

County of San Diego
Jacumba Hot Springs Community Sponsor Group
Minutes for the JCSG Meeting at 6 pm on April 10, 2023
Highland Senior Center, 44681 Old Hwy 80, Jacumba Hot Springs, CA 91934

A. The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm. Roll call/present: Seat 1. Hafdell; Seat 2. Greg Curran (Vice-Chair); Seat 3. Cherry Diefenbach (Chair); Seat 4. Jeffery Osborne; Seat 5. Katrina Westley (Secretary). Public 7.

B. Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Approval of the draft minutes for the JCSG meeting held on March 13, 2023.

M/S: to approve the draft minutes of the JCSG meeting of March 13, 2023: Curran/Hafdell. Passed: 4-0-1(Westley).

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.)

Chair: The Board of Supervisors is currently trying to determine how they will replace Supervisor Fletcher who has stated his intent to resign on May 15, 2023. With an even number of supervisors who are generally split politically on issues, the County may see a slow down on the approval of some of the more controversial programs.

CA collects \$1.08 on every gallon of gas sold in the State. (Other states collect around 29 cents.) The State gasoline tax is due to increase by 8 percent on July 1, 2023. Community members can send an email/letter directly to the Governor requesting that he suspend any increase in gasoline taxes for least another 12 months. We can also consider putting this issue on a future meeting agenda.

Ben: The residents of Jacumba need community dumpsters to dispose of their trash. EDCO could provide those. We should be developing a plan to make those available.

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

1. The Highland Senior Center Group has requested a letter of support for senior center improvements that could be funded through the Neighborhood Reinvestment Program if approved by Supervisor Anderson.

Maureen: The Highland Senior Center Group is preparing to request neighborhood enhancement funds in the amount of \$15K from Supervisor Anderson. The funds would be used to purchase a new refrigerator, upgraded tables, and chairs, food service utensils, and food stores so that the center can restart the community breakfast program. She has spoken to one of the supervisor's staff who told her that letters of support from the JCSG and other local entities would help in that effort.

Chair: It is also my understanding that the supervisor tends to look more favorably on funding the projects of organizations where he can get some good notice by the press, so maybe invite East County Magazine online out to the center when you resume your breakfasts. Sponsor group members have a copy of a draft letter of support to review.

M/S: to approve the draft JCSG letter of support: Westley/Hafdell. Passed: 5-0-0.

2. Should the Jacumba Community Service District (JCSD) have a policy that regulates commercial water-tanker access through the community?

Chair: At our last meeting, it was suggested that the JCSD should have a policy that regulates/restricts the movement of commercial water tankers through Jacumba to minimize their impact on residents. That policy could also prioritize which wells would be used for water sales and from which direction the water tankers approach the well.

Greg: I think the water board is already planning to discuss this issue at an upcoming JCSD meeting.

Katrina: Water tanker access can be regulated as part of any commercial water sales contract. Yes, the JCSD will likely be looking at developing a policy next month.

Jeff: Have the hours of operation for filling water tankers been previously defined?

Katrina: No, I don't believe so but this is something the water board can tackle. I personally recall that a water tanker started filling up at 4:45 am and we don't want that to happen in the future.

Bobby: I agree that the water board needs to develop a water tanker operations policy.

M/S: to request JCSD develop a policy that restricts the hours of commercial water tanker operations and that prioritizes the wells used for commercial water sales. Diefenbach/Curran. Passed: 4-0-1(Westley recused due to her position on the water board).

Chair: I will provide the JCSD with a copy of our draft minutes.

3. The public comment period on the proposed 100 MW Starlight Solar Plus Batteries facility planned for 565 acres on eight areas near Empire Ranch in Jewel Valley; Major Use Permit (MUP) Notice of Project: PDS2022-MPA-22-006. 200 MW Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) reported with SDG&E will end on April 24, 2023. A public scoping meeting will be held at the Back Country Resource Center in Boulevard on April 12, at 6 pm.

Chair: The construction on the Starlight Solar project is expected to begin in 2024. JCSD or Rough Acres ranch may be the providers for 28-acre-feet of construction water that is expected to be used over a 12 to 13-month period. This project will use a different type of battery than the JVR solar farm, one that is less flammable. Also, its solar arrays will have a special coating that may reduce the frequency of washing the panels with water. The Boulevard Planning Group has been working with the project developer and the community anticipates it will receive some financial community benefits. Since the community of Boulevard continues to be the County's favorite "dumping ground" for renewable energy projects, there are cumulative significant impacts to the residents and wildlife in the area that community benefits cannot mitigate. If our water district is going to provide the construction water for this project, they should charge a commercial water sales rate that is beneficial to the community. After all, water is a precious resource for our town.

Katrina: The JCSD will be addressing this issue as well.

