

**June 5, 2024**

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, BORREGO SPRINGS COMMUNITY SPONSOR GROUP**

**\*\*\* APPROVED MINUTES\*\*\***

**Wednesday, June 5, 2024, 4:30 p.m.**

**In-person at the Borrego Library, 2850 Country Club Rd, Borrego Springs & also via Zoom**

**THE PUBLIC IS ALWAYS WELCOME TO OUR MEETINGS**

**WE REPRESENT YOU WHEN ADVISING THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO ON LAND USE ISSUES**

**A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL - All Present (McRae attending via Zoom)**

**John Peterson, President**

**Judy Haldeman, Vice President**

**Bill Berkley**

**Jim Dax**

**Bruce Durbin**

**Bill Haneline**

**Rebecca Falk**

**Nancy McRae, Secretary - Attending via Zoom**

**Seat #7 - VACANT**

**B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE MEETING of May 1, 2024**

**MOTION: Rebecca Falk**

**SECOND: Judy Haldeman**

**Minor changes suggested and made.**

**VOTE: Passed unanimously**

**C. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION (may be limited to 3 min):** Opportunity for members of the public to speak to the Group on any subject matter within the Group's jurisdiction that is not on the posted agenda.

No member of the public wished to speak.

**D. ACTION ITEMS: (Note that Non-action item number E-1 will be heard first.)**

1. Membership within the Association of Planning Groups San Diego County. John Peterson presenting.

Peterson: Unincorporated areas (approx. 500,000 population) wanted representation on SANDAG Board. There is now have a non-voting person on the SANDAG Board who is the liaison between Planning Groups (elected) and SANDAG. Sponsor Groups (not elected) are being encouraged to become members of the Associated Planning Groups (APG). SANDAG distributes money mostly to incorporated cities, but the liaison gives us a way to highlight our needs. In the past BSCSG voted not to join. John went to Saturday APG meeting when 3 additional Sponsor Groups were appointed to join. John would like a vote on whether or not to join, and if joining, APG requires that we identify our representative.

Falk: APG meet formally 2x /yr. So that is what our representative is signing up for.

**MOTION: by Falk — Request for BSCSG to join as Associate Member to APG.**

**SECOND: Dax**

Discussion: Falk is willing to be a backup rep. This leads into next action item. APG submitted changes to the county on Board Policy I-1.

Peterson: Has nothing to do with Policy Changes.

Falk: Has AAPG withdrawn their policy letter to the county?

Peterson: Robin (APG liaison) says its two different issues.

Durbin. - SANDAG is really about transportation. Development is always going to come through the county. Unincorporated areas are very diverse. For example if there is a concern about off-highway vehicles, Campo interests will be different from ours. The relationship between and within APG and the associated members (Sponsor Groups) might get a little sticky down the road. He doesn't see SANDAG proposing any major highway issues. Our agendas aren't really aligned at all.

Member of Public (MP) Rodney Bruce: Does the rep have to be someone on the board?

Peterson: Yes. Peterson encourages members to volunteer to spread the responsibilities. Zoom option to attend meetings is available. Meetings are in Lakeside.

Jim Dax volunteered to serve as Primary.

Falk volunteered to serve as Secondary.

**VOTE: Motion passed with 5 Yes votes, 2 Abstaining and 1 unable to vote (on Zoom)**

John Peterson, President - Yes

Judy Haldeman, Vice President - Yes

Bill Berkley - Yes

Jim Dax - Yes

Bruce Durbin - Abstain

Bill Haneline - Abstain

Rebecca Falk - Yes

Nancy McRae, Secretary - Unable to vote (not physically present at meeting)

Seat #7 - VACANT

**2. Review and comment letter regarding revisions to Board Policy I-1. This policy is up for review at the County and this is our opportunity to comment on potential changes to the Policy. The policy is attached to the agenda. Sponsor Group members please review Board Policy I-1 prior to our June 5 meeting.**

Peterson: It is the Bible for sponsor group. Reviewed in December 2023 for continuance. Peterson would like to propose that we prepare a comment letter.

Peterson - Page 7 Disqualification. Recusing ourselves when we have business interests. Would like clarification on that. Also on page 21, real property interests. Had to go to County counsel for additional review. Page 22 - Recused member may appear as a member of the public.

Falk: Section specifically mentions family members. One question she would have - if your family member owns property but your name is not on the title, does it apply to you? Wants clarification.

Falk: Wants clarification on how we get new members. Question has come up in the past. Two areas where its addressed - on page 2 (initial formation of sponsor group); page 15 (sponsor groups that are already formed), addition of a new member is up to the group itself (even though it has to be approved by BOS). Recently, Supervisor insisted on a member and Falk would like clarification on that.

