

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

**Wednesday, April 8, 2020, 6:30 pm, remote/virtual meeting via Zoom/conference call**

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

**Public Attendees and Presenters:** Bob Gardner, Bentley Regehr, Wendy Sugimura, Dennis Domaille, Susa Bains, Elin Ljung, John Ljung, David Strelneck, K. Morse, Nora Livingston, Paul Ashby, "Marga", "Henry", Bob Gard

*\*\* 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:** 6:35 pm. Wendy gave an overview of virtual meeting etiquette.

1. **Public Comment** none

3. **Approve Minutes: Feb. 12 and March 11, 2020.** No comments or changes made to either draft. Bartshe motioned to approve the February and March minutes, Lisa seconded. Chris abstained, all other members voted to accept. Motion passed.

4. **Supervisor Gardner report:** The information Bob had to report on is under the covid-19 agenda item

5. **Chairperson Report:** The Mono City green waste dumpster is full already! Bob said he'd make sure it gets emptied.

**6. Member's reports:**

- a. Chris Lizza: Thanked county staff, supervisors and medical staff including Tom Boo for all the hard work and do-gooding related to Covid. Chris announced he found experienced, capable buyers for the Mono Market and anticipates the market being sold around mid-May. It's been a great 21 years under his ownership. Chris would also like to join the housing sub-committee
- b. Bartshe: gave brief update on the Mono Lake Committee – DWP stream restoration agreement from 2013 is delayed for the time being.
- c. Lisa: Also thanked county staff, especially Bob Gardner and Wendy Sugimura, for all their work and meeting attendance. Mono Co. health dept. has been amazing and progressive and has many resources on their website from information sites to online story times for children. She also congratulated Chris on the sale of the market
- d. Ilene and Kristie both reiterated the kind words of support for county staff, and thanks to Chris for running such an incredible market which has made this community a far superior place to live than it would've been otherwise.

7. **Fire Safe Council Update:** No meeting yet this month. They anticipate being within 60 days of having the fire truck and message banner in town. Will have virtual meeting on Monday. Now that the green waste dumpster is permanent and fills quickly, maybe the fire safe council and fire commissioners can share costs of emptying.

**8. Presentation on Suicide Prevention:** Susi Bains of the non-profit Shine overviewed and discussed suicide prevention tips, and is spreading awareness of the community training programs that will be available to teach how to respond to individuals in crisis. Trainings will resume when Covid-related bans on gatherings are lifted. She discussed risk factors (which include depression, substance abuse, family history, chronic pain, and more), warning signs (which include when individuals discuss or mention suicide or feelings of hopelessness), and behavioral changes such as social withdraw, giving away valuable items, or big mood swings. Having a few of the traits is not abnormal, and covid-19 may accelerate some of these traits, but having multiple traits could be a sign someone needs help. Susi talked about myths associated with suicide, like talking about it might make it worse (it doesn't). She then described how to approach and talk to someone who may be in crisis. That "you" do not have to be the councilor role, but do give support, empathy, and listen. Validate their feelings, and help them make a plan of calling someone, reaching out. Finally, simply reaching out and sending a text, note or call to someone can be profoundly helpful in letting someone know they are not alone.

**9. Logistics of April Planning Commission meeting:** The April Planning Commission (PC) will review the Tioga Inn project which has generated local controversy and some members of the public have expressed they wish the Tioga Inn project vote to be delayed. Wendy overviewed that logistically from the County's perspective, there is no reason not to move forward with this project on the scheduled April meeting. Public comments and participation are fully functioning. The virtual meetings are open to everyone, and have a well-functioning procedure where comments are received and processed in real-time. Board of Supervisor meetings have been running the same way: emails are sent real-time to a clerk who reads the emails and each are responded to during the meeting. The county has added additional staff to facilitate and make sure the public participation runs smoothly and efficiently. Some complaints surfaced that virtual meetings are impersonal and lack depth. And not standing at a podium might make speakers feel like their message carries less weight. Response includes these meetings might feel different, but voices are heard just the same. Lisa asked if the PC votes on Tioga Inn in April, when would it go to BOS? Wendy responded probably the May meeting. Even if the PC voted down the project, the BOS would still review it and have their own deliberations/decisions.

