

COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY
(CVMC)

REGULAR MEETING
73-710 Fred Waring Drive, Suite 101
Palm Desert, California

DRAFT MINUTES

November 18, 2024 - 3:00 p.m.

Teleconference locations:

State of California, Resources Agency
715 P St.
Mojave Room on the 20th floor (NRHQ 20-104)
Sacramento, CA 95814

3602 Inland Empire Blvd. Suite C-220
Small Conference Room
Ontario, CA 91764

MEMBERS PRESENT: Enrique Arroyo, California State Parks
Patricia Cooper, Riverside County
Denise Delgado, City of Coachella
Steve Downs, City of Rancho Mirage
Madeline Drake, CA Natural Resources Agency
Gary Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs
Grace Garner, City of Palm Springs
Beatriz Gonzalez, State Assembly Appointee
Elaine Holmes, City of Indio
Rita Lamb, City of Cathedral City (*Chairwoman*)
Deborah McGarrey, City of La Quinta
Jennifer Norris, Wildlife Conservation Board
Savana Saubel, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
Ellen Lloyd Trover, Senate Rules Committee Appointee
Evan Trubee, City of Palm Desert
Bruce Whitman, City of Indian Wells

MEMBERS ABSENT: Stephen Benson, Department of Finance
Richard Kim, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Joan Taylor, Governor's Appointee
Christopher Tracy, University of California, Riverside

CVMC STAFF PRESENT: Elizabeth King, Executive Director
Diana Rosas, Associate Director
Maximiliano Ochoa, Project Coordinator
Abriana Elms, Administrative Coordinator

OTHERS PRESENT: Dr. James Danoff-Burg, The Living Desert
Troy Strange, Desert Recreation District
William Brent Felstead, Coachella Valley Desert and Mountains
Recreation and Conservation Authority
David Neubert, Sacramento location, member of the public
Francis Coats, Sacramento location, member of the public

1.0 Call to Order & Introductions

Chair Lamb declared a quorum with 13 voting members present and called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m. Subsequently, three additional Board members (Delgado/ Gonzalez/ Holmes) arrived after the roll call bringing the attendance to 16 voting members.

2.0 Approval of July 8, 2024, Meeting Minutes

A motion was made and seconded (Gardner/McGarrey) to approve the July 8, 2024, minutes; the motion passed with three abstentions (Arroyo / Drake/ Whitman).

3.0 Public Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

A member of the public, Francis Coats from Yuba City, who was in attendance at the publicly noticed California Natural Resources Agency teleconference location, expressed concern during public comment regarding the Agua Caliente Land Back Donation and reservation of the public's right to fish on public land.

4.0 Closed Session

No closed session was scheduled for this meeting.

5.0 Action/Informational Items- Public Hearing

Action Item 5.1 Approval of Meeting Schedule and New Meeting Location for 2025.

Chair Lamb gave a brief overview of the 2025 Proposed Meeting Schedule and Proposed New Meeting Location.

Two board members (McGarrey/Gardner) asked about the audio quality and Wi-Fi accessibility. Executive Director King responded that staff could go by and test the audio quality and Wi-Fi accessibility.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Downs/Trubee) Approving the proposed meeting schedule and new meeting location for 2025, subject to review the audio quality and Wi-Fi accessibility. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item 5.2 Adoption of Resolution 2024-08 Consenting to and Approving a Proposition 1 Local Assistance Grant to the Desert Recreation District for its Thermal Park Water-Efficiency Infrastructure Project.

Executive Director King summarized item 5.2 as presented in the staff report.

Board member Trubee asked if the field/park will be a multi-purpose field. Troy Strange with the Desert Recreation District responded that it will be a multi-purpose park/field.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Trover/Cooper) approving a Proposition 1 local assistance grant to the Desert Recreation District in an amount not to exceed \$847,285 for its Water-Efficiency Infrastructure Project at the new Thermal Community Park. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item 5.3 Adoption of Resolution 2024-09 Consenting to and Approving a Proposition 68 Local Assistance Grant to the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens for its Desert Hot Springs Pollinator Pathway Project.

Project Coordinator Ochoa summarized item 5.3 as presented in the staff report.

