

County of San Diego
Jacumba Hot Springs Community Sponsor Group
Minutes for the JCSG Meeting at 6:00 pm on June 12, 2023
Highland Senior Center, 44681 Old Hwy 80, Jacumba Hot Springs, CA 91934

A. Call to order/Roll call: The meeting called to order at 6:05pm. Those present were: Seat 1. Hafdell; Seat 2. Greg Curran (Vice-Chair); Seat 3. Cherry Diefenbach (Chair). Public 10. Absent were: Jeffery Osborne (Seat 4) and Katrina Westley (Secretary--Seat 5).

B. Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Approval of the draft minutes for the JCSG meeting held on May 8, 2023.

M/S to approve the draft minutes of the JCSG meeting held on May 8, 2023: Curran/Hafdell.

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.)

Maureen: Thanked Jeff Osborne for spearheading a very successful humanitarian effort to collect/distribute food, water, and blankets to the large group of undocumented immigrants who crossed into the U.S. near Jacumba in May 2023.

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

1. Jacumba Groundwater presentation by Jim Bennett, San Diego County Hydrologist. Jim Bennett provided a very informative briefing on the Jacumba Valley Basin Aquifer. The State has identified the 70,000-acre watershed that makes up the Jacumba Valley Basin as a very low to low priority with regards to management plans. This sandy alluvial basin is located on both sides of the international border.

Bennett's presentation included graphs that showed annual rainfall totals 1992 through 2010 and historical water usage at JCSD's community wells and the Jacumba Valley Ranch (JVR) wells. (JCSD wells #7 and #8 are located at the west end of town were drilled in fractured rock and they are outside of the alluvial basin.) Bennett's graphs show that even after the organic farm ceased its extensive ground water pumping operations in 2012, the water levels of the JVR wells have not recovered to their historic normal levels. He explained that although San Diego County had impressive rainfall amounts this past year, the resulting aquifer replenishment is often seen not seen in water levels until the following year.

When asked why Jacumba's rainfall amounts from 2011 to present were not available, Bennett was not sure who had previously been providing his office with that information or why the rainfall reporting stopped. The Chair will send a follow-up email to request the County reestablish a weather station in Jacumba so that rainfall amounts can resume measurement and reporting.

Maureen: The County should develop water usage standards for industrial-scale renewable energy facilities during construction and operational phases. All solar facilities should be required to use dry brush solar panel cleaning systems.

Jim Bennett explained that the JVR Major Use Permit identified projected water use and well monitoring. JCSD wells within the proximity to the JVR wells will be monitored for potential interference. A five-foot draw-down in the baseline levels of Highland and Park wells may result in a construction delay and evaluation.

Chair: Are you aware of any plans by the State to take control of community water districts like Jacumba or to regulate/restrict water usage in privately-owned wells?

Bennett: There are no plans to do so.

The Chair thanked Jim Bennett for providing the community with pertinent ground water information.

2. Climate Action Campaign presentation by Ali Dressel, San Diego Climate Justice Policy Coordinator.

The Climate Action Campaign (CAC) is helping the San Diego Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice to gather feedback on the Regional Decarbonization Framework's (RDF) plans get to Net Carbon Zero. The CAC is collecting community climate priorities in an effort to ensure to the development of equitable and community-driven

climate change policies. The CAC has also been advocating for community solar systems installations on local roof tops, parking lots and commercial buildings over new and expensive transmission lines that deliver energy to urban centers from remote rural locations. The CAC does not believe in a “one-size fits all approach” to reduce carbon emissions, that is why they are reaching out to individual communities.

Chair: The BOS recently directed County staff to conduct a local analysis of existing residential, commercial and infill renewable energy infrastructure and report to the BOS in 180 days on the progress of the study. That is important information that needs to be considered before County moves forward to implement RDF playbook priorities.

Maureen: The RDF promotes the use of electric vehicles, but currently there are no public charging stations between Jacumba and Lakeside. The nearest public charging station is in the Target parking lot in El Centro.

Greg: When I charge my car at my house in Jacumba using 110V charger, it takes 9 hours to charge.

Chair: 220V Tesla chargers work much quicker, but many residents in older homes may not have an electrical system that will accommodate those chargers nor can they afford the cost to upgrade their electrical systems to accommodate a conversion to all electrical appliances as proposed in the RDF. SDG&E public power shutdowns in rural areas also impact the functionality of EV charging.

Tanya: Public transportation is almost non-existent in Jacumba. Residents can take a bus from Jacumba to El Cajon on Mondays and Fridays. The bus departs Jacumba about 10 am and then returns about 7pm on the same day.

Bonnie: Seniors who need to visit a doctor must then figure out what city bus or trolley to take from the El Cajon transit center and that is difficult for them. Also, there are no benches or bus shelters in Jacumba, just a bus sign.

