



**EASTERN SIERRA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (ESCOG)
Joint Powers Authority**

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Friday, December 11, 2020

8:30 a.m.

**Mammoth Lakes Council Chamber
437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite Z
Mammoth Lakes, CA**

NOTE: This will be a Zoom meeting and will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the Governor's Executive Order which suspends certain requirements of the Ralph M. Brown Act. It is strongly encouraged that you watch this meeting on the Town of Mammoth Lakes' (TOML) website at www.townofmammothlakes.ca.gov or on TOML's local government cable channel 18.

Public comments may be submitted to the TOML Assistant Clerk at clerk@townofmammothlakes.ca.gov before and during the meeting.

Board Members

Mono County Supervisor
Stacy Corless – Chair

Mono County Supervisor
Bob Gardner

Town of Mammoth Lakes Councilmember
Lynda Salcido

Town of Mammoth Lakes Councilmember
John Wentworth

Inyo County Supervisor
Jeff Griffiths

Inyo County Supervisor
Dan Totheroh

City of Bishop Councilmember
Jim Ellis

City of Bishop Councilmember
Karen Schwartz – Vice Chair

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting please contact the Clerk of the Board at 760-965-3615. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City of Bishop or Town of Mammoth Lakes to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. (See 42 USCS 12132, 28CFR 35.130). NOTE: Comments for all agenda items are limited to a speaking time of three minutes.

1. Call to Order

Chair Stacy Corless called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Stacy Corless led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll Call

Chair Stacy Corless, Vice Chair Karen Schwartz and Board Members Bob Gardner, Lynda Salcido, John Wentworth, Jeff Griffiths, Dan Totheroh and Jim Ellis were present via videoconference.

4. Public Comment

Plumas Project Manager Janet Hatfield said that there had been a request circulating around the conservation community in the State of California to request additional emergency funding from the Governor's office for resilient forest projects. Ms. Hatfield said that she wanted to provide an opportunity for the ESCOG to utilize the online comment process to submit a letter in support of the request for funding. She said that Chair Stacy Corless and Board Member John Wentworth had the link to the electronic comment form.

There was a public comment received via email from Mammoth Lakes Housing Executive Director Patricia Robertson discussing the success of the Emergency Rent Assistance Payment Program.

There was discussion between Ms. Corless, Ms Kabala and members of the Board.

5. Consent Agenda

- a. **Approve the Minutes of the October 16, 2020 meeting of the ESCOG JPA.**

ACTION: It was moved by Board Member Bob Gardner, seconded by Board Member Dan Totheroh, and carried by an 8-0 roll call vote to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2020 meeting of the ESCOG JPA.

6. Introduction of Forest Supervisor Lesley Yen – *Chair Stacy Corless*

Chair Stacy Corless introduced Inyo National Forest Supervisor Lesley Yen.

Ms. Yen reported that she had attended several meetings since she started her position in order to get to know the elected officials and community partners that had a stake in the management of the Inyo National Forest and said that she looked forward to working with the members of the ESCOG.

There was discussion between Ms. Yen and members of the Board.

7. Discussion with Inyo Mono Advocates for Community Action (IMACA) Housing and Planning Director Larry Emerson and Eastern Sierra (CoC) Chair Susi Bains regarding regional homeless issues – *Councilmember Jeff Griffiths*

Board Member Jeff Griffiths spoke about homelessness issues in the region and introduced Inyo Mono Advocates for Community Action (IMACA) Housing and Planning Director Larry Emerson.

Mr. Emerson spoke about the homelessness issues in our region and outlined the information in the Eastern Sierra Continuum of Care (CoC) PowerPoint Presentation.

Vice Chair Karen Schwartz voiced concern about the safety and habitability of the rental units that IMACA would provide to homeless community members and asked how IMACA would make sure that the homes they provided were up to code and safe.

SPEAKING FROM THE FLOOR:

Legal Counsel Grace Chuchla reported that when there were issues with a rental being substandard and that the landlord may have an obligation to not charge the occupant rent for that period of time and/or pay the tenant back for any rent paid during any time period when the home was deemed to be substandard.