Maureen: How do the residents of Boulevard feel about this project? Shouldn't Jacumba be a good neighbor and support them.

Chair: I have heard comments by Boulevard residents near the proposed location who are worried about a potential drawdown of their private wells.

Greg: I don't think that rural residents should have to compromise their quality of life to allow these massive renewable energy projects to be built.

Chair: Anyone who opposes or supports this project can submit public comments either in writing or at the upcoming meeting in Boulevard. I would be willing to submit some general comments about the potential negative impacts that project will have on the quality of life for nearby Boulevard residents and on the natural environment that sequesters carbon and that provides important habitat for wildlife. I could also request the County require the developer provide funding for additional firefighters, and that the project developer be required to use the best available equipment, including solar batteries that do not increase fire risks to the community.

M/S: to approve that the Chair submit comments about the potential negative impacts that another industrial-sized facility will have on the residents/wildlife near the project location: Curran/Westley. Passed: 5-0-0.

4. Our June 2022 requests for naming the Patricia Fouble Memorial Bridge and the Bert Vaughn Memorial Bridge seem to have stalled. Discuss and vote to on whether to continue pursue those honorary bridge naming requests with Supervisor Anderson.

Chair: In March, I finally met with Mike Kulis, policy director for Supervisor Anderson, who apologized for the Supervisor's slow response to our bridge naming requests. At that meeting, Mr. Kulis stated that is the practice of the supervisor to name bridges after deceased law enforcement or military members. (Board policy F-53 does not say anything about military/or law enforcement.) Mr. Kulis then offered Mr. Anderson's financial support for a sign recognizing Fouble and Vaughn's contributions elsewhere in town, just not a honorary bridge.

The community of Pine Valley also submitted a bridge naming request as did Campo. Their requests have also stalled. The Mountain Empire Historical Society recently submitted a request for a group meeting with the supervisor. To date there has been no response. Since one fifth of all Jacumba residents signed the bridge naming petitions, we should submit another formal request that the Supervisor put the bridge naming on the BOS agenda.

Greg: What about if we emphasize that Pat Fouble had been our volunteer fire chief?

Chair: Our original bridge naming packages did list Pat's years of service as our fire chief. I think the supervisor might

have been supportive if Pat had died while fighting a fire.

Maureen: Did you mention in your original package submission that the signed petitions represented the will of one fifth of the town's population?

Chair: I did not, but if we vote to ask for Supervisor Anderson's support again, I will certainly do so.

M/S: to submit another request to Supervisor Anderson for his support of naming the bridges in honor of Patricia Fouble and Bert Vaughn: Diefenbach/Curran. Passed: 5-0-0.

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

1. Potential unintended impacts of the draft 2022 Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) map.

The Chair attended the Boulevard Planning group meeting on April 6, 2023 where members of the public stated that some insurance companies were no longer insuring homes in the very high or high FHSZ categories. It is expected that companies that continue to provide fire insurance will likely charge higher insurance rates. Apparently, the insurance rate for the Back Country Resource Center was recently tripled.

2. Update on the FY 2023-2024 CDBG application for sidewalks along Old Hwy 80 and a lighted crosswalk at Carriso Street, in Jacumba.

This year, the BOS did not consider the funding of any CDBG applications except for those related to more affordable housing. The HHSa actually liked our sidewalk/crosswalk CDBG application and they suggested that we resubmit it in the fall.

3. Update on getting a new Unincorporated Communities Advisory Board Member and Alternate seated on SANDAG's Board of Directors. The revision to BOS Policy I-1 is being discussed but it may not be the right avenue to institute representation. The various backcountry community planning and sponsor group representative are continuing to meet to move forward on this effort.

4. Update on JVR Energy Park solar project to include legal appeal and the new San Diego Community Power Group (SDCP) power purchase agreement (PPA) with BayWa r.e.

Jeff: We recently filed a final reply brief (a 60-page document) to our legal appeal on the JVR Solar project. Our legal challenge to the project will eventually be heard by the Fourth District Appellate Court of Appeals and that hearing may still be a year out. We will make one final attempt to negotiate with BayWa r.e. If we do prevail in our legal challenge, it would probably over the developer's requirement for a project switchyard.

Maureen: What does the legal challenge do to the anticipated project construction date?

Jeff: It pushes the construction start date way out...maybe sometime in FY 2024. The solar developers are also having a problem sourcing the purchase of solar panels from China due to tariffs.

Chair: It would be nice if SDCP would at least require the JVR developer to use non-flammable batteries for the project due to the safety concerns of our residents. I would imagine SDCP could specify that in their contract. Non-flammable batteries would probably cost the developer more in construction costs.

