

**COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY  
REGULAR MEETING  
73-710 Fred Waring Drive, Suite 115  
Palm Desert, California  
July 9, 2012- 3:00 p.m.**

**DRAFT  
MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Buford Crites, State Assembly Appointee–(*Chairman*)  
Kristy Franklin, City of La Quinta  
John Kalish, Bureau of Land Management  
Patrick Kemp, Natural Resources Agency  
Eddy Konno, California Department of Fish and Game  
William Kroonen, City of Palm Desert  
Chris Mills, City of Palm Springs  
Gordon Moller, City of Rancho Mirage  
Allan Muth, University of California  
Paul Riesman, California State Parks  
Pedro Reyes, Department of Finance  
Larry Spicer, City of Indian Wells  
Joan Taylor, Governor’s Appointee  
Ellen Lloyd Trover, Senate Rules Committee Appointee–(*Vice-Chairwoman*)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

John J. Benoit, Riverside County Supervisor, District IV  
Russell Betts, City of Desert Hot Springs  
John Donnelly, Wildlife Conservation Board  
Jim Foote, U.S. Forest Service (*Non-voting Member*)  
Karin Messaros, National Park Service  
Sam Toles, City of Cathedral City  
Tribe Representative, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Kevin McKernan, Executive Director  
Kerrie Godfrey, Associate Governmental Program Analyst

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Britt Wilson, Management Analyst, City of Rancho Mirage

**VACANT POSITIONS:** Vacant, Staff Services Analyst

**1.0 Call to Order & Introductions**

Chair Crites declared a quorum with 11 voting members present at 3:05 pm. Chris Mills, Pedro Reyes and Joan Taylor arrived late and were not present to vote on the Minutes making the voting member count 14 for all other items.

**2.0 Approval of Minutes of May 2012 meeting**

Chair Crites asked if there were any comments additions or changes to the May 2012 Minutes. There was no further discussion, so a motion was made and seconded

(Spicer/Franklin) to approve the Minutes. The motion was adopted by the Board members saying “Aye” in a unanimous vote with the exception of Gordon Moller who abstained because he was not present at the last meeting.

### **3.0 Public Comments on Items Not on the Agenda**

Chair Crites asked if there were any comments on any items on the agenda. There were none.

### **4.0 Action Items - public hearing Agenda Item**

**4.1** Resolution 2012-10 approving a local assistance grant to the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission for the Desert Ranch II acquisition from the Trust for Public Lands of approximately 763.13 acres in the Santa Rosa Mountains alluvial fan area near Martinez Canyon.

Kevin McKernan explained that this is the second phase of the acquisition in the alluvial fans of the Santa Rosa Mountains. As you may recall, the Board previously approved a grant to the at the May 9, 2011 board meeting to acquire 1423 acres of former Blixseth property known as Desert Ranch I. CVMC’s participation in acquisitions in the area dates back to Su Hai (a 5,400 acre partnership acquisition among BLM, WCB, and CVMC in 2003), plus two grants to Friends for acquisitions in Sections 25 and 27, the LOH property acquisition in Sections 7 and 8 by BLM, WCB, and CVMC (matching funds for section 6 grant) and most recently the acquisition of 1423 acres of former Blixseth property known as Desert Ranch I. With the acquisition from TPL, and subsequent acquisition by the CVCC through a local assistance grant, nearly 100% of the total conservation needs in that area will be completed.

Trust for Public Lands (TPL) has now purchased the 763 acre property in a portion of sections 6 and all of Section 31 (Santa Rosa Mountains alluvial fan near Martinez Canyon) from Desert Ranch LLC (a.k.a. Blixseth properties). TPL acquired these important properties subject to a purchase/option agreement entered into with the Friends of the Desert Mountains contingent upon receiving CVMC and Federal Section 6 grant funding and the option to assign the property to another entity. At its June meeting, the CVCC approved a motion to acquire the property per the assignment clause in the TPL/Friends purchase agreement.

Two appraisals were commissioned by CVMC for the properties, one for the smaller parcels (~20-40 acres parcels) and one for the larger parcel (all of section 31). DGS approved both appraisals as well as USFWS for the use of Federal Section 6 and CVMC prop. 84 bond funds as the non-federal match. The appraised value for the subject property is \$1,260,000. ***The requested CVMC grant amount from the CVCC is \$440,000 plus closing costs*** with the contribution of Federal Section 6 subgrant funds in the amount of \$882,000. TPL’s commitment to move quickly on this acquisition was entirely based upon the Friends’, CVCC’s and CVMC’s commitment to acquire the properties from TPL in an expeditious manner.

Chair Crites asked if there were any questions.

Gordon Moller asked when TPL acquired the property.

Kevin McKernan responded that TPL closed about a month ago. This agency has liquidity so they step in when working with private landowners who are motivated to sell quickly and will use their own funds to close at the appraised value and then sell it us for the same amount. They basically did the same in Phase 1 but we granted the funds to the Friends and subsequently now CVCC are taking ownership. So, basically CVCC will take ownership of both phase 1 and 2.

