

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 5, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority Board of Directors Meeting was called to order by Chair Natasha Johnson at 12:30 p.m., via Zoom Meeting ID 823 8889 2144, pursuant to Governor Newsom’s Executive Order N-29-20.

2. ROLL CALL

Board of Directors/Alternates Present

Kevin Jeffries
Karen Spiegel
Colleen Wallace
Julio Martinez
Jeff Cervantez*
Larry Greene
Tony Daddario
Linda Krupa
Lorena Barajas
Natasha Johnson

Lesa Sobek
David Marquez
Jonathan Ingram
Kevin Bash
David Starr Rabb
Erin Edwards
Crystal Ruiz
Maryann Edwards
Ben J. Benoit

Board of Directors Absent

Chuck Washington
V. Manuel Perez
Jeff Hewitt
Jocelyn Yow

*Arrived after the meeting was called to order.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board Member Benoit.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Patrick Ellis, president of the Murrieta/Wildomar Chamber of Commerce, expressed his desire to work with the RCA to find a solution for the cities in the southwest area of Riverside County regarding the permit fee structure for the MSHCP. Mr. Ellis would like the Board to consider creating a plan to help with smaller industrial and commercial properties or postponing the adoption of the fee increase until the end of the year. A proposal has been sent to the RCA staff.

5. ADDITIONS / REVISIONS

There were no additions or revisions to the agenda.

6. CLOSED SESSION

At this time, Steve DeBaun, legal counsel, announced the Board will be going in to Closed Session to discuss the two property items on the agenda.

6A. CONFERENCE WITH REAL PROPERTY NEGOTIATORS

Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.8

Agency Negotiator: Executive Director or Designee

Item	Property Description	Property Owner	Buyer(s)
1	915-480-008	Hui Hwang	RCA
2	932-180-014, 932-180-015, 932-200-024	Hannis L. Stoddard, et al	RCA

6B. REPORT OUT FROM CLOSED SESSION

Mr. DeBaun announced the Board considered and approved the following closed session items:

Item 1: acquisition of the property was approved for \$140,000

7. CONSENT CALENDAR - All matters on the Consent Calendar will be approved in a single motion unless a Board Member(s) requests separate action on specific item(s).

At this time, Board Member Cervantez joined the meeting.

M/S/C (Ruiz/Sobek) to approve the following Consent Calendar items.

7A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 1, 2021

7B. WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN FEE COLLECTION REPORT

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Fee Collection Report for February 2021.

7C. ADOPT RESOLUTION NOS. 2021-009 AND 2021-010 AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT FUNDS FOR ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY

This item is for the Board of Directors to adopt Resolution Nos. 2021-009 and 2021-010 Authorizing the Acceptance of Grant Funds for Acquisition of Real Property.

7D. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

This item for the Board of Directors to:

- 1) Receive and file an update on state and federal legislation; and

- 2) Adopt the following bill positions:
 - a) HR 972 (Calvert) - Support.

8. UPDATE ON STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS FOR RESERVE ACQUISITION

Aaron Hake, Interim Regional Conservation Deputy Executive Director, provided a presentation on the current status of three state and federal grants that have been awarded to the RCA. Mr. Hake detailed the process for the RCA team when competing for and completing grants for both the state and federal level.

The RCA received a Fiscal Year 2017 Section 6 Program grant for \$2 million, matched with state funds. The grant is set to expire in May of this year, but the RCA staff is working on a 6-month extension. Efforts to spend these funds are being coordinated with the Nature Conservancy, as they are sometimes able to acquire property in a more streamlined fashion. With the 6-month extension, the RCA will be able to expend all the 2017 grant funds.

For Fiscal Year 2019, the RCA received two years' worth of grant funding under the Section 6 Program, in the amount of \$10 million, matched by some state funding. This grant was unusual as the funds were only valid for one-year, a condition of receiving the funds were that they be spent within the year. Some of these grant funds have been used but, unfortunately, the Department of General Services (DGS) rejected the appraisal that was presented to expend the remaining grant funds. With that rejection, the RCA will be returning \$4.2 million in federal funds.

The Jurupa Mountains Conservation grant was awarded to the RCA a few years ago with the help of Assembly Member Cervantes, for \$14.7 million. The RCA currently has a couple properties that are being processed, with a few more in discussion. It has become clear to the RCA staff that it won't be possible to expend all the funds in the Jurupa Mountain area, there simply aren't enough willing sellers at appraised value. In an effort to expend all the awarded funds, the RCA staff has started conversations with Assembly Member Cervantes about potential options, expanding the area of eligibility for this grant, and a possible extension.

