

County of San Diego
Jacumba Hot Springs Community Sponsor Group
Minutes for the JCSG Meeting at 6 pm on November 14, 2022
Highland Senior Center, 44681 Old Hwy 80, Jacumba Hot Springs, CA 91934

A. The Nov. 14, 2022 JCSG meeting was called to order at 6:02pm. Present: Diefenbach (Chair) Seat #3; Osborne Seat #4; and Westley (secretary) Seat #5. Seat #1 is Vacant and Curran (Vice-Chair) Seat #2 was excused. Public: 13.

B. Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Approval of the draft minutes for the JCSG meeting held on October 10, 2022.

M/S to approve the draft minutes of Oct. 10, 2022: Westley/Osborne. Passed: 3-0-0-1 (Curran).

D. Public Communication: The public may comment on any subject within the JCSG’s jurisdiction that is not on the posted agenda. (Speakers are limited to 2 minutes and no action can be taken on non-agenda items.)

Jeff: The landlord of the property proposed to house SVP William Stafford recently stated that a property lease with Liberty Healthcare has not yet been signed. The landlord said he was not aware of the neighbors’ opposition to that placement.

E. Action items: (Agenda items may be taken out of order upon request.)

1. Decorative Community Identification Signage Program presentation by Benjamin Baker, DPW Assist. Engineer Traffic Engineering Transportation Division.

There are a few communities within the County, like Lakeside, that have already paid for and installed a decorative community sign. In August 2022, the BOS tasked County DPW to determine the interest level of other communities with regards to participation in a funded or partially funded program. In an October 18, 2022 email, DPW provided some signage program information to community planning and sponsor groups and requested that groups provide the following:

-- Verification of the County’s listing of communities. (Jacumba Hot Springs was correctly listed under the JCSG but Bankhead Springs was incorrectly listed as being part of the Boulevard Planning Group—it is within the Jacumba sponsor group area.)

-- Whether our respective communities would be good candidates for either a ground mounted or street-spanning sign.

-- Our input on the sign funding levels that the BOS should consider (100% County funded; 50/50% County match; County offset 10%; or no County funding)

-- Our input on the County’s implementation priorities with regards to funding priority for underserved communities, and implementation/funding for communities without a planning or sponsor group.

Mr. Baker stated that, as a minimum, the County would waive the estimated \$10K-20K in permitting fees and that the County would be looking at a variety of grant programs to cover some or all of the decorative sign construction/maintenance costs (estimated from \$100K to \$500K per sign). He believes that there is some funding available through “Clean California.” He also stated that decorative street signs would be located within the County Right-Of-Way (ROW) at a distance of eight feet from the edge of the pavement. An overhead or street spanning sign would require a 17-foot overhead clearance. It is the community and not the County who will choose the sign design and find a contractor to make and install the sign. The County DPW will review any plans for decorative signs within the ROW to ensure the safety of sign installation. The DPW will be returning to the BOS with their findings in February 2023.

Jeff: Of course, Jacumba would like the County to pay for the entire cost of the sign, not just the waiving of permitting fees. Perhaps the County should consider funding a designated amount and a community would match that amount. What are the lowest priority, medium priority, and high priority sign funding categories referenced in the DPW email?

Mr. Baker was unable to define the priority criteria and will check into the details.

Bonnie: Will County DPW maintain/insure decorative community signs after their installation? Jacumba would request that DPW does so.

Chair: Will Jacumba will be prioritized as an “underserved community” which could improve sign funding opportunities for us? (Jacumba has previously been referred to by the BOS as an underserved community.) Mr. Baker was unsure about whether Jacumba will be considered as “underserved.”

Katrina: Will DPW provide communities with assistance by submitting grant requests for decorative signs? Mr. Baker believes that DPW will work to get grant money.

Chair: Based on tonight’s community feedback, Jacumba would definitely like to participate in the County’s decorative sign program. Is there a motion from our group to do so?

