

COUNTY OF INYO PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES OF JANUARY 27, 2016 MEETING

COMMISSIONERS:

FRANK STEWART
CYNTHIA WAHRENBROCK
ANNETTE SWITZER
ROSS CORNER
JOHN (JIM) GENTRY

FIRST DISTRICT (VICE-CHAIR)
SECOND DISTRICT
THIRD DISTRICT
FOURTH DISTRICT (CHAIR)
FIFTH DISTRICT

Inyo County Planning Commission
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STAFF:

JOSHUA HART
CLINT QUILTER
KEVIN CARUNCHIO
CATHREEN RICHARDS
DIANE FORTNEY
JOHN VALLEJO

PLANNING DIRECTOR
PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
SENIOR PLANNER
PROJECT COORDINATOR
COUNTY COUNSEL

The Inyo County Planning Commission met in regular session on Wednesday, January 27, 2016, in the Administration Building, in Independence, California. Commissioner Wahrenbrock opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

These minutes are to be considered for approval by the Planning Commission at their next scheduled meeting.

ITEM 1: PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Wahrenbrock at 10:00.

ITEM 2: ROLL CALL - Commissioners: Stewart, Wahrenbrock, Switzer, Corner and Gentry were present.

Staff present: Joshua Hart, Planning Director; Cathreen Richards, Senior Planner; Diane Fortney, Project Coordinator; John Vallejo, County Counsel.

Staff absent: Clint Quilter, Public Works Director; Kevin Carunchio, County Administrator

ITEM 3: PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – This item provides the opportunity for the public to address the Planning Commission on any planning subject that was not scheduled on the Agenda.

Joshua Hart, Planning Director introduced new County Counsel staff member Mr. John Vallejo to the Commission.

ITEM 4: APPROVAL OF MINUTES (Action Item) – Approval of Minutes from September 23, 2015 meeting of the Planning Commission.

MOTION: Moved by Commissioner Stewart and seconded by Commissioner Switzer to approve the Minutes from September 23, 2015.

The Motion passed 3-0-2. Abstained: Commissioners Wahrenbrock and Gentry.

ITEM 5: **NOMINATION & ELECTION OF CHAIR PERSON** – The Commission will accept nominations for chair-person for 2016 and hold an election.

MOTION: Moved by Commissioner Wahrenbrock to nominate Commissioner Corner Chair:
The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gentry.

The Motion passed 5-0

ITEM 6: **NOMINATION & ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR PERSON** – The Commission will accept nominations for vice-chair-person for 2016 and hold an election.

MOTION: Moved by Commissioner Corner to nominate Commissioner Stewart Vice-Chair
The motion was seconded by Commissioner Switzer.

The Motion passed 5-0.

ITEM 7: **OWENS VALLEY SOLAR ENERGY STUDY** – The California Energy Commission awarded the County a grant to collect geospatial data, coordinate with tribal governments, local residents, and City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, and prepare a study of the Owens Valley and Owens Lake. The County has prepared the Owens Valley Solar Energy Study (OVSES) that includes geo-spatial data and information gathering for topics including: biological resources, visual resource, land use, and historic and cultural resources. Development of the OVSES also included a robust public outreach component. The Commission will receive a presentation regarding the OVSES and provide input and recommendations for the Board of Supervisors' consideration.

Ms. Cathreen Richards, Senior Planner, presented the staff report to the Commission. Late additions to the packet included the Owens Valley Tule Elk Habitat Management Plan and letter from the Defenders of Wildlife; Letters from the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe of Death Valley and the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley; for inclusion in the Study.

Mr. Robert Edgerton, Helix Environmental Planning, provided an overview of the Draft Owens Valley Solar Energy Study noting this was a study not a plan, no CEQA required. The study is still in draft form and will be added to as needed until finalized and approved by the Board of Supervisors in March. This study was funded by the California Energy Commission to evaluate the biological, cultural and visual resources as well as land use within the Owens Valley and Owens Lake areas and builds on existing data from Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) Gateway (by Data Basin). The data was collected and compiled from existing public resources, customized and formatted specifically to Inyo County and the Owens Valley and provides a single clearing house and platform that is easy to use and available to the public. Helix conducted public outreach through workshops and tribal coordination meetings with additional guidance provided by other agencies and public entities.