**10. Letter of recommendation that planning commission meeting be postponed** (above discussion bled into the recommendation letter discussion): A draft letter from the RPAC requesting postponement of the Tioga Inn approval decision at the April planning commission (PC) meeting was discussed. If the RPAC approved the letter tonight, it would be presented to the PC the day of the meeting, and to the BOS, in which it would probably have enough time to be in the meeting packet of information presented before the meeting and might have time to be agendized. Wendy described how the county is obliged to provide fair process to the applicant in processing their project (as well as the other permit applicants at the upcoming PC meeting), and this is considered essential business. The county must follow all guidelines like CEQA and open meeting practices and they do not put value judgements on projects that are following required guidelines, and process all projects equally. If the BOS received the RPAC letter, they would be obliged to react to it, and it would be their decision on how to proceed. Dave Strelneck asked if by Brown Act requirements, since the community or public is itself a legal entity, can it be adequately represented in a virtual meeting? A discussion about virtual meetings and if that was an adequate reason to request the Tioga Inn deferral was discussed. Virtual meetings have had high levels of public participation, and dialogue is oftentimes improved (this RPAC, for example had participants from across the state and country and more public dialogue than most meetings). Also, the draft letter did not state a timeline, if a vote was delayed, of when would it resume. The RPAC then discussed this to add needed clarity to the letter. The resumption of in-person meetings or the end of economic duress

are likely a long way off with indefinite timing. Extensive discussion ensued. Language was added that the RPAC requested the Tioga Inn project decision be delayed “until Covid-19 no longer threatens to overwhelm the health of the local community”. Ilene made a motion to accept the letter with the above modification. Duncan seconded. Chris, describing potential conflicts of interest with regard to owning (for now) the Mono Market, abstained. Lisa, Ilene, Bartshe and Duncan voted to approve, Kristie did not, so motion passed 4-1 with one abstention.

**11. Discussion of issues related to Covid-19:** Bob spoke on county updates. The county website continues to be the best source of covid information. Social Services has food assistance programs, and deliveries are widely available so food assistance should be available to anyone who needs it. There have been discussions about having a checkpoint on Hwy 203 to stop tourists, decision on that is pending. Mountain highways that are closed for winter (Lakes Basin, June Lake loop, etc.) have had requests to remain closed to decrease allure and temptation for tourists/travelers. Decisions on this are pending as well. SCE has had proposed projects of veg. clearing around poles, but public health dept. and Mammoth Lakes are concerned about the 200+ employees SCE had slated for that project. The employees are self-contained, but whether they should be allowed to conduct this work is still unresolved. Lisa asked clarification if the request for SCE employees to stay away was for Mammoth Lakes specifically, or the whole county? Wasn't clear.

A letter signed by Inyo & Mono Counties was sent to Fish & Wildlife requesting a delay to fishing opener. There will be a F & W directors meeting to decide on this. Lodging order remains in effect thru 5/31, could have some adjustments. The county has done over 100 covid tests, 20 positive and no new cases since about Friday. Two remain in Reno hospital. There's a nurse phone line available from the hospital. Chris discussed grocery supply chain issues related to the virus. Small and mid-sized local food suppliers who normally handle many restaurant sales are struggling to have enough incentive to deliver all the way here from Reno distribution centers. Bonanza Produce, Sierra Meats, and dairy suppliers are struggling since the restaurants, coffee shops, etc. are closed. They are still operating for now but it is shaky. Delivery truck drivers occasionally need hotel rooms and that sometimes needs to be worked out since hotels are generally closed.

Ilene voiced how much she appreciated the communal meals that the Dores and LV Fire Dept hosted – a great example of social networking and she'd like more of that to continue for community support. Ilene agreed to be a repository of ideas for such events/projects for the next meeting. It was suggested to have targeted, specific ideas and needs. Bartshe explained how the Mono Lake Committee has been evaluating its programs, and most recently the Andrea Lawrence dinner was canceled.

**12. Information Items:** Tioga Green has requested a modification on their permit to change signage restrictions. Some updates are planned on the census, which will be phone based and not door to door

**13. Future agenda Items:** Conway Ranch and Mono County dumps updates, standing items including INF update. More Covid-19 updates

**Adjourned 9:27pm** until next meeting in May

Respectfully submitted – Kristie Nelson