M/S to request that Jacumba be recognized by the BOS as an underserved community for the purposes of the decorative sign program, and that Jacumba be considered for maximum program funding of a street-spanning sign: Osborne/Westley. Passed 3-0-0-1 (Curran).

The Chair thanked Mr. Baker for providing an in-person presentation. She will send a follow-up email to DPW confirming Jacumba’s desire to participate in the community decorative sign program.

2. Discuss/approve Jacumba’s draft FY2022-2023 Parks Land Dedication Ordinance (PLDO) priority list. A written response is due to the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), Chelsea Jander, by November 30, 2022.

The Chair provided a brief overview of the PLDO program and explained that Jacumba is part of the Mountain Empire PLDO group. She explained that in addition to PLDO funds, Capital Improvement Needs Assessment (CINA) funds may provide a source for getting park improvements, etc. She also reminded the group that the County is aware JCSD will be getting \$250K in benefit money for park improvements and the community will also be getting \$3.55 Million in undesignated funds as part of the JVR Solar Project benefits package. The future availability of that benefits money may likely be factored into DPR’s decision about park funding for Jacumba.

The Chair attended the October 25, 2022 JCSD board of directors’ meeting where they confirmed the following priorities for the Jacumba Community Park:

1. The refurbishment/replacement of the children’s playground equipment plus the installation of new benches, picnic tables and shade structures.
2. The addition of a concrete skirt around existing basketball court plus the installation of a new set of covered spectator bleachers and shade covers for the existing bleachers.
3. The purchase and installation of circuit training/fitness equipment.

These are the same recreational priorities the JCSG previously submitted to DPR in January 2022. However, this time, our submission will be accompanied by a JCSD letter that states JCSD personnel and community volunteers will maintain any new equipment that is funded and installed by DPR.

Emilio Gonzalez, the JCSD manager, who was present at this meeting, explained that the park has historically been maintained primarily through monetary donations and the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

Jeff: Asked Emilio about whether the JCSD spends water sales money on maintaining the park. Emilio stated JCSD has two separate accounts: one for water sales and one for the park maintenance. He also explained that JCSD personnel maintain the existing park facilities on a not-to-interfere basis with their primary duties to maintain the water system. JCSD does not currently have money to buy new park equipment--they will be using the \$250K in JVR benefit money to do so.

Maureen: JCSD expenditures are specified by the District’s By-Laws and by administrative code.

Emilio: If the District made enough in water sales, it may be able to hire a part-time person to specifically maintain the park.

Bonnie: Asked about the status of a CDBG request for park equipment that was previously submitted by Gina to Supervisor Anderson. The Chair had no information about that earlier request.

M/S to approve the proposed recreational priority list and submit it to DPR: Westley/Osborne. Passed 3-0-0-1 (Curran).

3. Discuss the JVR Solar Project’s minor deviation and proposed County and BayWa (project developer) MOU regarding previously negotiated benefit agreements with JCSD, IVDM, and San Ysidro Health. (Ashley.smith2@sdcounty.ca.gov email of November 8, 2022 refers.)

The Director of PDS is currently reviewing a minor deviation to the project which includes:

1. Increases the project setback from 300 to 400 feet to 943 feet.
2. Relocates battery storage containers and inverter/transformer platforms w/in the MUP boundary area.
3. Increases the number of battery storage containers, but reduces the dimensions of the battery storage units.
4. Installs sound barriers at specified battery storage units.
5. Adds a minor water line extension and water tank for irrigation.

I have requested that our community receive a copy of the revised JVR Solar Project map that shows the minor deviation.

In order to go forward with their grading plans, the project applicant has proposed a MOU between the County and the applicant that would require the developer to:

1. Provide security in the form of a bond or letter of credit for the \$4 million in community benefits.
2. Regularly communicate with the County and provide quarterly reports to the County for the first 5 years and annually thereafter.
3. Execute any community benefits agreements (Jacumba Community Service District, IVDM, San Ysidro Health for a total of \$450K) or to create funding mechanisms for allocating the remaining funds and provide copies of any executed community benefits agreements to the County within 5 days.