McRae - Would like clarification on the need to recuse due to living within 500 feet on proposed development, when in fact, the proposed development will affect everyone in the community equally.

Peterson - Page 15, article 1, item 4 - Everything is planning and sponsor groups, but they left us out of this section.

Falk: Page 16 - we don't have a local weekly paper.

Peterson - Has about 10-12 comments he would like to make, but because members did not review the Policy, it is difficult to discuss his recommendations..

Falk: Recommended that In future, come back with a document with the changes you're suggesting and send that out in advance.

#### **E. NON-ACTION ITEMS:**

1. Update regarding potential upgrades and expansion to power conveyance system through Borrego Valley. Presentation Bri Fordem and David Garmon. (NOTE: This discussion was rapid and technical; the notes below may not represent the entire discussion.)

Garmon - wants to update group on status of power line coming through the state park. Today is a very different environment from when the Powerlink was defeated, so today the threat is much more significant. Went through the key points of his "The Behemoth at Our Doorstep" which was attached to the Agenda. Garmon asked BSCSG to inform Desmond of our concerns and ask for assistance in getting our concerns to the right people at the state level, if possible.

Falk: Is there an organization prepared to sue about the avoidance of CEQA?

Garmon & Fordham: The group is just now beginning to talk with larger groups like Sierra Club, NRDC. Can't confirm at this point. In touch with Bill Powers, but Protect our Communities Foundation is taking a step back. Powers is supportive in offering education materials. We are not asking for an alternative that would change or eliminate the bill completely, instead our effort is to educate State representatives on all alternatives to this bill and make sure they understand its impact on the Park. Making recommendations that would make it less likely that the transmission line will be built. An alternative is to bulk up current power lines - look at them first before doing a brand new line. Garmon wants to be sure we understand the bill will wipe out CEQA for the proposed power line and the company to build it has already been hired. We will not be able to use the same arguments that we used to stop the Powerlink.

Durbin: Would be willing to assist on any committee. Tribes are working with SDGE to underground transmission lines. jReminded group the Grapevine Canyon (proposed route of power line) is a historic canyon for all San Diego tribes.

Garmon & Fordham: None of that will matter because CEQA review and public review will not be required. It is political suicide to go against the bill, but education about its true effects is critical. It is transparent to see where SDGE has made donation to individual politicians. Garmon and Fordham asked to speak with Durbin in greater detail after meeting.

Falk: Does ABF (Anza Borrego Foundation) website have information to get the word out?

Fordham: ABF has to be careful about what they say on their website, but they are working with their auditors to disseminate whatever information they safely can.

Member of Public (MP): There things always come in the heat of summer when not many are around. Is there a deadline?

Garmon: Senate will begin hearing this in June. July 3 is the final date for voting. It will be completely finalized by mid-August.

MP: Do Federal environmental laws override CEQA?

Garmon: NEPA (Federal) comes into play if federal lands are involved or there is a federal impact.

MP: What happens if we become a National Park?

Garmon: Then NEPA would be involved.

MP: Can that happen?

Fordham: The bill is moving faster than the process that would take. Federal protection is something to consider if the bill passes.

Peterson: What exactly does “expansion of right of way” mean? This should have a Project Definition and we don’t have that, so how can we really understand what is being proposed?

Garmon & Fordham: If this bill goes through there will be no CEQA, there will be no public review. Currently right of way is expanded to 200 ft. The builder has said they will use the right of way and route of the existing power line, which is a very small and unobtrusive power line linking Borrego Springs to the coast, but the builder will be building 500 foot tall, extremely large, monster power lines, so the right of way will have to be much larger. There are many other viable alternatives but they are not being looked at or considered.

**2. Discussion regarding “Let’s Go Borrego” which is through the Borrego Resource Center. Presentation by Martha Diechler, President CRC.**

Let’s Go Borrego is about having a driver to help take elderly or other “unable to drive” people to doctor appointments, grocery stores and other essential tasks. Program has become wildly successful. Started by Borrego Valley Endowment Fund (BVEF), handed over to Community Resource Center (CRC). The program is 100% donation dependent and recently received a grant for \$184,000. Here’s how it works: Call Sylvia (only paid employee), register where you might go, you find a driver, the driver signs a form, after you do the trips, turn in what doctor, stores, you’ve been to, how many miles, can’t go over 350 miles/month, check is mailed to you, you give it to the driver. Based on honesty. CRC needs donations. Have lowered rate to 33 cents a mile. Currently helping 54 people a month. You can drive yourself and claim yourself as the driver. Obstacles to expansion: Finding drivers.

