

ITEM 7A

Coachella Valley Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes September 11, 2025



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 Gary Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs Mayor Pro Tem, at 10:30 a.m. in the Coachella Valley Water District, Steve Robbins Administrative Building Training Room, 75515 East Hovley Lane, Palm Desert.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Gardner requested a moment of silence to honor those who lost their lives in the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, then led the commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **ROLL CALL** – Following the pledge, roll call was taken and it was determined that a quorum was present.

Members Present

Councilmember Ernesto Gutierrez
Mayor Steven Hernandez
Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner, *Chair*
Mayor Pro Tem Dana Reed
Councilmember Oscar Ortiz*
Mayor Linda Evans
Director Amber Duff
Mayor Pro Tem Evan Trubee
Mayor Ron deHarte
Mayor Ted Weill
Councilmember Stephanie Virgen
Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick
Mayor Jan Harnik
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez
Councilmember Ben Guitron

Agency

City of Cathedral City
City of Coachella
City of Desert Hot Springs
City of Indian Wells
City of Indio
City of La Quinta
Mission Springs Water District
City of Palm Desert
City of Palm Springs
City of Rancho Mirage
Riverside County – District 1
Riverside County – District 2
Riverside County – District 3
Riverside County – District 4
Riverside County – District 5

Members Not Present

Director Anthony Bianco
Director Alex Cardenas

Coachella Valley Water District
Imperial Irrigation District

**arrived at Item 5*

4. AGENDA MODIFICATIONS (IF ANY)

None

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

Deputy Clerk Elysia Regalado acknowledged a public comment submitted via email by Fish and Wildlife Biologist Lory Salazar-Velasquez in support of agenda item 7C and transitioning CVCC committees into informal working groups.

7. CONSENT CALENDAR

Prior to the announcements, the Chair accepted a motion for the Consent Calendar items.

- A. **Approve the minutes of the June 12, 2025, meeting**
- B. **Authorize the Executive Director to execute an Amendment No. 1 to the agreement with University of California, Davis to include the project “*Genetic Analysis to Test Effectiveness of Linkages for Corridor Dwelling Small Mammals*” at an additional not-to-exceed cost of \$152,287 through March 31, 2027**
- C. **Adopt a revision of the By-Laws, incorporating references to the CVCC’s Procurement Policy and Procedures, clarifying meeting cancelations and authorizing the Executive Director to take steps to transition the Reserve Management Oversight Committee, Reserve Management Unit Committees and Trails Management Subcommittee to informal working groups**

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

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 15 AYES AND 2 MEMBERS ABSENT.

Councilmember Ernesto Gutierrez	Aye
Mayor Steven Hernandez	Aye
Director Anthony Bianco	Absent
Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner	Aye
Director Alex Cardenas	Absent
Mayor Pro Tem Dana Reed	Aye
Councilmember Oscar Ortiz	Aye
Mayor Linda Evans	Aye
Director Amber Duff	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Evan Trubee	Aye
Mayor Ron deHarte	Aye
Mayor Ted Weill	Aye
Councilmember Stephanie Virgen	Aye
Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick	Aye
Mayor Jan Harnik	Aye
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez	Aye
Councilmember Ben Guitron	Aye

7.1 ITEMS HELD OVER FROM CONSENT CALENDAR

None

6. COMMISSION CHAIR / DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Executive Director Tom Kirk introduced U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Assistant Field Supervisor for the desert region Brian Croft and thanked him for being present. Mr. Croft addressed the Commission

8. DISCUSSION / ACTION

A. Partnership with Mojave Desert Land Trust for Seed Collection and Preservation

MDLT's Seed Program Manager Patrick Emblidge provided a detailed PowerPoint presentation on seed collection and preservation process.

Robust member discussion ensued with Mr. Emblidge and CVCC staff answering questions from the Commission regarding target areas and species involved in preservation efforts, as well as general inquiries related to seed collection.

IT WAS MOVED BY MAYOR WEILL AND SECONDED BY COUNCILMEMBER FITZPATRICK TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH MOJAVE DESERT LAND TRUST FOR SEED COLLECTION AND PRESERVATION THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2028

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 15 AYES AND 2 MEMBERS ABSENT.

Councilmember Ernesto Gutierrez	Aye
Mayor Steven Hernandez	Aye
Director Anthony Bianco	Absent
Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner	Aye
Director Alex Cardenas	Absent
Mayor Pro Tem Dana Reed	Aye
Councilmember Oscar Ortiz	Aye
Mayor Linda Evans	Aye
Director Amber Duff	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Evan Trubee	Aye
Mayor Ron deHarte	Aye
Mayor Ted Weill	Aye
Councilmember Stephanie Virgen	Aye
Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick	Aye
Mayor Jan Harnik	Aye
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez	Aye
Councilmember Ben Guitron	Aye

B. Presentation: Creating climate resiliency in the CVMSHCP

Dr. Lynn Sweet from UC Riverside Center for Conservation Biology provided the Commission with a presentation regarding climate resiliency and species in the area.