As the community benefits are paid out, the amount of the security with the County will be reduced accordingly and the MOU and security will remain in place until the entirety of the \$4 million has been allotted.

Chair: Based on Ashley’s email, it sounds as if the County will not require that BayWa deposit the benefits money in a specified bank account where the money can accrue interest. We still need to have a County-approved plan for how the undesignated money will be accessed by the community.

Ben: Does the new larger setback match what the community had asked for?

Jeff: We had asked for a 1,300-foot setback with no solar panels placed south of Old Hwy 80. The setback in the minor deviation applies to the area north of Old Hwy 80.

Jeff: We need to request that the JVR developer put the money in an interest-bearing account that includes clear instructions on how money will move out of that account, who makes the decisions on what the money will be spent on, and the accountability/oversight of the proper expenditure of that money.

Maureen: The community needs the County to specifically define what is the role of the developer in terms of how the community benefit money is dispersed--the MOU will likely do this.

Chair: The roles of the community (JCSG), the County, and the JVR project developer need to be clearly defined with regards to benefit money management. The JCSG should play an integral role in any proposed distribution of benefits because we can provide a forum for community transparency. At this point, I feel that PDS has not provided us with enough information regarding the implementation of a community benefits management plan.

M/S to request that the County require the JVR Solar developer to place the \$3.55 undesignated community benefit funds into an interest-bearing account until the mechanics of allocating and managing community benefits and the roles of the JCSG, County and project developer have been clearly defined by PDS staff: Osborne/Westley. Passed: 3-0-0-1 (Curran).

F. Group business/project updates, to include correspondence-discussion only:

- 1. A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Application for sidewalks along both sides of Old Hwy**

80 at the eastern end of town and a lighted crosswalk at Carriso St. and Old Hwy 80 was submitted by Cherry Diefenbach as an individual resident before the November 4, 2022 CDBG application deadline. The JCSG previously identified the lack of sidewalks and a lighted crosswalk on Old Hwy 80 as safety issues for our residents, especially those who use walkers or wheelchairs. The federal government provides CDBG funding to low-income communities. Next year Jacumba should try to take full advantage of the program.

2. The JCSG's request for the addition of drought-tolerant landscaping near the JCSD water treatment facility fence on Old Highway 80 was tabled by the JCSD Board of Directors at their October 25, 2022 meeting. Perhaps they will reconsider landscaping in the future.

3. The County held an online Environmental Justice (EJ) Element Workshop on Nov. 9, 2022. The Chair provided comments that included her concerns about adding more ignition sources next to our town such as transmission lines, the JVR Solar project with 25 lithium ion batteries, increased dust after JVR project grading clears all vegetation, noise from transformers, and higher ambient temperatures in town due to the heat island effect created by solar arrays. She stated that Jacumba should be considered as an environmental justice community due to the unavailability of residential garbage pickup.

Katrina: Recently there was a warehouse fire in San Diego that housed lithium ion batteries. During that fire, nearby residents were advised to shelter in place. She participated in the online EJ workshop sponsored by the Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice. Their mission is to reduce community exposure to health hazards and assess health concerns within the unincorporated areas of the County. Katrina provided a recommendation that the EJ criteria/indicators be expanded to include communities like Jacumba where residents will experience negative health impacts from industrial-scale renewable energy projects. Environmental Justice is a new concern with BOS and the County is just beginning their public outreach.

Chair: If you are interested in participating in an upcoming EJ workshop, please visit the County's website and sign up for alerts on this topic or the many other issues that are being addressed by County leadership.

4. Community interface reports.

a. There was no Highland Senior Center report.

b. There were no Real East County Fire Safe Council and JBRA (Revitalization) reports. Bonnie noted that a Christmas toy giveaway will be held at the Backcountry Resource Center in Boulevard on Dec. 17, 2022. Contact Lorrie Ostrander for more info.

G. Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15pm.

The next JCSG meeting is tentatively scheduled for Monday, December 12, 2022 at 6 pm if there is sponsor group business that needs attention before the holidays.

Approved: January 9, 2023