

NEWPORT BAY CONSERVANCY
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Back Bay Science Center Conference Room
Wednesday January 21, 2015 2:00-4:00 pm
OPEN SESSION

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Directors Present: Peter Fuhrer, Michelle Clemente, Donna Flower, Holly Fuhrer, Peter Bryant, Frances Cork, Howard Cork, Nancy Gardner, Sarah Kimball, Jean Whitaker, Dick Zembal

Directors Absent with Apologies: Danielle Zacherl

Staff: Heather Cieslak

The meeting was called to order by Pres Fuhrer at 2:07 pm.

2. Secretary's Report

Sec Fuhrer presented the minutes of the December 17, 2014 Board Meeting. Two corrections suggested by Mbr Cork prior to the meeting were read. No further changes were advised. Motion made by Mbr Gardner to accept with corrections, seconded by Mbr Clemente. The minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's report was delivered by Treas Flower with the following highlights:

1. Our adjusted unrestricted cash on hand at December 31, 2014 is \$312,999.00;
2. Contributions from our membership drives in 2014 increased this year to the highest amount in five years, \$26,812.50;
3. Gross income from our kayak tours in 2014 is an unprecedented \$26,812.50, over \$10,000 more than the previous year;
4. We received three unsolicited restricted donations in the fourth quarter of 2014 totaling \$11,500.00.

4. Discussion of Committees, Committee Membership, and Relationship to Strategic Planning

Pres Fuhrer reviewed NBC committee structure and suggested that the Board analyze how our committees are functioning and whether they are fulfilling their charters and effectively furthering our strategic goals. He requested that committee chairs review the responsibilities designated to their committees under "NBC Committee Structure" in the Board Handbook and in the Bylaws, along with the priorities established at the 2014 Retreat, and prepare a brief assessment report for discussion at the Retreat. Pres Fuhrer also asked the Board to consider reorganizing some of our committees to include Public Relations and Marketing, Special Events, and the Watershed. He would like to see all of our publications coordinated through a Public Relations Committee with a comprehensive marketing plan that would make sure that all of our printed materials have consistent and effective messages and goals. He has spoken with Bill Halladay, an NBC Naturalist who has a background in Advertising as a creative director, and he has agreed to take the lead in such an effort. Discussion followed and several suggestions were made.

Questions were raised about overlapping roles and responsibilities of our committees and whether we have too many. Past Pres Cork reminded us from his experience that form should follow function and that one of the big challenges is finding people to take the lead.

The creation of a Watershed Committee was discussed specifically. Pres Fuhrer proposed specific goals for such a committee in taking a position in relation to issues in the watershed that directly or indirectly affect the health of the Bay. Mbr Gardner has agreed to take the lead should we establish this committee but only if its goals are supported by the Board as part of NBC's Strategic Plan. Mbr Bryant questioned whether our Watershed Coordinator would have a continuing role. Past Pres Cork stated that our Watershed grant ended in December 2014 and Krista Sloniowski is no longer working for NBC as a contractor on the grant. She is at this time completing her work for NBC in the form of an "Idea Book" which she hopes to utilize in her continuing pursuits under other auspices. Past Pres Cork reminded the Board that we decided at our October 2014 meeting not to initiate any projects in which we might appear to be at odds with our watershed colleagues but rather take a more collaborative and facilitating role in our goal to work toward sustaining the health of the Bay. Pres Fuhrer suggested that supporting the loose coalition of agencies that came together after the June Symposium should be part of our Strategic Plan. Mbr Gardner encouraged the Board to discuss all of this at the Retreat and advised that we may decide to restructure all of our committees based on our updated Strategic Plan.

5. Retreat Planning

Pres Fuhrer announced that the focus of the 2015 Retreat will be the NBC Strategic Plan. The officers met to discuss this and agreed that this retreat should be focused on delineating specific outcomes. Past Pres Cork has agreed to facilitate the Retreat which will be planned by him, Pres Fuhrer, and Sec Fuhrer with inputs solicited from all Board members. Copies of the Strategic Plans from 2009, 2011, 2012, and 2014 were distributed to all Board members to review before the Retreat. The Retreat is scheduled for Tuesday February 10, 2015 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Final details will be distributed to the Board in a timely manner.

Mbr Cork suggested consulting with the Advisory Board for their input but it was acknowledged that that body has not been active in the organization for several years. Pres Fuhrer has asked Past Pres Cork to explore a revival of the function of the Advisory Board in the coming year.

6. Committee Reports

Pres Fuhrer requested that henceforth, any committee scheduled on the Board Meeting agenda to make a report should submit a written report to the Board in advance of the meeting.