Brief member discussion ensued regarding information presented.

No action was taken, as the item was presented for informational purposes only.

C. Like Exchange between East Indio Hills Conservation Area and Dos Palmas Conservation Area

Program Manager Peter Satin presented the staff report providing detail and logistics of the like exchange.

IT WAS MOVED BY MAYOR HERNANDEZ AND SECONDED BY MAYOR WEILL TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 2025-06 AND APPROVE A LIKE EXCHANGE TO THE COACHELLA VALLEY MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN, FINDING THE LIKE EXCHANGE DOES NOT REQUIRE FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW AND DIRECTING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO FILE A NOTICE OF DETERMINATION, EXECUTE THE LIKE EXCHANGE AGREEMENT AND TAKE THE NECESSARY STEPS TO ACCEPT THE TRANSFER OF PROPERTY REQUIRED BY THE LIKE EXCHANGE

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 15 AYES AND 2 MEMBERS ABSENT.

Councilmember Ernesto Gutierrez	Aye
Mayor Steven Hernandez	Aye
Director Anthony Bianco	Absent
Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner	Aye
Director Alex Cardenas	Absent
Mayor Pro Tem Dana Reed	Aye
Councilmember Oscar Ortiz	Aye
Mayor Linda Evans	Aye
Director Amber Duff	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Evan Trubee	Aye
Mayor Ron deHarte	Aye
Mayor Ted Weill	Aye
Councilmember Stephanie Virgen	Aye
Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick	Aye
Mayor Jan Harnik	Aye
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez	Aye
Councilmember Ben Guitron	Aye

D. Local Development Mitigation Fee Nexus Study Update

Mr. Satin presented the staff report.

A brief discussion among members followed, focusing on questions about the study's costs and fees in comparison to similar efforts.

IT WAS MOVED BY MAYOR EVANS AND SECONDED BY MAYOR HARNIK TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ENTER INTO A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH ECONOMIC AND PLANNING SYSTEMS, INC., FOR A NOT-TO-EXCEED AMOUNT OF \$174,850 THROUGH APRIL 30, 2026, TO UPDATE THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT MITIGATION FEE AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 15 AYES AND 2 MEMBERS ABSENT.

Councilmember Ernesto Gutierrez	Aye
Mayor Steven Hernandez	Aye
Director Anthony Bianco	Absent

Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner	Aye
Director Alex Cardenas	Absent
Mayor Pro Tem Dana Reed	Aye
Councilmember Oscar Ortiz	Aye
Mayor Linda Evans	Aye
Director Amber Duff	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Evan Trubee	Aye
Mayor Ron deHarte	Aye
Mayor Ted Weill	Aye
Councilmember Stephanie Virgen	Aye
Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick	Aye
Mayor Jan Harnik	Aye
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez	Aye
Councilmember Ben Guitron	Aye

E. Election of CVCC Officers

Mr. Kirk opened the floor for nominations for Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission. Councilmember Fitzpatrick nominated the current Chair and Vice Chair to stay in their roles for the fiscal year. No other nominations were received.

IT WAS MOVED BY COUNCILMEMBER FITZPATRICK AND SECONDED BY MAYOR EVANS TO ELECT COUNCILMEMBER GARY GARDNER AS CHAIR AND MAYOR PRO TEM ELAINE HOLMES AS VICE CHAIR OF THE COACHELLA VALLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-26

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 15 AYES AND 2 MEMBERS ABSENT.

Councilmember Ernesto Gutierrez	Aye
Mayor Steven Hernandez	Aye
Director Anthony Bianco	Absent
Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner	Aye
Director Alex Cardenas	Absent
Mayor Pro Tem Dana Reed	Aye
Councilmember Oscar Ortiz	Aye
Mayor Linda Evans	Aye
Director Amber Duff	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Evan Trubee	Aye
Mayor Ron deHarte	Aye
Mayor Ted Weill	Aye
Councilmember Stephanie Virgen	Aye
Councilmember Kathleen Fitzpatrick	Aye
Mayor Jan Harnik	Aye
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez	Aye
Councilmember Ben Guitron	Aye

9. INFORMATION

- A. Attendance Record Attendance Record**
- B. Contracts under Executive Director's signing authority**
- C. New location of CVCC's public meetings**
- D. Illegal Dumping in the Coachella Valley**
- E. Update on the status of the Chuckwalla National Monument**
- F. Acquisition Status Report**
- G. CVCC's Unaudited Financial Reports through June 30, 2025**
- H. CVCC's Quarterly Investment Report through June 30, 2025**

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Palm Desert Mayor Harnik recommended that the Commission review suggested plant palettes to help guide and inform residents about selections that are most beneficial to the local environment without mandating the suggestions.

The next **Coachella Valley Conservation Commission** meeting will be held on Thursday, November 13, 2025, at 10:30 a.m at the Coachella Valley Water District, Steve Robbins Administration Building Training Room, 75515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert, 92260.

12. ADJOURN

Chair Gardner adjourned the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elysia Regalado
Deputy Clerk