

Ocotillo Community Park
266 Imperial Hwy.
Ocotillo, CA 92259
Monday, March 4, 2024
6:00 P.M.



Committee Members:
Michael Cuff, Chair
Darren A. Apedaile, Vice Chair
Ava M. Mead, Secretary
Frank Vrettas
Patricia Thompson

February 4, 2024, meeting minutes

Ocotillo Area Community Advisory Committee

The meeting was called to order by Michael Cuff, Chair, at 6:05pm.

Roll call, members present: Michael Cuff, Darren Apedaile, Ava Mead, Patricia Thompson. (A) Frank Vrettas, quorum was met.

Michael Cuff led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Meeting open for public comment: 3 minutes per speaker

No public comments at the immediate time.

Michael Cuff made introductions of Sheriffs present Sgt. Mossad, Sgt. Villarte.

Michael Cuff also made note of Luis Plancarte's presence for District 2.

Michael Cuff addressed Andy Renfro's concerns of the activities in Jacumba and the border areas. He says he drove through recently and there was no one present. Only a porta potty and dumpsters.

We were told the migrants were coming through regularly and being processed to then be taken off site.

Michael Cuff asks; do we have anyone for public comment.

Luis Plancarte states, "we do have candidates for District 2 present".

Michael Cuff explains the 3-minute rule for speakers.

First up was Candidate Diahna Garcia-Ruiz, introducing herself and explaining she has been here before speaking as a guest on a nonprofit she founded, Proyecto Heber. She is a lifelong resident of Heber, and as she drove through the town of Ocotillo, she noticed it has grown a bit since she last worked at the Post Office. She has been involved in politics for twenty-seven years. She has been on several boards including the water board in Heber, and recently on the Board of Directors for the school.

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She likes to focus on bettering life for the children and elderly as they are usually the ones who suffer from community changes and shortages.

She sat on the AB617 committee, and several fundraising committees.

She is not one who chooses to sit back and wait for things to happen. She likes to go out and make things happen.

We need better health care programs, educational programs, we must work together. Never taking NO for an answer.

Up next is Candidate Ashley Bertussi, she introduced herself, as we know she is candidate for District 2 which covers all the unincorporated areas as well as Imperial, El Centro, Calexico. Her family is deeply rooted in the community, her great grandparents immigrated from Russia to the Imperial Valley and started a small dairy farm. It stayed operational until the 1950's. Working with her father for several years gave her extensive experience in site development, building, and project sites. She is immensely proud to be a member of the community and looking forward to working with us and the district to better our lives.

Darren Apedaile took a moment to speak about the bridge meeting held on January 11th re: Bridge No. 58E0050 and No. 58C0052. He was present to hear Caltrans Engineer and Department of Public Works Engineer.

The Caltrans Engineer reported the Coyote Bridge is being worked on, there is progress to the process.

They also touched bases on the Sandbar bridge, all the artifacts need to be removed to get a clear report on the structure.

Michael Cuff asks, "Why is Caltrans inspecting the bridge and not Public Works?"

John Gay has no idea why Caltrans would be asking the community to remove the artifacts. He does say that Caltrans inspects our bridges once every two years. They look for critical findings, this is when bridges are shut down like Coyote Wash Bridge.

He reports there is a meeting tomorrow and will follow up at the next meeting about what was discussed and the outcome.

Darren Apedaile asked community members why the lights do not flash continually as they do in other areas.

Tracey Raybon reported she was told the windmills are set via FAA to come on automatically when aircraft is present.

EMAIL RECEIVED FROM PATTERN AFTER MEETING ATTACHED.

Mark Silva says the requested removal of the artifacts on the Sandbar presents a party opportunity.

Michael Cuff and Daren Apedaile will work together to make sure the community is aware of when Caltrans needs to have the Sandbar artifacts removed. It is their intention to notify the community in a timely manner to allow for removal, storage, and restoration.

John Gay adds that Ray Collin is the Caltrans contact person, he will make every effort to notify the community a week ahead of Sandbar inspection.

