

**Mono Basin RPAC
Regional Planning Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, May 13, 2020, 6:30 pm, remote/virtual meeting via Zoom/conference call

Members present: Lisa Cutting, Bartshe Miller, Elin Ljung, Duncan King, Ilene Mendelbaum, Chris Lizza, and Kristie Nelson

Public Attendees and Presenters: Bob Gardner, Bentley Regehr, Wendy Sugimura, Dennis Domaille, Paul Ashby, Margaret Eissler, Jody Shultz, Justin Nalder, Beth Long, Dave Marquart, Lynn Bolton, Gordon Martin, Pamela Wines, Jourdan Arnaud, April Sall

*** attendance was made to the best of the secretary's capacity. Due to the remote meeting situation and/or incomplete screen names, the attendance list may not represent every person who joined all or parts of the meeting.**

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance: 6:36 pm.

1. Public Comment Jody Shultz from the US Census recruiting center gave an update on the Mono Co. and regional census needs. Field operations are on hold due to the virus, but they are hiring for census work. Mono Co. is currently insufficient on job quota and census data self-response. To date Kern has had a 53% census response, 43% for Inyo, but Mono is only at 12% of households have self-provided census data. Census is hiring for Mono Co., especially for Mammoth and Bridgeport. Pam Wines is a contact in Big Pine for census jobs pamela.s.wines@2020census.gov.

Second public comment - Jourdan Arnaud is a journalism student gathering information on a project researching the LA Aqueduct. She's interested in hearing from anyone with interesting information or potential contacts.

2. Approve Minutes: 8 April, 2020. No comments or changes. Chris Lizza moved to approve the minutes; Duncan seconded, Elin abstained. Motion passed unanimous with one abstention.

3. Supervisor Gardner report: Yesterday Elin Ljung was approved by the BOS as a new member to Mono Basin RPAC. The Mono City green waste dumpster was recently emptied. Bob also emphasized the dismal Mono Co. census status and self-reporting rates so far. There's encouragement for people to sign up for being local census workers. SCE crews have been active replacing poles and conducting vegetation management. They aim to be done in late June and are overnighing mostly in Mammoth. Roads are opening: Lundy opened Friday, and Tioga is open to the park gate. The rest of 120 in the park will remain closed for now – housing, covid, etc. continue to be limiting factors. Hopefully it is open early to mid June. The BoS approved a permit to lift some signage restrictions on Tioga Green. People had been entering it not knowing it was a pot store – they thought it was a visitor center, casino, store, etc. So some additional clarifying signage will be added, and some of the lighting will be reduced with new lighting restrictions. It was too bright at night. Both Lee Vining and June Lake have a CARES program to assist locals with paying bills, providing food, etc. in the time of Covid-related economic loss. Fire restrictions on the INF went into effect. Chris asked if conducting the town clean up would be ok under covid, Bob replied yes, with proper distancing and precautions.

4. Chairperson Report: Duncan welcomed Elin to the RPAC. He thanked Bentley, Wendy and county staff for all the remote meeting management they have been doing. Duncan was disgusted with the Planning Commission decision on the Tioga Inn project. He also thanked Caltrans for reducing the hwy speedometer to flash at speeds over 30 instead of 40, and the flashy ped-Xing is great and working.

6. Member's reports:

- a. Lisa also welcomed Elin, and expressed appreciation and gratitude for the local CARES programs. Bridgeport apparently still needs one.
- b. Chris: also thanked county staff with the increased workloads they've had under covid. He commented how the Planning Commission meeting was well organized and well run and effective, despite the disappointing result many people feel. Also the PC is not the last word – BoS will review Tioga Inn also. Chris described situations he faces as a store owner with masks/no masks of customers. In Nevada, they are not required, so some travelers coming to store don't have them, and there is some opposition to having to wear them. So far business has been slow, with upcoming Memorial Day perhaps the market will need to limit # people in store at a time if it is busy. The market is not serving ice cream like they usually do because of virus risk.
- c. Elin: Echoed support of the LV and JL CARES programs and value in community members taking care of each other.
- d. Ilene: Also voiced disappointment in Tioga Inn vote by PC, and appreciation and thanks to the LV CARES program.
- e. Bartshe: Also expressed thanks for the CARES and what an important effort it is for local needs. He appreciated the discussions had by BoS on the make-up of the RPAC, especially Peters' comments. Also emphasized the RPAC has open seats and it welcomes more and diverse membership. Since 2015 it has struggled with a legacy of "liberal domination", yet seats are open for all to join. The Mono Lake Committee is not hiring seasonal staff and is canceling programs and the storefront remains closed. Things will open as county/state regulations allow. Bartshe also acknowledged how well-run the PC Tioga Inn meeting was, and all points and concerns were read aloud.