Al Muth asked about the fence in question comment on the map.

Kevin McKernan responded that the map had multiple purposes and one was deciding what to do with the existing fencing that was initially placed to keep Bighorn Sheep off the property and will now need to be removed. The landowner did not spare any expense as he fenced off two full sections.

Al Muth asked if we will remove the cross that sits on the hill in the middle of the property.

Kevin McKernan responded that you can barely see it from anywhere except by hiking into the property. Once CVCC owns it, it will be their decision.

John Kalish noted that BLM has previously bought properties with this type of situation and if the land were to eventually transfer to BLM they would handle it like all other cases. He also noted that this property is adjacent to the Santa Rosa Wilderness Area and would be very compatible with the adjacent designations. John Kalish noted that BLM had considered a land exchange with Tim Blixseth themselves a few years back.

Kevin McKernan also noted that the adjacent section 32 is also owned by BLM and connects the parcel so it's not such an island out there by itself and it will be easier for BLM to manage that area for conservation purposes.

Larry Spicer noted that at \$1,650 an acre that it looks like a good use of public funds.

Chair Crites asked if there was any further discussion on the item. Since there was none, he asked for a motion to adopt resolution 2012-10. A motion was made and seconded (Taylor/Muth) to adopt the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote of the 14 Board members present.

#### **4.2 Resolution 2012-11 approving a local assistance grant to the Friends of the Desert Mountains for acquisition of approximately 640 acres in the Desert Tortoise and Linkage Conservation Area**

Kevin McKernan explained this is a full section of land in the Desert Tortoise and Linkage Conservation Area adjacent to the Joshua Tree National Park boundary area. The Park staff has expressed interest in acquiring inholdings and edge properties working with CVMC, FODM and other partners. The long-term plan for these properties is an eventual transfer to the Park Service for inclusion in Joshua Tree National Park. CVMC's past acquisitions in the area have included the notable Cathton acquisition, Thermal Canyon Wildlife Corridor and National Park and Wilderness Area inholdings.

The proposed 640 acre acquisition provides existing habitat as well as future potential linkages for wildlife movement in the Desert Tortoise and Linkage Conservation Area. This full section of land sits at the mouth of what is known as the Double Canyons (East and West) which have been identified as a potential wildlife corridor linkage into Joshua Tree National Park. The long-term plan for these properties is an eventual transfer to the Park Service for inclusion in Joshua Tree National Park.

This property also possesses significant historical resources due to its proximity to the Colorado River Aqueduct and associated relics from that area. Acquisition and management by the Friends of the Desert Mountains and other partners will ensure the historic integrity of the site.

The Friends of the Desert Mountains has requested that the Conservancy approve a local assistance grant not to exceed \$250,000 for the acquisition of the parcel consisting of approximately 640 acres in the Desert Tortoise and Linkage Conservation Area (APN 707-240-003). This parcel belongs to a landowner who has been identified as a willing seller.

Chair Crites asked if there were questions on this item.

Larry Spicer noted that he is surprised that someone does not raise a question that the construction items may be of historical value.

Chair Crites noted that they will not be disturbed or removed by the Friends.

Ellen Trover noted as a member of the historical society she would like to take pictures and try to preserve the items.

Chair Crites asked if there was any further discussion on the item. Since there was none he asked for a motion to adopt resolution 2012-11. A motion was made and seconded (Mills/Kroonen) to adopt the motion. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote of the 14 Board members present.

## **5.0 Closed Session – No matters scheduled**

Pursuant to Government Code sections 11126 (a)(1), 11126 (e)(1) and 11126.3(a) the Board may hold a closed session to discuss and take possible action on personnel matters and or receive advice of counsel on pending or potential litigation. In addition, pursuant to Government Code section 11126 (c) 7 (A) the Board may meet in closed session with its negotiator prior to the purchase or sale of real property by or for the state body to give instructions to its negotiator regarding the price and terms of payment for the purchase or sale. Confidential memoranda related to these issues may be considered during such closed session discussions.

## **6.0 Reports**

### **6.1 Written Reports.**

Chair Crites asked if there were any discussion. Kevin McKernan provided the Board an update on acquisitions, acquisition priorities, and explained that he remains engaged in the all-Conservancy effort to raise better public awareness of the

Conservancies and address common issues that face the Conservancies. The Conservancy is also in the process of interviewing for the vacant SSA position.

Larry Spicer asked when the initial prop 84 bond funds were appropriated.

Kevin McKernan responded in 2006.

Chair Crites noted that congratulations are in order for the Parks people in meeting their goal to keep the Salton Sea State Park open.

Paul Riesman went into detail about the ongoing process of raising funds for this purpose.

**6.2** Board Member comments and reports from Conservancy member agencies. Chair Crites asked if there were any discussion. There was none.

**7.0 Adjourn to the September 10, 2012 meeting**

The meeting was adjourned without objection at 3:30 p.m.