

ITEM 6A

**Coachella Valley Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 12, 2023**



The audio file for this committee can be found at: <http://www.cvag.org/audio.htm>

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** – The meeting was called to order by Chair Linda Evans, City of La Quinta, at 9:04 a.m. at La Quinta City Hall, 78-495 Calle Tampico.
- 2. ROLL CALL** – Roll call was taken and it was determined that a quorum was present.

Members Present

Councilmember Ernesto Gutierrez
Board Member Anthony Bianco
Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner
Mayor Donna Griffith
Councilmember Elaine Holmes
Mayor Linda Evans, Chair
Councilmember Evan Trubee
Councilmember Lisa Middleton
Director Russ Martin
Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick
Councilmember Jan Harnik
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez
Supervisor Yxstian Gutierrez

Agency

City of Cathedral City
Coachella Valley Water District
City of Desert Hot Springs
City of Indian Wells
City of Indio
City of La Quinta
City of Palm Desert
City of Palm Springs
Mission Springs Water District
Riverside County – District 2 (*arrived at Item 7A*)
Riverside County – District 3
Riverside County – District 4
Riverside County – District 5

Members Not Present

Mayor Steven Hernandez, Vice Chair
Director Alex Cardenas
Mayor Richard Kite
Supervisor Kevin Jeffries

City of Coachella
Imperial Irrigation District
City of Rancho Mirage
Riverside County – District 1

Chair Evans acknowledged the Commissioners who are new to the CVCC: Cathedral City Councilmember Ernesto Gutierrez, Indian Wells Mayor Donna Griffith, Palm Desert Councilmember Evan Trubee, and Supervisor Yxstian Gutierrez.

3. AGENDA MODIFICATIONS (IF ANY)

None

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Philip Bettencourt, a La Quinta resident, expressed his interest in civic activism and excitement about the property tour (Item 7C).

5. COMMISSION CHAIR / DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Executive Director Tom Kirk provided an overview of the bus tour stops that the Commissioners would visit during Agenda Item 7C. Mayor Evans highlighted the beauty and recreation of Lake Cahuilla, and Supervisor V. Manuel Perez and Board Member Anthony Bianco talked about its important role for water resources. Supervisor Perez noted some upcoming opportunities being explored to expand use of the park.

Mr. Kirk also noted the passing of former Palm Desert Councilmember Buford Crites, who was a leader for conservation and open space preservation in the Coachella Valley.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR

- A. Approve November 10, 2022 CVCC Meeting Minutes**
- B. Reaffirm that findings still exist, pursuant to Assembly Bill 361, and authorize continuation of remote teleconference/virtual meetings of the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission and its committees**
- C. Authorize the Executive Director to execute Amendment 1 to the Technical Assistance Agreement with the United States Geological Survey, extending the term through August 31, 2023, and providing an additional \$70,000 for critical tasks at the Mesa study site**

Based on an inquiry about the looming expiration of the Governor’s emergency order, staff provided background on Legal Counsel’s input on AB 361 and the use of virtual meetings.

IT WAS MOVED BY COUNCILMEMBER HARNIK AND SECONDED BY MAYOR PRO TEM GARDNER TO APPROVE THE CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS.

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 9 AYES, 3 MEMBERS ABSTAINING AND 5 MEMBERS ABSENT.

Councilmember Ernesto Gutierrez	Abstain
Mayor Steven Hernandez	Absent
Board Member Anthony Bianco	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner	Aye
Director Alex Cardenas	Absent
Mayor Donna Griffith	Aye
Councilmember Elaine Holmes	Aye
Mayor Linda Evans	Aye
Director Russ Martin	Aye
Councilmember Evan Trubee	Abstain
Councilmember Lisa Middleton	Abstain
Mayor Richard Kite	Absent
Councilmember Glenn Miller	Absent
Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick	Absent
Councilmember Jan Harnik	Aye
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez	Aye
Supervisor Yxstian Gutierrez	Aye

7. DISCUSSION / ACTION

A. Contractual Services for Trail Maintenance and Building in the Palm Hills area – Tony Quiroz

Conservation Management Analyst Tony Quiroz presented the staff report. Member discussion ensued, including discussion of property maintenance challenges.

