley have density limits. Ordinances are being revised. Sup. Rowe was on KCDZ last week and made a comment on limiting corporate owners. Only one per parcel is another limitation possibility.

3) Re-Districting - JJ

There's a great imbalance in land areas of County districts. The changes provide the 3rd District with a huge amount of unincorporated area. Janet showed a chart of the towns within the proposed new districts. All the incorporated areas are in 3 districts and the 3rd and 1st are almost all unincorporated areas. But the Planning Commission has so much say over the unincorporated areas because it's a majority of urban members (3 of 5) who don't understand unincorporated issues. They aren't finalized yet. Brian is helping to figure out some of the data. The changes between Rowe's and Cook's districts are significant. The Community Plans that have been terminated become even more important. There are many complicated issues of governance for the largest County in the US. Perhaps the County will eventually be split. *When redistricting decisions are final, Laraine will put the lists/charts on our website with commentary.* There is a lot of turnover in the planning staff of the County (Rahhal, Watkins, Petersen), a great loss of institutional memory.

Steve emailed our letter about STR issues to the state Attorney General. Communities and the County need guidance from the state level and they have issued a statement about wanting to clean up legal housing issues.

Steve thanked Janet for all the work she's been doing on these housing issues and creating letters and documents to eventually put on our website. Janet has

had contact with a reporter from the *Desert Sun* and expects there will be some articles reporting our issues.

4) Cadiz, DF

David said the Cadiz stock price is only \$4.18, and still dropping. The Biden administration has [taken action](#) to stop the use of the pipeline that the prior administration permitted. Cadiz is trying to use the Central Valley water problems to say they could remedy them. Stacy spoke with a Santa Margarita Water District person who said he was sure they'd get the water, but it was water that usually evaporates.

5) Info sheet to Realtors-CA welcome center – SD, CZ, SB

Gary and Steve have been developing this information sheet; Gary has a draft. Part 1 sets the stage for what it's like to live here in the MB, including references to global warming/climate change. Part 2 is to be developed. *Gary will send us Part 1 and draft ideas for Part 2.* The intent is to give them ideas of what to expect, "everything from water to fencing," such as trying to effectively use greywater. Steve noted it will include our "Top Ten Tips for Desert Wise Living," with links between the two. Gary is planning it as hard copy as well as digital with lots of links. We must plan for mitigation and resilience.

6) MBCA advertisements *Desert Moon Pictorial* – SB, SD

Stacy talked with Melissa with a plan to start in February. We also need to flesh out our Top Ten Tips for print media. *We'll need a working session with several people to design for both full and half pages, hopefully including former Board member Mike Lipsitz.*

7) Outreach to MBCA by JT Distilling -SB

Paul Chakalian of the new local business [JT Distilling](#) purchased a business membership. Steve contacted them because they wanted to donate to local organizations. The AWE enterprise they're involved in used organization names without checking with the organizations. He has a background in environmental studies and is really interested.

Conservation Issues

1) Stagecoach Solar - PF

Pat has been asked by Steve Mills to work further on this. The letter is already 70 pages. The project is on state lands and they're still planning to do it. She may ask for help from some of us. It's off Hwy. 247; would also lead to the gentie line and new substation and trigger all the other projects that are in line such as Ord Mountain, Calcite, etc. It would industrialize the entire area just where 247 is trying to get Scenic Highway designation.

2) MCAGCC Raven 'abatement' – PF

The Base created a document for comment describing their need to remove 11,000-13,000 ravens initially on DOD lands in the desert. They're a real problem for the desert tortoise. ([Desert Star article.](#)) They propose methods

both lethal and non-lethal. It really does need to be done to save tortoises. They expect to continue to “take” 1400 to 1700 ravens annually after the initial effort. Humans have provided situations for ravens to thrive as desert development continues. Their environmental report shows that they have done mitigation to reduce raven populations but it’s not enough. It’s intended for all desert military installations.

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

The [MDLT webpage with Joshua tree regulations](#) is most comprehensive for realtors and residents.

4) Air Quality Monitoring: Location of Purple Air units – SK, AM
nothing new

5) Light Trespass Ordinance –SB, LT

The LTO was [passed by Supervisors](#) this week. There are still concerns about string lights; Gary would like to see a definition. There is one in the ordinance but they don’t have to shielded. There is a lumens limit but only for residential sites.

6) 30x30 Carbon sequestration in the desert. – PF, BH

We signed a [letter](#) initiated by Audubon to focus on the Inland Desert issues of the State’s 30x30 project. Pat attended a webinar by CARB; they are to categorize and measure carbon sequestration in categories, but the desert category was minimized. We have been upgraded and they are now including deserts in their categories and they got it right in their maps. There will be a local group meeting soon and they’ll provide more info to CARB.

7) Scenic 247 - SK

The Planning Commission received a great [presentation](#) from the Scenic 247 Committee today, and Sarah and Steve made comments. The Planning Commissioners were very positive. It’s been a grassroots project over 10 years, and this moves the project forward to the next action. (The [Committee’s website](#) contains lots of great information.) *Sarah wants to include a list of native plants and will follow up with Arch and Pat.* A Corridor Protection Plan needs to go to the Supervisors, then to CalTrans HQ. County staff Karen Watkins wants to get it through as part of her legacy as she will retire soon. Solar projects will have to mitigate appropriately if the plan is finally accepted. Note that two Planning Commissioners admitted they had never been on Hwy. 247 – another sign of the gap between urban and unincorporated area experience and perspectives.

8) Save California Solar NEM 3.0 – SB

Yesterday the Solar Rights Alliance presented over 100,000 signatures on petitions to Newsom to stand up for rooftop solar.

9) HR 5355 Desert Community Lands Act - BH, SB, PF

Thousands of acres would be turned over to various jurisdictions. Eric Hamburg of Wonder Valley has been following this, with concern about acres near Twentynine Palms.

Steve will confirm in-person meetings at the YV Community Center for 2022.

Adjournment: 7:03 PM.

Letters created / signed onto :

Thank you letter to Terri Rahhal

Next Regular Meeting: Thursday, January 13, **2022!!** - 5:00 – 7:00 PM, in person Yucca Valley!