

COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY
REGULAR MEETING
73-710 Fred Waring Drive, Suite 101
Palm Desert, California
March 11, 2024 - 3:00 p.m.

Tele-conference locations:

State of California, Resources Agency
715 P St.
Serpentine Room on the 20th floor (NRHQ 20-103)
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Enrique Arroyo, California State Parks
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
Elaine Holmes, City of Indio
Richard Kim, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Rita Lamb, City of Cathedral City (*Chairwoman*)
Deborah McGarrey, City of La Quinta
Jennifer Norris, Wildlife Conservation Board
V. Manuel Perez, Riverside County
Savana Saubel, Aqua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
Christopher Tracy, University of California, Riverside
Evan Trubee, City of Palm Desert
Bruce Whitman, City of Indian Wells

MEMBERS ABSENT: Stephen Benson, Department of Finance
Beatriz Gonzalez, State Assembly Appointee
Joan Taylor, Governor's Appointee
Ellen Lloyd Trover, Senate Rules Committee Appointee

STAFF PRESENT: Jim Karpiak, Executive Director
Diana Rosas, Associate Director

Maximiliano Ochoa, Project Coordinator
Abriana Elms, Administrative Coordinator

OTHERS PRESENT: Kathleen Brundige, Coachella Valley Conservation Commission
Sandy Hernandez Orellana Barrows, COFEM
Amber Laird, Joshua Tree National Park
Tammy Martin, Friends of the Desert Mountains
Kendall Neisess, Joshua Tree National Park
Jennifer Prado, Southern California Mountains Foundation
Jane Rodgers, Joshua Tree National Park
Thomas Texeira, Friends of the Desert Mountains

1.0 Call to Order & Introductions

Chair Rita Lamb declared a quorum with 12 voting members present at 3:02 p.m. Subsequently, 4 additional board members arrived after the roll call bringing the attendance to 16 voting members.

2.0 Approval of January 8, 2024, Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2024, meeting; the motion passed with 3 abstentions.

3.0 Public Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

No public comments were made.

4.0 Action items – Public Hearing

4.1 Adoption of Resolution 2024-01 Approving a Climate Resilience & Community Access Program Local Assistance Grant to the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission in an amount not to exceed \$372,712.00 for its Cooperative Ranger Initiative for Conservation Lands.

Jim Summarized item 4.1 as presented in the staff report. Kathleen Brundige of CVCC was also in attendance and available for questions.

Rita Lamb and Gary Gardner asked about the mechanics of hiring the rangers, and Kathleen and Jim described the partnership among CVCC, CVDMRCA and DRD, which has legal authority to retain peace officers such as rangers. Gary asked if the budget of \$700k was annual, and Jim responded that is a three-year budget. Christopher Tracy noted that training rangers in both conservation and law enforcement should make for a very comprehensive program. Evan Trubee asked what part of the budget the CVMC grant would fund, and Jim responded that the grant supports the organizing staff person for three years plus legal costs. The pilot part of the program including training program would be funded by CVCC. Evan also asked

how the program addressed climate change, and Kathleen responded that better management of the human impacts on the ecosystem will allow wildlife to adjust better to climate change challenges. There were no further comments or questions from the board.

A motion was made and seconded (Trubee/Tracy) approving a CRCA Local Assistance Grant to the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission in an amount not to exceed \$372,712.00 to support its Cooperative Ranger Initiative for Conservation Lands Program. The motion passed unanimously.

4.2 Amendment of Climate Resilience and Community Access Grants to Provide Additional Funding to Four Grantees.

Diana Rosas summarized item 4.2 as presented in the staff report.

Rita Lamb asked for more detail on the COFEM Program, which Max Ochoa provided based on his experience as a participant. No other comments or questions were received.

A motion was made and seconded (Downs/Holmes) approving the following items:

1. Resolution 2024-02: Southern California Mountains Foundation (SCMF), UCC Climate Corps program. Initial Grant March 2022: \$298,000.00; Recommended additional grant: \$109,277.00.
2. Resolution 2024-03: Council of Mexican Federations in North America (COFEM), *Defensores de Tierras Pública* Program. Initial Grant March 2022: \$140,000.00; Recommended additional grant: \$140,000.00.
3. Resolution 2024-04: The Friends of the Desert Mountains (FODM), Eastern Coachella Valley Programs Capacity Building Project. Initial Grant March 2022: \$287,000.00. Recommended additional grant: \$118,700.00.
4. Resolution 2024-05: Coachella Valley Desert & Mountains Conservation & Recreation Authority (CVDMRCA), Land Management Capacity Building project. Initial Grant: July 2022: \$125,000; Recommended additional amount: \$90,000.

As to Resolution 2024-04, Diana noted that we have two board members, Joan Taylor and Deborah McGarrey, who also serve on the Friends board, but the attorney general has advised that as unpaid board members of a nonprofit organization, no conflict

exists so no recusal is required. The motion passed unanimously except as to item Resolution 2024-04, on which Councilmember Deborah McGarrey abstained.

4.3 Presentation by Joshua Tree Park Superintendent Jane Rodgers and staff.

Jim Karpiak introduced Jane Rodgers Joshua Tree Park Superintendent. Also in attendance were Kendall Neisess and Amber Laird.

Jane and Staff gave a brief overview of Joshua Tree Park's Operations and Priorities.

There were no comments or questions from the board.

5.0 Reports

5.1 Written reports from staff.

There were no questions or discussion from the Board.

5.2 Executive Director Report.

Jim Karpiak reported on the following:

- Trail Project Status- The Mitigated Negative Declaration should be ready for board consideration in May for the four trails in West Deception Canyon, Biskra Palms, Chuckwalla, overlook connector trail in Rancho Mirage and the Cathedral City cove extension. There is an EA for two more trails in Blind Canyon and Fargo Canyon that includes federal land which is pending BLM action.
- Legislative Update- there is no legislative resolution yet as to whether a bond funding CVMC programs will be added to the ballot in fall 2024. Even without one, the Conservancy should have sufficient funds for its traditional programs over the next two to three years.
- Community Events- Staff have been more involved in participating in events such as environmental fairs and public education days and we are open to suggestions for events to attend within the valley.

There were no board comments or questions.

5.3 Board Member comments and reports.

There were no further questions or comments from the board.

6.0 Closed Session

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. The matter scheduled for closed session is:

- Recruitment of Executive Director

Chair Rita Lamb asked the public to leave the meeting at 4:00 pm to convene the closed session. At 4:20 p.m., the Chair reconvened the open session and announced that the board discussed the ongoing search process but took no action.

7.0 Adjourn to the May 13, 2024, meeting at 3:00 pm.

Chair Rita Lamb adjourned the meeting without objection at 4:00 p.m.