Regarding a new San Diego Community Power (SDCP) power purchase agreement (PPA) with BayWa r.e., the JVR Energy Park developer, I personally contacted the SDCP board of directors to encourage them not to enter into a new PPA. However, at their last board of directors meeting held in March, 2023, the SDCP board voted to move ahead with a new PPA, since their goal is to provide 100 percent renewable power as soon as possible. They did so over the objections of about ten Jacumba residents who were present at the meeting. One of the SDCP members, the Chair of the Community Advisory Committee, also stated his opposition to the PPA because of equity impacts to Jacumba, a low-income and underserved community. The developer and the labor unions were also well-represented, so it wasn't a surprise that the PPA approval was ramrodded through.

Chair: Is there any point in the community attempting to change the SDCP's decision given the board's decision to commit to providing 100 percent renewable energy by 2025 vice their previous goal of 2035?

Jeff: That decision does make their ability to move away from the solar energy produced by the JVR Park problematic. Still, we are going to continue to attend their future board meetings and make public comments. An opt out campaign may be needed.

Ben: Why would you want to opt out of SDCP to remain a SDG&E customer? That company is the worst electrical service provider in the entire State.

Katrina: SDG&E may actually be the lesser of two evils.

Bonnie: SDCP says that they will be offering a better buy back rate for the excess solar power produced by homeowners, though this is yet to be seen.

Chair: SDG&E recently announced that they are pursuing a rate reduction for lower/middle income customers with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). That is likely a response to strong public opposition that they have received regarding their proposed rate increase. They may also be trying to recapture some of their customers who were automatically enrolled with the SDCP. I am a little concerned that the SDCP Board of Directors are able to set their electrical generation rates without any oversight by the CPUC.

Ben: Does anyone know what is going on with the two homes on the south side of Old 80 now that one of the owners has recently died? When the teenagers figure out that the place is empty, there may be some problems.

Bonnie: When did Jose Cesena die?

Ben: He died within the last month.

Chair: Maybe the JVR developer will buy up those two properties so they do not have such large project setbacks for their facility.

Chair: I just learned that SDG&E is currently building a 20MW Micro Grid adjacent to the Boulevard Substation. The SDG&E Rep said that it was because Boulevard frequently gets their electric power secured during public safety power shutdowns (PSPS). The Micro grid will initially be connected to a few businesses and the school, though it sounds as if it may later be connected to nearby residence. As you recall, we asked the JVR Energy Park developer for a micro grid but were told that it was not feasible. This is the second micro grid that SDG&E is building. The other one is already operational in Campo, so I guess it can be done.

Ben: Micro grids are complex electrical systems.

Bonnie: Jacumba has been lucky with regards to being impacted by PSPSs. This past year, we only had a couple of them.

Chair: You can go to the SDG&E website and look up the circuit you are on to see the number of PSPSs that have been implemented.

5. Community interface reports.

a. Highland Senior Center.

Greg: I want to settle a public misconception about the Senior Center operations...We have never been closed even though we lost our non-profit status and our ability to receive money. We are currently under bankruptcy protection after getting a 90-day stay from the court. (The stay ends in June 2023.) The JCSD has hired an in-house legal counsel and we are optimistic that the Senior Center board and the JCSD board will soon be able to reach a satisfactory settlement. We are also very close to having our non-profit status reinstated and we anticipate a facility inspection in the near future. Once our kitchen gets a thumbs up and we hopefully get some funding from Supervisor Anderson, we should be able to start having senior breakfasts and some other programs again.

Chair: I think that getting your non-profit designation back will be key to getting donations from individuals, and organizations would likely support senior center operations as a tax deduction.

Greg: Since losing our non-profit status, we have lost many opportunities to receive donations and county funding. We have been having a very hard time even paying our bills.

b. Real East County Fire Safe Council.

–3 grants have been submitted; the chipping grant has been approved, air curtain/burner grant and operating expenses grants are still pending.

–Next chipping day is May 27 at Boulevard.

–Next community clean-up date is August 19 in Boulevard.

The FSC desperately needs volunteers (they are down to two) and board members (they down to 3). Their next meeting is 6:30pm on April 17 at the community room at the Resource Center. Please contact Mark Ostrander for more info.

c. JBRA (Revitalization).

--A food pantry is in operation from 9-12 every Monday at the Resource Center. JBRA is also hoping to offer a hot meal and food supplement for home-bound seniors pending the approval of two grants.

-- The household mattress and box springs recycle trailer is open to the public on Monday mornings and by appointment.

--JBRA also needs volunteers.

--Their next meeting is 7:30 pm on April 17 at the community room at the Resource Center

G. Adjournment: The JCSG meeting was adjourned at 7:09 pm.

The next JCSG meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 8, 2023 at 6 pm. (To put an item on a meeting agenda, it must be submitted to the Chair NLT 5 pm on the Wednesday preceding Monday's JCSG meeting.)

Approved: May 8, 2023