Board Member Jeff Griffiths discussed the varying characteristics of the homeless population across the region.

Mr. Emerson reported that IMACA was in the process of opening a Community Connection for Children (CCC) office in Mammoth to provide outreach in Mono County.

Chair Stacy Corless discussed revisiting working with the Forest Service with regard to safe parking and camping areas outside of Town for the homeless population.

There was discussion between Mr. Emerson, Ms. Chuchla and members of the Board.

8. Discussion regarding scheduling of presentations of the Sustainable Recreation Ecosystem Management Program Resolution to each Member Agency's Board/Council – *Chair Stacy Corless*

Administrative Services Contractor Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the staff report. Ms. Kabala noted that there was a correction to be made to the title of the program of work on Attachment A, the word Forest should be replaced with Ecosystems.

Town of Mammoth Lakes (TOML) Town Manager Dan Holler reported that January 20, 2021 would be the earliest date that the Sustainable Recreation Ecosystem Management Program (SREMP) Resolution could be presented to the Town Council.

Vice Chair Karen Schwartz reported that it would be best to wait until one of the February Bishop Council meetings to present the SREMP Resolution.

Board Member Jim Ellis concurred with Ms. Schwartz with regard to waiting until February for the presentation of the SREMP Resolution to the City of Bishop Council.

Ms. Kabala said that after all of the new Board Members and Councilmembers for the ESCOG member agencies had been seated post-election, she would attend one of each of their meetings to make a public comment in which she would give an overview of the ESCOG and some of the initiatives they were involved with.

City of Bishop City Administrator Ron Phillips agreed with waiting until February as suggested by Ms. Schwartz and Mr. Ellis for the presentation of the SREMP Resolution to the Bishop City Council.

Board Member Jeff Griffiths said the presentation of the SREMP Resolution to the Inyo County Board of supervisors would work best in middle to late February.

Board Member Bob Gardner reported that Ms. Kabala would be introduced at one of the January Mono County Board of Supervisors meetings and the presentation of the SREMP Resolution would take place at their February 19th meeting.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala and members of the Board.

9. Update on the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership (ESSRP) and Brief Presentation on the Prop 68/Sierra Nevada Conservancy’s “Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Initiative” Grant, administered by the Town of Mammoth Lakes on behalf of regional partners - *Councilmember John Wentworth*

Board Member John Wentworth gave an update on recent Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership (ESSRP) activities and the Prop 68/Sierra Nevada Conservancy’s Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Initiative (SRTI) Grant. Mr. Wentworth reported that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) had signed a Memorandum of Understanding to become a part of the ESSRP. Mr. Wentworth outlined the information in the PowerPoint presentation and announced that the last meeting to rank SRTI projects was last night and reported that the results would be out next week.

- a. **“Recreation Stakeholders”** –
 - i. 183 Project Ideas: Virtual Scoring Meetings
- b. **“Climate Adaptation”**
 - i. “Vulnerability Assessment” + “Baseline Natural Capital Assessment”
- c. **“Connection to the Eastern Sierra Visitor Audience”**
 - i. Carl Ribaud
- d. **"Projects and Funding"**
 - i. Partner Engagement for next year: 2021
- e. **Discussion regarding regional forest management and dispersed camping issues.**
 - i. Presentation

There was discussion among members of the Board.

10. Discussion and approval of 2021 ESCOG JPA Meeting Schedule – *Elaine Kabala*

Administrative Services Contractor Elaine Kabala outlined the information the staff report and recommended that the Board approve the 2021 ESCOG JPA Meeting Schedule as presented.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala and members of the Board.

ACTION: It was moved by Board Member Bob Gardner, seconded by Board Member Jeff Griffiths, and carried by an 8-0 roll call vote to approve the 2021 ESCOG JPA Meeting Schedule as presented.