Research Committee

Chair Peter Bryant reported to the Board on the status of the Symposium scheduled for January 31, 2015 which promises to be a very interesting gathering of speakers focusing on the Wetlands of Southern California. Mbr Bryant reminded the Board that the Symposium is timed to celebrate the 44th anniversary of the intergovernmental Ramsar Convention (The **Convention on Wetlands of International Importance**), in the Iranian city of Ramsar. The Convention recognizes the ecological functions of wetlands and their economic, cultural, scientific, and recreational values. It provides the framework for national and international action for the identification of important wetland sites, as well as their conservation and wise use. The U.S. has so far designated only 36 sites (less than many other smaller countries) and only one of these is in Southern California (The Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve)." If Upper Newport Bay was to be designated a "Wetlands of International

Significance”, the Ecological Reserve would have more recognition and status in the larger global community. If we are interested in applying for this designation for the UNB, there is a specific procedure to be followed. Mbr Bryant recommends that we explore it. Pres Fuhrer requested that he bring a proposal to the Board for consideration.

Restoration Committee

Chair Sarah Kimball reported for the committee. Our contractor, Barry Nerhus, has completed planting the Upper Slope of the Bayview Project. He has asked Mbr Kimball not to order more plants for the Lower Slope because horse riders continue to use unauthorized trails and trample the habitat at will. He recommends that we consult DFW about more effective fencing or more effort to find a compromise with them. Questions were raised about the removal of the Brazilian Pepper trees on the Upper Slope and the weeding and watering schedules needed to maintain the new planting. Pres Fuhrer agreed to consult with Endemic Environmental Services (Mr. Nerhus) about their schedule of weeding and watering and will communicate with Mbr Kimball about the result of that discussion. He has also consulted with Scott Fegley about the OCParks maintenance crew taking responsibility for the removal of the Brazilian Pepper Trees utilizing their contract with the Conservation Corps. Past Pres Cork agreed to talk with Jeanne Stein about assembling volunteers to maintain a regular schedule of watering and mustard removal on the Upper Slope.

Mbr Kimball has scheduled another field trip on January 22 to continue the committee’s survey of the Bay, including Vista Point and the Newport Aquatic Center.

Board Development Committee

Chair Holly Fuhrer reported for the committee which consists of Peter Ridley (elected), Jack Keating (elected), Constance Bean, and Judith Booth who met January 13, 2015 to consider a recommended candidate for the Board and to review and revise the Board Code of Involvement. Recommended revisions were submitted to the Board. Mbr Gardner requested that we postpone consideration to a future meeting.

7. Operations Director’s Report

OD Cieslak reported for the staff. She has been meeting with our partners to discuss what they need from NBC. Ten people have signed up for the next Volunteer Orientation and Training session.

OCParks has issued new vests that they want NBC volunteers to wear with their logo only. They will not allow any other badges on it which may necessitate buying our own NBC vests.

Past Pres Cork has spoken with Stacey Blackwood about NBC’s position in the continuing transition involving IRC’s takeover of volunteer training within OCParks. He recommends that NBC partner with Laguna Canyon Foundation regarding what position we will take when the contract between IRC and OCParks comes up for renewal after three years.

Question was raised what NBC’s position should be in case a potential volunteer does not pass the OCParks background check. It was decided that we should do our own background check in that case and that a person in question should be put on hold with regard to participating in NBC programs until we have received and evaluated our own report. OD Cieslak will consult with our insurance carrier with regard to its position. The issue will then return to the Board for discussion of our on-going policy.

Dick Zembal left at 4:05 pm.

Nancy Gardner left at 4:07 pm.

Sara Kimball left at 4:07 pm

8. Other Business/Matters Rising

Pres Fuhrer announced that NBC will be renting a storage space and calling for all of NBC records and historic materials to be moved there. A committee will then sort through the documents to determine what should be preserved.

NBC's liability insurance carrier has sent notice that our premium will likely be raised due to the increase in claims across the board related to employment issues (such as the lawsuit that NBC experienced in 2013 with our ex-Executive Director).

A letter was received from the Banning Ranch Conservancy requesting that NBC send a letter in support of their enforcement hearing in front of the California Coastal Commission in January 2015. The hearing concerns charges of various infringements of the Coastal Act which threaten the preservation of that valuable open space. Motion was made by Mbr Bryant to send the letter, seconded by Mbr Cork, and approved unanimously. Past Pres Cork agreed to draft a response.

A letter has been received from OneOC inviting nominations for Spirit of Volunteerism Awards. In the past NBC nominees have been put forward by OCParks. Motion was made by Mbr Cork that NBC should independently nominate and sponsor three volunteers and send one person as host, to be determined by members of the Board, to the ceremony at a cost of \$85.00 each. Seconded by Treas Flower and passed unanimously. Input will be solicited from Board members and staff regarding potential nominees.

13. Adjourn

Mbr Bryant made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by VP Clemente. All were in favor. The meeting closed at 4:40 pm.

Holly Fuhrer
Board Secretary, Newport Bay Conservancy