**3. Report on the Grant Application for additional Solar expansion. Bill Berkley presenting.**

Microgrid program. Rodney Bruce has been a prime mover. Have expanded group to include T2 (Terry Considine company that owns Rams Hill). From time to time, funds will need to be put up, will eventually be reimbursed. Solar array use as shade structure over the mall. Wermers (mall owner) likes that idea. \$14M grant from the SDGE - 5 acres of solar panels. Primary benefit: battery backup system. Additional - \$280 - \$400K revenue generated for the CRC that would help low income people with their power bills. The cost of the system may be as high as \$10M with solar and batteries. Government gives a 30% rebate, so may rebate as much as \$3M. The power goes to the grid and can meet our needs in a 24 hour period.

Peterson: We do not have means to transmit the production we currently have. A whole bunch more solar has already gone in. Don’t want to get it out of the valley, because that means power lines. We need batteries, storage.

Falk: Borrego Springs has an overproduction issue. Can’t just have big fluctuations. Would this create a problem for us or not? She would be interested in Berkley’s conversations with SDGE. Is your battery storage able to store everything you produce?

Berkley: Panels are compatible with the amount of battery storage.

Peterson: They are pulling the plug on a lot of the solar because there’s nowhere to put the power. We’re using up all transmission capabilities leaving the valley.

Berkley: That is during prime areas of production. Sweet spot.

Falk: Will this involve larger transmission lines?

Bruce: No, not our intent. Add more reliability and resiliency.

Falk: At what point is SDGE going to start pitching for larger lines going out of the valley?

Dax: What's the time frame?

Bruce: 5 - 10 years

## F. GROUP BUSINESS:

### 1. Chair Report, status update on filling vacant seat #7

Peterson: Julie Gerson left in December. Nancy Burke was voted to replace her, but today she notified John Peterson that she is moving to Colorado. So seat #7 is still open.

Falk: We can draw from the list. But there has been no time to put it on the agenda and we're not meeting for a while. Should we advertise again? Former alternate candidate is still interested.

Peterson: Can't vote because not on agenda. He would prefer to fall back on prior candidate, but not sure if that's proper. This won't be happening until October. Best to put it off until the fall and deal with it then.

Durbin: Can we nominate (put the name out there), but not take action?

Haldeman: We already took action on Ann (alternate candidate). She went through formal process. She was on agenda. We nominated her. Should be straightforward to make second choice the nominee.

Falk: We need a majority vote, we didn't have that. We need to open it up again. Read from policy about appointees to vacancies. Shall be confirmed by majority vote.

Peterson: Will talk to county counsel and let us know.

### 2. Summer schedule, next meeting set for September 18, 2024 **if needed**; otherwise the next regular meeting will be on October 2, 2024. **(Sponsor Group members please bring your calenders to discuss what our summer schedule is if a special session is needed.)**

### 3. Subcommittee Reports: None

### 4. Meeting Updates: None

### 5. Correspondence received: 1) email from Dalin Young SDG&E on status of microgrid updates and battery storage.

Dallin was on Zoom and made presentation: There have been and will continue to be planned outages to do updates on lines. Another outage as we transition from Imperial Irrigation district. Current microgrid is out of commission. Two main generators that powered microgram went down last year. Currently In the middle of acquiring two new generators. Building out battery storage and generators, operational by Q1 2025. We know outages are tough on the community. Have completed all the work on the tie line 687.

Dax - When has microgrid ever worked?

Dalin: Last year 30 - 45 outages all in the first 5 months of the year. The microgrid was in process of breaking down. But before that, 20 or so activations over the last ten years that it did work. When one of the generators did go down, it made it harder.

Berkley - Working with group that is trying to do \$14M grant from SDGE to do solar and battery. What areas does the grid serve and for what length of time?

Dalin: Our microgrid with upgrades will pick up entire BS load. Excited that you are pursuing additional because that's additional supply.

Rodney Bruce: Would be helpful when the notices are sent out to the public to note whether it is a continuous outage or intermittent outage.

Dalin: Its technically on SDGE grid, so we can't be specific like that. We are transferring the load to Imperial Irrigation District. The community is still being served. Trying to get notifications out 3 weeks in

advance. They will work with communications department to see if they can address Bruce's question. He will share his info in the chat. Will also send info that was presented to Revitalization committee.

#### **G. ADJOURNMENT**

The next regular meeting is scheduled for October 2, 2024 at 4:30 at the Borrego Springs Library Community Room, 2850 Country Club Rd, Borrego Springs, California and via Zoom.

If any comments on Board policy - send to John.

Haldeman: Had asked for landscaping at CdelZ solar installation. They were working with a landscaper. John Wells left. Judy has not been able to get in touch with Vivian, his replacement.

**Motion to Adjourn: Durbin**

**Second: Dax**

**Vote: Unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 6:50.**