Mr. Jameson Honeycutt, Helix Environmental Planning, conducted a tutorial for the Commission. The tutorial provided instruction on the use of Data-Basin, a public online forum, to access the mapping and data layers created for this study. This powerful tool can be used for research of prospective projects within the Owens Valley Area from the County line in the North to Olancho in the South.

All Commissioners commented that this study provided a remarkable amount of data and the ease of use and availability to the public and county staff will be a cost savings to both. The work done by both County Staff and Helix Environment Planning was impressive.

Public Comment opened at 10:53 a.m. by Commissioner Corner.

Mr. Earl Wilson commented that an amazing product has been produced and Helix was receptive to public input. This data will protect and save the County money.

Public Comment closed at 10:54 a.m. by Commissioner Corner and recessed for a five minute break

Meeting reopened at 10:58 a.m. by Commissioner Corner.

ITEM 8: **NATURAL RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE** - The Natural Resource Advisory Committee (NRAC) acts as a technical committee on natural resource matters with the goal providing pertinent information and making recommendations to the Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission. Several of the Committee's positions have been vacant, and a Request for Appointment has been received in response to the County's Notice of Vacancy to recruit new members. The Planning Commission will consider making a recommendation regarding the appointment to the NRAC to the Board of Supervisors.

MOTION: Moved by Commissioner Stewart to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to reappoint Mr. David German to the Natural Resource Advisory Committee.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Corner.

The Motion passed 5-0.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORT/COMMENTS –

- Commissioner Wahrenbrock commented on a letter in the Sierra Wave paper concerning Los Angeles wells #385 & #386 in the Five Bridges Area being renamed to #385R & #386R and pumping from these wells would be started. Commissioner Wahrenbrock expressed concerns that any pumping should not be allowed from these wells per the water agreement and requested additional information.

The commission requested Dr. Harrington be scheduled to provide an update at the next meeting.

Public comment: Mr. Earl Wilson informed the Commission that the Water Commission had a meeting scheduled for tonight at the Water Department in Independence.

- The Commission requested an additional Public Comment opportunity be placed at the end of each agenda for those wishing to speak.
- Commissioner Switzer and Wahrenbrock express concerns that the modular building in the Rite Aid parking lot is being used as a residence and requested an update.

Mr. Hart, Planning Director informed the Commission that he understood the Hostel project at that location had stopped due to permitting issue.

- Commissioner Stewart express concerns about the poor condition of the fencing at The Arbors project located at Hwy 395 & Barlow.

Mr. Hart, Planning Director informed the Commission that the fencing issue had come before the commission in the past, but could be agendize for a future meeting. The Planning Department recently reviewed permit applications to build two new units. New activity at the site may improve site upkeep.

Commissioner Wahrenbrock and Switzer added that there was someone living in the existing unit on site.

- Commissioner Gentry commented on the great job the Planning Department was doing at Public Meetings. The meetings are productive at collecting information and comments are being heard.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT-

- Mr. Hart reported that the County continues to be involved with Inyo National Forest for Wilderness, Scenic & Wild Rivers and Species of Conservation Concern. The County has issued a letter of protest with DRECP.
- Mr. Hart commented that recruitment is open for the replacement of two Associate Planners due to staff members leaving.

ADJOURNMENT - With no further business, Chair Corner adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m., to reconvene in Regular Session on Wednesday, February 24, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. in the Board of Supervisors Room, Administrative Center, Independence, California.

Approved: February 24, 2016

Moved by Commissioner Switzer, seconded by Commissioner Wahrenbrock

Passed: 4-0 with Commissioner Stewart absent

Prepared by:

Diane Fortney

Inyo County Planning Department