Chair: Our community will soon be swallowed up by a 400-acre solar farm and residents are concerned about potentially negative impacts such as mechanical noise, toxic fumes if a lithium battery catches fire, and the heat island effect created by acres of superheated solar panels. The construction of the solar facility will scrape the ground and remove the natural carbon sequestering brush.

Tanya: I have concerns about whether the RDF will restrict the use of wood burning stoves and propane heaters.

Ali: The RDF does not currently restrict propane use and wood burning stoves.

Chair: We are concerned that when the implementation of the RDF policies failed to get the county to carbon zero, that policymakers will go after the low hanging fruit such as propane generators.

Maureen: The availability of water must be considered in the RDF.

Chair: I am concerned that in spite your organization’s outreach attempts that the majority of County residents will not have a clue about the goals of the RDF playbook and how its implementation may impact them financially. The County should commit to mailing each postal customer a one-page glossy information sheet that provides an RDF overview. Residents may choose to throw it away without reading but at least they were provided with some information.

Ali: I have been recording everyone’s comments tonight so that I can submit them in my monthly report to the County. If the people who are here can take my short survey that would be helpful. You can also take my survey online. Also, if your group wants to provide written comments and solutions to me at a later date, I will be happy to submit them, but that is not necessary.

The Chair suggested that Ali contact “The Protect Our Communities Foundation” to solicit that organization’s feedback on the RDF.

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

1. On May 24, 2023, the Board of Supervisors voted to send a letter to SANDAG requesting that SANDAG add an Unincorporated Communities advisory board member and alternate to their board.

2. STATE FARM and ALSTATE insurance companies are no longer writing new homeowners insurance policies in California. Maureen Phillips is continuing to use an online survey to collect data from rural residents who have been impacted by insurance cancellation/rate hikes for the Fire Safe Council.

3. Update on the 90MW Jacumba Valley Ranch Energy Park (JVR Solar) legal appeal.

Still no court date set for the JVR legal appeal to be heard. BayWa R.E may provide one final offer of a slightly smaller project footprint with the hopes of a settlement. Otherwise a final legal decision may be a year out.

Regarding the establishment of a Special Community Benefits foundation, Mike Appelman recently provided the following update:

--Sometime ago, BayWa had agreed in principal to fund the legal costs associated with standing up a special benefits foundation. Efforts to do so stalled given the legal challenge to the JVR project. The establishment of a benefits foundation is currently on hold pending the outcome of the current legal appeal. However, a basic foundation framework is in place and Mike has in mind, a number of potential board candidates that would come outside of Jacumba. If the JVR project moves forward, he stated a willingness to restart the process to form a foundation.

4. The 06/06/2023 California ISO Controlled Grid Consideration Queue for the Jacumba area includes “Kettle Solar One,” a 90 MW Photovoltaic Battery Storage facility that would connect to the electrical power grid via the Carrizo Gorge Substation. Kettle Solar One has an on-line date of 10/31/26. (The Carrizo Gorge electrical substation is an integral part of the JVR Solar MUP.)

[Http://www.casio.com/PublishedDocuments/PublicQueueReport.xlsx](http://www.casio.com/PublishedDocuments/PublicQueueReport.xlsx)

5. Community interface reports.

a. Highland Senior Center.

The center’s new pantry is filling up. The extra bottled water and canned food leftover from the humanitarian support of refugees are donated to the center.

b. Real East County Fire Safe Council.

--The FSC had two grants approved: a chipping grant and a grant for operating expenses.

--Community chipping days were held in Boulevard on May 27th and in Jacumba on June 10th. Only two loads of brush were delivered to Jacumba and they came from Boulevard. If Jacumba residents do not take advantage of chipping days going forward, future dates may be cancelled. The next chipping date is 8 am to noon on June 17 in Boulevard and the next community cleanup date is August 19th at the Resource Center in Boulevard.

c. JBRA (Revitalization).

--JBRA recently received grant funding for the Resource Center’s fire insurance and funding for exterior paint. It did not receive grant funding from the San Diego Foundation for its proposed hot meal service for seniors.

--The Resource Center’s food pantry and household recycling continues to operate on Monday 9am to noon.

To volunteer to help at an event or to provide a financial donation to the FSC or JBRA, please contact Mark Ostrander.

G. Adjournment:

M/S to adjourn the meeting at 8:16pm: Curran/Hafdell. Passed: 3-0-0.

The next JCSG meeting is scheduled for Monday, July 10, 2023 at 6 pm.

For more information, contact the JCSG Chair at csdiefenbach@sbcglobal.net or 619-743-5224.

Approved: October 9, 2023