CVCC members also inquired about alternative approaches to managing parking at the location. Councilmember Middleton noted that this would not be the City's preferred location for overnight recreational vehicle parking.

Executive Director Kirk suggested the CVCC consider an amended recommendation to include consulting with the City on times of use and exploring other opportunities

IT WAS MOVED BY COUNCILMEMBER GARDNER AND SECONDED BY MAYOR GRIFFITH TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MOUNTAINS FOUNDATION URBAN CONSERVATION CORPS FOR A NOT-TO-EXCEED AMOUNT OF \$210,777.69 THROUGH JANUARY 31, 2024 TO IMPROVE AND RESTORE APPROXIMATELY 350 ACRES OF OPEN SPACE IN THE SANTA ROSA AND SAN JACINTO NATIONAL MONUMENT CONSERVATION AREA AS PART OF THE PALM HILLS MANAGEMENT EFFORT, AND AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND/OR LEGAL COUNSEL TO MAKE CLARIFYING CONTRACT CHANGES PRIOR TO EXECUTION; AND DIRECT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO ALSO CONSULT WITH THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS ON TIMES OF USE AND EXPLORING OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 13 AYES AND 4 MEMBERS ABSENT.

Councilmember Ernesto Gutierrez	Aye
Mayor Steven Hernandez	Absent
Board Member Anthony Bianco	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner	Aye
Director Alex Cardenas	Absent
Mayor Donna Griffith	Aye
Councilmember Elaine Holmes	Aye
Mayor Linda Evans	Aye
Director Russ Martin	Aye
Councilmember Evan Trubee	Aye
Councilmember Lisa Middleton	Aye
Mayor Richard Kite	Absent
Councilmember Glenn Miller	Absent
Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick	Aye
Councilmember Jan Harnik	Aye
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez	Aye
Supervisor Yxstian Gutierrez	Aye

B. Deferral of a Peninsular bighorn sheep fence on a single residential lot and acceptance of an easement allowing for future fence construction – Peter Satin

Regional Planner Peter Satin presented the staff report. Member discussion ensued with staff clarifying the fence requirements, next steps for the property and how the agreement was reached with the property owner.

IT WAS MOVED BY COUNCILMEMBER HARNIK AND SECONDED BY BOARD MEMBER BIANCO TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE DEFERRING CONSTRUCTION OF A PENINSULAR BIGHORN SHEEP FENCE ON APNS 658-170-003 AND 658-170-010 IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE COACHELLA VALLEY MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN AND TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO ACCEPT AN EASEMENT TO ALLOW FOR THE FUTURE CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE, AND MONITORING OF SUCH A FENCE SHOULD IT BECOME NECESSARY IN THE FUTURE

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 13 AYES AND 4 MEMBERS ABSENT.

Councilmember Ernesto Gutierrez	Aye
Mayor Steven Hernandez	Absent
Board Member Anthony Bianco	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner	Aye
Director Alex Cardenas	Absent
Mayor Donna Griffith	Aye
Councilmember Elaine Holmes	Aye
Mayor Linda Evans	Aye
Director Russ Martin	Aye
Councilmember Evan Trubee	Aye
Councilmember Lisa Middleton	Aye
Mayor Richard Kite	Absent
Councilmember Glenn Miller	Absent
Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick	Aye
Councilmember Jan Harnik	Aye
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez	Aye
Supervisor Yxstian Gutierrez	Aye

C. Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitation Conservation Plan Property Tour – Tom Kirk

At 9:47 a.m. the CVCC recessed and departed for the tour.

Commissioners boarded a bus to visit Lake Cahuilla and the bighorn sheep fence construction. Following that, the CVCC headed east to see the North Shore Ranch as well as some ongoing tamarisk removal.

8. INFORMATION - The following items were provided in the agenda for information only:

A. Attendance Record

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next meeting of the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission will be held on Thursday, February 9, 2023, at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom webinar.

10. ADJOURN –

Following the tour’s conclusion, the meeting was adjourned by Chair Evans at 1:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Erica Felci, Assistant Executive Director