11. Board Member/Agency Reports - *Chair Stacy Corless*

Board Member Jeff Griffiths reported that nineteen new COVID cases were reported in Inyo County yesterday and said that it was widespread across the county with 10-20 new cases per day. Mr. Griffiths said that the hospital had only one ICU bed available and reported that they were looking to expand, however, staffing was an issue. He said that Renown Hospital in Reno was currently utilizing their parking garage as an overflow and voiced concerns regarding where to send critically ill patients when necessary. He reported that there was a 24-36 hour delay to transfer patients out at this time. Mr. Griffiths reported that the hospital had advised people not to go to the Emergency Room unless they had a serious emergency and said that the surge capacity was almost non-existent throughout California. He said that he had been working with the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) Rural Caucus Working Group and announced that they had a meeting scheduled with California Department of Public Health (CDPH) staff today at 2:00 p.m. He said that there had been disagreements about how the Regions were developed when the Stay At Home Order (SAHO) came out but said that it was a moot point now and that he would turn his attention to advocating for business and personal financial relief from the State budget surplus. He reported that there had been some spread of the virus from people going to work sick and that there needed to be funds available to pay people to stay home and not feel pressured to work while ill. Mr. Griffiths reported that the vaccine would come out next week and would be distributed regionally with Inyo and Mono Counties receiving a combined 1,075 doses to share between them. He reported that the surge would likely last six weeks to two months, rather than the three weeks the SAHO was created for to combat the virus.

Board Member Dan Totheroh said that another death had been reported which brought the total number of deaths in Inyo County to seventeen and said that there were fifty new cases last week. Mr. Totheroh said that he felt the current cases were a result of Thanksgiving gatherings and hoped that people would learn from this so the potential Christmas surge would be reduced.

Vice Chair Karen Schwartz said that as a small business owner, she needed and wanted business at this time and said that asking people not to do business with her while being allowed to stay open put business owners in an awkward position. She reported that the City of Bishop had completed their Spruce, Hanby, Yaney Sidewalk Project and said that the City had applied for funds to rebuild the Sierra Street to 395 path to connect the elementary school to the new Seibu to School Bike Path.

Ms. Schwartz reported that the Bishop Fire Department had raised \$7,000 in gift cards for Walker homeowners and said that they hoped to hire a Fire Inspector for 2021. She said that they had a successful public outreach program for the Bishop Downtown Strategic Plan, the results of which would be presented to the Bishop City Council on the 14th. She announced that the collaborative holiday event between the Bishop Chamber of Commerce, the City of Bishop and the Eastern Sierra Tri-County Fairgrounds had to be cancelled due to the COVID surge.

City Administrator Ron Phillips reported that the City of Bishop's Measure P which would increase Sales Tax by 1% passed with 68% in favor and said that it would likely not take effect until April 2021.

Board Member Lynda Salcido gave a COVID update. Ms. Salcido reported that there were nineteen new cases yesterday for a total of fifty-six cases since Sunday, with three days of testing still outstanding and said the total case count to date was four hundred and thirteen and reported that there had been three deaths to date. She reported that testing was available five days a week in Mammoth and said that the County was in the process of increasing contact tracing and would add staff to assist with it. She said that there was one COVID patient in Mammoth Hospital so there was currently some capacity available, but said that there was nowhere to transfer patients out if we were to get additional serious illnesses or injuries in the County. She said that the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) had been sending out messaging about the SAHO and personal behavior and requested that people be careful and stay at home. She reported that many new cases were due to the recent fire activity. Ms. Salcido reported that the Town Council had approved \$750,000 to go towards Community First Programs and asked Town Manager Dan Holler to give a breakdown as to what programs the funds would be allocated to. She thanked IMACA for helping to provide food for those in need in the community.