Approval of the order of the agenda.

Ava Mead made a motion to accept the agenda as presented. Daren Apedaile seconded; we will continue with the agenda as presented.

Michael Cuff asks if anyone has seen the physical posting of the meeting minutes and agendas around town. The community says they have not seen them. We need to work on this. Postings were completed and removed or fell.

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Approval of the February 4, 2024, meeting minutes.

Patricia Thompson makes a motion to accept the meeting minutes. Ava Mead seconded, the motion passes. Minutes will be filed as presented.

Discussion and Action items

Michael Cuff covers discussion and action items of the agenda including where we were and where we want to be but not so much about how to get there.

We want to start the year strong. He asks the community to step up and help. Get involved. We can form committees of community members to help create a better life for us all.

Michael Cuff expresses we are an open door, come to the meetings and let us discuss issues, concerns, complaints or comments you have.

Michael Cuff invites John Gay to step up and speak about what we can expect this coming year.

John Gay goes over response and readiness for anticipated rains. We will be ready to go with more structure this year regarding the infrastructure, we start in late spring, SB1 projects will be prioritized by necessity.

We are preparing better, and we will have rotating emergency contracts open for immediate assistance.

The county is doing more soliciting for jobs needing to be done. Appreciates that this forum is the place where all these issues are brought up, discussed and decisions made before moving forward.

He stated that the bridges were downgraded by approximately 60%. This will make it a simple fix. The plan is to grind eight inches of asphalt off the bridge surfaces and restore them to a better condition.

Michael Cuff asks if the bridges John Gay is speaking of were here in Ocotillo.

John Gay says they are the **Havelock Bridge** and **Owatobe Ditch** which are both in the Evan Hewes corridor.

As far as the Coyote Wash Bridge, they are going through extensive permitting issues. They are discussing alternative routes for repair and/or improvement. There is a concrete wrap which may help. It would be a faster and effective way to get the work done.

Michael Cuff asks about the cost associated with the bridge repairs. John Gay says he will email the information to Ava Mead tomorrow. The county is reaching out to the Fergusson Group, a grant writing company, to write the grants we are after.

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Dogwood, Clark and Lack bridges were repaired this year. Dogwood and Clark alone were \$13M.

Coyote Wash and Walters Camp receive excessive damage during heavy rains.

Use of a thirty% design will allow us to make momentous changes. It will improve the quality of life for Ocotillo.

The low water crossing is the best choice for the wash.

Michael Cuff asked about the bypass road to Plaster City and repairing the potholes.

He addressed the Candidates about the concerns regarding the dangers due to the road closure, which is a life-threatening situation.

Michael Cuff asks if Mrs. Stella Jimenez is present, she is, they exchanged business cards. Michael Cuff to forward the email to Mrs. Jimenez.

Mr. Cheney asked John Gay, “what is Plaster Cities take on the road and repairs?”

John Gay says he would like to see along two sections of the Evan Hewes corridor, one; from Seeley to Ocotillo and the other at the other end of Evan Hewes to repave the areas. He feels we deserve a large project to be covered.

Luis Plancarte explains, we must remember when applying for grants, they are competitive grants. We are not the only ones applying for grants.

Michael Cuff reminds Luis Plancarte, according to the meetings at the end of 2023, the Coyote Wash Bridge was moved up to a priority position as of the start of the year.

John Gay covers the benefits of refurbishing the roads, for them to qualify they need to be long straight roads and that is exactly what we have.

This makes Evan Hewes the perfect candidate for the project, and Public Works is purchasing their own, new equipment.

Michael Cuff asks if it is possible to ask the Congressperson for assistance on the necessary repairs and rehabilitation.

We are continuing to discuss OHV crossings.

Mrs. Stella Jimenez, Director for Congressman Raul Ruiz MD., introduced herself and Sarah Lo, field representative and scheduler. We are incredibly happy to have been invited and look forward to working with your community and the board.