7. Fire Safe Council Update: Banner is still coming. Fire resiliency seminars may be run via Zoom, or delayed. Long discussion on dispersed camping/campfires, and the consistencies and lack thereof among differing agencies and public landowners on fire restrictions. Signage was discussed on SCE property being closed for camping – like lower Mill/LV canyon. Any new signage would need support by landowner (agency or private). Illegal fires or suspected illegal fires can be reported to INF or sheriff.

8. Inyo National Forest update: Campsites and other public use sites remain closed until CA governor and county staff lift restrictions. Visitor centers, public places like South Tufa and campgrounds remain closed, but may gradually open – VC employees would need to quarantine. For some facilities, opening also depends on ability to staff, clean bathrooms, have hazard trees removed, etc. Fire crews have completed quarantine and are now on. Under Covid, fire crew units are more isolated from one another and multiple new guidelines are in effect to manage their health. He also mentioned the work SCE is doing in Lakes Basin and beyond. DeChambeau Ponds are drying up and the INF would like to see them watered but isn't able to get the water there due to ongoing problems.

9. Industrial Hemp presentation: April Sall screen shared a PowerPoint and facilitated a discussion on policy ideas and direction as it relates to potential regulation of industrial hemp production in Mono Co. She overviewed existing state regulations, and the difference between cannabis and hemp – which is hemp must test <0.3% THC. It needs regular testing and enforcement, which can be costly. She discussed options for Mono Co to approach it, which include 1. Altogether ban, 2. Allow it under current state regulations, 3. Allow it as a trial run under a pilot program, 4. Under a pilot program with additional county permits. Pluses and minuses of each option were reviewed. Other counties have varied responses. Land use design was also discussed. Should there be legal setback requirements, including from any cannabis production to reduce cross-pollination problems? Good sets of questions

were asked, including water usage (less than cannabis), does it need to be produced on a large scale to be profitable? – yes for fiber, but demand for CBD oil is lessening the volume needs.

She took a poll on the 4 options; Bentley noted the totals. 1. Ban – no votes. 2. Follow state regs – none, 3. Pilot program – 3 votes, 4. Pilot program with county permits – 3 votes.

A second poll was taken on setbacks: 1. Same as commercial cannabis (generally 50', 600' sensitive areas), 2. Same standard setbacks but increase from any existing cannabis operation – 4 votes; 3. Fewer setbacks – 2 votes; or 4. Increase setback requirements above cannabis – 1 vote

10. Conway Ranch update: Justin gave an update, though said much has been on hold during Covid. No valid grazing proposals have been received. Small scale ag on <2.5 acres is in conceptual phase, it would be in the old fish area and could be vegetables or mushrooms. Still no new progress on the trail network beyond the conceptual ideas of trail(s) in/out of ranch. They have completed stage I structural stabilization of the historic buildings. Further building rehab may happen in coordination with the historical society and involve assessments. The 2019 annual report is completed and there's an operations plan for 2020. Some invasive weeds were removed and repairs to fences, ditches, etc. have been done. The county removed the old, unmaintained porta-potty, and they may work further on signage against dispersed camping/fires at Conway and Mattley Ranches. Irrigation season starts soon, and they are working with SCE to model anticipated flows.

11. Pedestrian connectivity: If Lee Vining expands in size (Tioga Inn), there may be increased demand for a trail from the Mobil Mart area to town. The person asking for this in the agenda wasn't present, so it is postponed.

12. Covid-19 issues and updates: Bob reported Mono Co. now has 33 cases – a recent increase. Re-opening some businesses has been discussed and plans in place for moving to stage 2, yet the recent cases may hold that back – county should be at or below 1 case per 10k people in past 14 days. Lodging probably won't open until stage 3. Obviously, tensions and stress by local businesses bleeding out revenue and potential solvency are urging county officials to loosen restrictions on business. Yet it is important to send message of responsibility and give a feel of safety so people feel safe in businesses when they open. Fishing will open June 1 but lodging and services will remain low. Sub-county approaches have been discussed. The Bodie road is opening, but the park probably won't. Chris asked is there is a guideline for the # of people in a building – sq. footage. Bob said it is up to the local retailers (beyond the 6').

13. Information Items: BoS will review the Tioga Inn project, there may be future proposals of mining in the Bodie Hills by Radius Gold, two campground sites north of Mono Lake may be downsizing, and next week the planning commission will review requests of short term rentals in the June Lake highlands.

13. Future agenda Items: regular standing items, pedestrian connectivity in LV

Adjourned 9:30pm until next meeting June 10

Respectfully submitted – Kristie Nelson