Town Manager Dan Holler gave a COVID update and reported that the Town would allocate \$750,000 to Community First Programs: \$400,000 of which would go to a second Business Assistance Program, \$250,000 would be directed to the Rental Assistance Program, \$25,000 would be allocated to the Right 2 Recover (R2R) Program to assist people coming out of quarantine or isolation without sick leave or Workers Compensation, and \$75,000 would be set aside for potential food bank needs if necessary, if not used for a food bank, it may go back into housing and/or business needs. Mr. Holler said that no one in our community should be concerned about going without food. He said that the EOC planned to focus on testing protocols during snow events, and also for vaccinations. He reported that there were widespread cases throughout the community and said that Town staff had looked at its ability to effectively provide emergency response related to COVID and also snow removal. Mr. Holler reported that staff was working on clearing people out of short-term lodging in Town per the SAHO and said that the Mountain was still open and reported that he would like it to stay open to give people a recreation outlet. He noted that if the Mountain were to do a full shut down it would cause close to two thousand employees to be laid off which would create an even bigger challenge trying to assist that many people financially and with housing and food. He said there would also be a significant challenge trying to rehire employees at a later date if the Mountain were to reopen because many of the employees would have left the area. He said that several Mountain employees worked two jobs and had already lost one of them. Mr. Holler announced that Mono County Public Health Officer Dr. Thomas Boo had reported that there would be no more elective surgeries at Inyo Northern Hospital as of Monday the 14th.

Board Member John Wentworth gave a COVID update and reported that the region was on its own due to the surge and lack of hospital capacity regionwide. Mr. Wentworth said that the Creek Fire was still burning but was mild and voiced concerns about dispersed camping while we were still in fire season. He congratulated the City of Bishop for its tax measure passing. Mr. Wentworth said that Mammoth Lakes had budgeted conservatively for several years which had allowed them to have funds available to assist with COVID relief. He spoke about the Trail Community Host Program in Mammoth, gave a Parcel update and announced that the Mammoth Lakes Planning and Economic Development Commission had approved The Parcel Master Plan. He said that the INF Management Plan was a regional effort and said that there was a 50,000 acre fuels reduction project in Mammoth Lakes and that there was a need to balance that with sustainable outdoor recreation.

Ms. Salcido reported that Inyo County and Mono County Public Health Departments would collaborate with regard to distribution of the COVID vaccine which would be delivered to Bishop Hospital and four hundred doses would be sent to Mono County.

Mr. Griffiths said that the IMACA food distribution was doing well with supply and delivery, but said they did not get a lot of money for administration of the program and would like some assistance with that.

Board Member Bob Gardner gave a COVID update and stated that the total case count to date for the County not including the Marine Warfare Training Center cases was four hundred and thirteen. Mr. Gardner said that enforcement of COVID regulations needed to be consistent throughout the region. He spoke about the Mountain View Fire and reported that 140 structures had burned with about half of those being homes. He announced that there was a public hearing scheduled to be held on the 15th regarding the Tioga Inn but noted that it might be postponed.

Mr. Lawton gave an update on the Mountain View Fire and said that he had been working with the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) with regard to the plan for COVID vaccine distribution and would present a plan to the Mono County Board of Supervisors on the 15th. Mr. Lawton reported that there were three counties in the Southern California SAHO Region that were making an effort to become their own region and said that there had been discussion about Mono County following suit. Mr. Lawton said that it may not provide any benefit to us at this point due to the overall lack of ICU capacity throughout the entire State. He said that he was on a call this morning related to the quickly diminishing ICU capacity and said that he felt Mammoth Hospital could move from Green to Red very quickly.

Chair Stacy Corless said that she was grateful for regional collaboration to contribute to the Mountain View Fire relief fund. Ms. Corless reported that the Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce (MLCC) non-profit funds were up to about \$200,000 and said that approximately 33% of the fire victims were uninsured. She said that the Town of Mammoth Lakes and Mono County overall had received several complaints about Suddenlink and would like to see the Mono County Board of Supervisors and the TOML Town Council separately work this issue. She announced that she would serve as the Chair of the Rural County Representatives of California in 2021 and said that the members of the Board would receive an invite to the installation reception scheduled to be held on January 13th.

There was discussion between Mr. Holler, Mr. Phillips, Mr. Lawton and members of the Board.

12. Request for future agenda items - *Chair Stacy Corless*

Discussion regarding Suddenlink service issues.
COVID Update.

13. Adjournment - *Chair Stacy Corless*

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m. to the next regular meeting scheduled to be held on February 12, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.