To say a bit about the Office; offers constituent services and acts as a facilitator with other agencies, agencies such as, Medicare, IRS, Veteran Services and more.

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We can request from their office letters of support for projects important to our community.

Presentation from Bryan Belknap, owner, and CEO of Modular Pump tracks.

Presented a 2-minute video. He was invited to present by Ava Mead as one of many companies she is looking into for information on building in the community, BMX, bike, skate track. Improvements to our local park for a better quality of life for the youth.

The Sherriff suggested that between now and the next meeting for the community to look at suggestions for the OHV crossing areas and we can move forward with postings. At least two areas.

Presentation by Bertha Alicia White, AVIA HOSPICE representative. They provide care for patients with chronic diseases, and all is paid for by Medicare and Medical as well as other providers. They provide help for providing comfort and care and feel dignified.

Patricia Thompson says her mother used AVIA HOSPICE care and confirms they were wonderful to her mother.

Member reports

- I. The Roadkill Chili Cook Off is on March 16, 2024. One of the Optimist Clubs' largest fundraisers is held every year. If you plan to enter a dish for the Cook Off, it needs to be there by 10:00am. Prizes will be announced later. The Cornhole Tournament will have 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prizes. The tickets for drawing prizes will be \$1.00 each or seven tickets for \$5.00. This year, they will raffle off a 1999 Jeep Renegade. Tickets will be \$20.00 each or six tickets for \$100. Tickets are on sale now. Contact the Lazy Lizard Saloon for more information. It is already posted on FB as well as at the Post Office. Good Luck.

First prize for the cornhole tournament is \$1000.

- II. The Imperial Valley Desert Museum continues to ask for volunteers. Contact the IVDM for more information. Reminder to local kids; volunteer hours at the museum count towards your graduation incentive.
- III. IVDM will have its annual Ocotillo Blooms on March 16 from 10am to 4pm, an event held every year where one hundred butterflies will be released. There will be food, arts, crafts, and speakers.
- IV. The first Weekend Market will be held on the weekend of March 16, 17. It will be open to vendors and private sales. We are expected to have fresh produce, honey, crafts, hobbyists, and lots more. Set up will be at 9am and breakdown at 4pm.
- V. There will be a meeting on the 17th on the patio of the Great Escape for New Club Builders. It will be the first official meeting for the Jacumba/Boulevard Optimist Club. The meeting starts at 6pm.

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Next Meeting Date: March 4, 2024

Email Response from Pattern:

Dear Ava,

Thank you for reaching out to Ocotillo Wind and Pattern Energy. Pattern Energy received Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approval to make the red lights radar controlled and we installed the Aircraft Detection Lighting System (ADLS) about three years. This means that the red lights only come on when an aircraft is detected in the area.

This was requested by the local community as a positive action so that the red lights would be less of a disturbance at night.

Apologies for the slow response. I hope you can take this information to the March meeting. Please do not hesitate to let us know if you have any more questions.

Thank you for serving as Secretary of the Ocotillo Advisory Committee and being an active member of the local community.

Sincerely,

Sarah

Sarah McCall

Stakeholder Engagement Consultant

Hello, my name is Ava Mead, Secretary of the Ocotillo Community Advisory Committee under the Board of Supervisors for Imperial County.

I have a question from community members and residents regarding the flashing red lights on the windmills.

They are wondering why our lights do not flash regularly as they do in other areas.

What is the reason for this, that I may take the information back to the community?

If you would like to send a representative to speak and or answer questions, please feel free. I am extending an open invitation to you to all our meetings, which are held the first Monday every month at 6 PM.

Our first meeting this year is scheduled for February 5, 2024, 6 PM at the Ocotillo Community Park located at 266 Imperial Highway Ocotillo CA 92259.

We will be providing dinner, so do not worry about dinner, we have you covered.

Thank you,

Ava Mead,

Secretary,

Ocotillo area community advisory committee

Meeting adjourned at 7:55pm

Recorded and submitted by: Ava Mead, Secretary

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