Mr. Hake added that looking ahead, the RCA staff has requested a workshop with the DGS to better understand how they operate, are starting to prepare for the Fiscal Year 2022 Section 6 funding opportunities, advocating for improvement to the Section 6 program, and pushing for increased funding from Congress.

Board Member M. Edwards noted that it is never good to return grant funds, returning funds as a long-time grantee, it can be difficult to get funding in the next cycle. It was suggested that in the future, properties should be targeted, so that when grant funding is available, it can be used. Any grant requests should be balanced with the number of properties the RCA believes they would be able to acquire. Mr. Hake agreed, stating that the RCA staff has already started identifying which properties could be included in the next proposal and calibrating the request amount versus what can be expended.

Board Member Ingram stated that there are forces beyond the control of the RCA. The constraints placed on staff by the DGS and the process of spending those grant funds can call everything into question. Board Member Ingram thanked the RCA staff for their efforts and continuing to do the most possible with the available funds.

Board Member Sobek inquired as to how the state can decline an appraisal, and if there were guidelines that weren't met. Mr. Hake noted that the Section 6 Grants are given to the State of California from the federal government, the RCA is considered a sub-recipient. As such, for the state to release the funds to the RCA, they must approve the process and how the RCA has come to an agreement. The method to reviewing and approving the agreement and appraisal, is through the DGS, and their policies are something the RCA needs to learn more about.

Anne Mayer, Executive Director, added that this is an area where the RCA staff is going to dive deeper into understanding. The RCA, along with other HPCs, have asked the DGS for a workshop to have an opportunity to ask detailed questions and acquire knowledge to determine if the criteria are personal preferences, professional appraisal management, or written in their manual. This will also help the RCA determine if there are administrative restrictions in place that make it harder than it should be to fairly acquire property, and what can be done to remedy the issues.

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file an update on state and federal grants for reserve acquisition.

9. NEW ONLINE CONSERVATION DASHBOARD DEMONSTRATION

Philip Kang, Technical Information Program Manager, provided a demonstration of the two new MSHCP Annual Report dashboards on the RCA website. The dashboards include details for Conservation by Jurisdiction and Rough Step Balance. The data on both dashboards are pulled from the MSHCP Annual Report and are updated annually.

Chair Johnson noted that cities and jurisdictions have asked for quite some time to be able to quickly access how much land has been conserved and how much more needs to be conserved. Chair Johnson is excited in the level of transparency this brings to the organization and encouraged Board Members to go to the website to explore them.

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the New Online Conservation Dashboard Demonstration.

10. BOARD OF DIRECTORS / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Anne Mayer, Executive Director, provided a Nexus Study update and noted that several jurisdictions have made great progress towards implementation, with nearly three quarters of the cities already starting the adoption process. The RCA staff is moving ahead and assisting jurisdiction staff in any way possible with the deadline of final adoption by July 1st. There have been technical meetings with the RCA staff and jurisdictions, as well as review of the

implementation manual, and presenting information to the Western Riverside Council of Governments. Ms. Mayer acknowledged the accommodations that jurisdiction staff have made to allow the RCA staff to attend or participate in City Council Meetings and support from Board Members during this process. The RCA staff is scheduled to meet with Mr. Ellis next week to discuss his issues and concerns as voiced at the beginning of this meeting. Ms. Mayer pointed out that any changes to the fee structure already adopted by the Board including a change that would affect the categories or the associated fees would likely need to be completed through a Nexus Study update or revision.

The managing agency transition between the RCA and RCTC is going very well. Ms. Mayer recognized staff who have worked to make this transition as smooth as possible and the recommendations and suggestions received not only from the Board, but also from stakeholders, city and county staff. The primary focuses for the next few months will be sustainability of the MSHCP, making sure the Nexus Study is adopted, managing of existing grants, organizational excellence, and partnerships at the local, state and federal level.

Chair Johnson thanked the RCA staff for their support in the adoption of the Nexus Study and making it a priority.

11. PRESENTATION - SPECIES OF THE MONTH

Betsy Dionne, Senior Management Analyst Management and Monitoring, provided a presentation on the species of the month, the Granite Night Lizard.

Board Member Ingram thanked Ms. Dionne for the presentation of a great looking lizard.

12. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for consideration by the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority Board of Directors, Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 1:22 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors is scheduled to be held on **Monday, May 3, 2021**, via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Mobley
Administrative Services Manager/
Clerk of the Board