Board member Gardner asked if there is a list of schools that this project will be working with. Dr. James Danoff-Burg with The Living Desert responded that a consultation would ensue with the communities to identify the best locations. Chair Lamb asked what the school's responsibility would be. Dr. Danoff-Burg responded that the curriculum has been established, and the next step moving forward would be to meet with the teachers and implement the curriculum. Board member Trubee asked if this is a feasibility study or implementation grant. Dr. Danoff-Burg responded that it is an implementation grant. Board member McGarrey and Board member Trover both voiced their support and approval for this project.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Trover/McGarrey) approving a Proposition 68 Local Assistance grant to the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens in an amount not to exceed \$133,981 for its Desert Hot Springs Pollinator Pathway project. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item 5.4 Adoption of Resolution 2024-10 Consenting to and Approving a Proposition 68 Local Assistance Grant to the Coachella Valley Desert and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for its West Deception Canyon Trail Project.

Project Coordinator Ochoa summarized item 5.4 as presented in the staff report.

It was noted for the record that Board member McGarrey serves on the Friends of the Desert Mountains board, but the Attorney General has advised that as an unpaid board member of a nonprofit organization, no conflict exists so no recusal is required. Board member Trubee asked if usage has been measured pertaining to the foot traffic. William Felstead with the Coachella Desert and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority responded that there is some traffic noting that the trail is located on a pre-existing trail. Board member Whitman asked if there is a parking lot. Mr. Felstead responded that there is plenty of parking in the area. Chair Lamb asked about the development of the switchbacks being accomplished by an experienced trails crew. Mr. Felstead responded that the switchbacks portion would be completed by the Urban Conservation Group (UCC). Board member Trover also commented expressing her support for this project.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Trubee/Trover) approving a Proposition 68 Local Assistance grant to the Coachella Valley Desert and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority in an amount not to exceed \$17,998 for its West Deception Canyon Trail Project. The motion passed unanimously.

Informational Item 5.5 Presentation by The Living Desert.

Chair Lamb introduced Dr. James Danoff-Burg, Vice President of Conservation for the Living Desert, who gave a brief informational presentation on The Living Desert Zoo & Gardens that included information on native plant species in the Valley and best practices for cities to help green the desert.

Chair Lamb asked if there is a list of appropriate native plants that can be provided to the Planning Commissions when planning different developments. Dr. Danoff-Burg responded that there is a list that he can provide. Board member Gardner commented that the signage is great. Board member Gardner also commented that the Palm Tree skirts may require trimming for safety purposes near city streets. Dr. Danoff-Burg encouraged maintenance of palm fronds where possible. Board member Holmes also commented on the environmental problems open trash can lids cause. Board member Holmes commented that the City of Indio has implemented an ordinance giving a small grant to property owners to build enclosures and keep the trash cans covered and locked.

6.0 Reports

6.1 Written reports from staff.

Associate Director Rosas and Project Coordinator Ochoa gave a brief update on Acquisition and Land Management Updates.

Board member McGarrey asked about the Willow Hole Appraisal and if the cost is more than the purchase price. Associate Director Rosas commented that it is not. Executive Director King and Associate Director Rosas both commented that only fair market value can be offered. Board member Gardner expressed concerns directed towards Oswit Land Trust. Executive Director King responded that if this moves further along, the Conservancy will ask Oswit Land Trust to attend to answer questions.

6.2 Executive Director Report.

Executive Director King reported on the following:

- 2020/2025 Strategic Plan- Preparing for our next Strategic plan by doing a look back at the past five years.
- Proposition 4- Proposition 4 was passed by California voters on November 5th. The bond goal is to help fund climate projects, and \$11M was allocated to CVMC.
- Lands Management- Mr. Felstead continues to make progress through the CVDMRCA on fence repairs, removing illegal dumping, and moving the Board approved 4 trails project forward.
- Housekeeping- CVMC will be moving to a new office and requires a new board meeting location as the current building is set to be demolished, and a tool called an Owl has been purchased to improve teleconferencing at Board meetings.

Board member Delgado commented that some of the disadvantaged communities might not have the staff to apply for these grants but there are many areas who are in need.

6.3 Board member comments and reports.

Board member Gardner acknowledged and congratulated Joan Taylor on receiving the Minerva Hoyt California Desert Conservation Award for Conservation of California's Deserts. There were no board comments or questions.

7.0 Adjourn to the February 10, 2025, meeting.

Chair Lamb adjourned the meeting without objection at 4:20 p.m.