



INYO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

TRINA ORRILL • JEFF GRIFFITHS • SCOTT MARCELLIN • JENNIFER ROESER • MATT KINGSLEY

NATE GREENBERG
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

DARCY ELLIS
ASST. CLERK OF THE BOARD



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 13, 2023

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
Public Relations Liaison Darcy Ellis, (760) 878-0373

Highlights from the July 11 Board of Supervisors Meeting

INDEPENDENCE --- Impacts from the 2023 runoff, housing, and employee and department achievements dominated the July 11 meeting of the Inyo County Board of Supervisors.

Specific topics of discussion ranged from mosquito abatement and the Lower Owens River to comprehensive webpage updates to a new landscaping law and affordable housing projects.

Following are some of the highlights.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

Continuing a tradition born in 2018, the Board acknowledged the following employees who reached service milestones during the second quarter of 2023:

- Cynthia Draper, 5 years – Planning Department
- Katie Bardonnex, 15 years – Assessor’s Office
- Laura Piper, 25 years, and Zach Nelson, 10 years – Water Department
- Jorge Alvarado, 5 years, and Lisa Vetter, 5 years – Probation Department
- Jody Veenker, 15 years; Paulette Erwin, 10 years; and Deanna Briggs – Health & Human Services
- Shannon Platt, 30 years, and Gordon Moose, 15 years – Public Works
- Gabriel Mesquitez, 5 years – Ag Commissioner’s Office
- Jayme Westervelt, 5 years – Information Services
- Carma Roper, 25 years; Katie Bird, 15 years; Irving Perez Esquivel, 5 years; Esteban Vega, 5 years; and Melissa Nelms, 5 years – Sheriff’s Office
- HHS Director Marilyn Mann, 25 years
- Environmental Health Director Jerry Oser, 20 years

BANKING TRANSITION

Treasurer-Tax Collector Alisha McMurtrie offered praise to the team that helped transfer the county’s numerous bank accounts following the purchase of Union Bank by U.S. Bank. McMurtrie said her office began the herculean transition – which included accounts covering 25 special districts, the Inyo County Office of Education, and 23 L.A. Education Corps sites – in March and finished in June.

She said staff is working out some hiccups, but she wanted to publicly thank Child Support Services Director Amy Weurdig; Tom Snyder, Heather Barlow, Cathy Patrykus, Elizabeth Nunez, Bob Quackenbush, and Amy Harris with the Office of Education; Amy Shepherd, Christie Martindale, Rusty Huerta, Shiela Ward, Grae Biggs, Heather Williams, and Kortni Giardin from the Auditor’s Office; and Deputy Treasurer-Tax Collector/Treasury Operations Manager Moana Chapman and Treasury Operations Office Clerk Jennifer Ellis.

“It took a village to get this done,” McMurtie said.

RECORD-SETTING SKEETERS

Inyo County Ag Commissioner Nate Reade told the Board Tuesday that the Owens Valley Mosquito Abatement Program (OVMAP) is ever vigilant in its efforts to keep the bugs away from population centers this summer.

According to Reade, his employees are working extra-long hours to do early-morning fogging around communities and aggressively monitor and treat breeding locations, which have greatly increased this year due to the excessive runoff and related water-spreading activities by LADWP. He said the team recently caught a record high of 13,312 mosquitoes at the Owens Lake delta – the site of the previous record in 2017. Those mosquitos have been sent to the state for testing for West Nile Virus. Reade noted that OVMAP has been detecting a lot of dead birds, which is one indicator that WNV could be in the valley. Results from the testing will be available soon.

Both OVMAP and Inyo County Public Health are prepared to launch a WNV public information campaign, Reade said.

WORST-CASE SCENARIO AVOIDED

LADWP is readjusting its predictions for high flows in the Lower Owens River, according to Water Director Holly Alpert.

Alpert told the Board Tuesday that the city initially predicted flows as high as 1,000 cubic-feet-per-second (cfs) to hit the channel at the peak of the runoff season. That hasn't happened, Alpert said, because unseasonably cooler temperatures this spring slowed the snowmelt considerably. She said the river is currently flowing at 300-350 cfs and is only expected to peak at 600 cfs over the coming weeks as temperatures soar above 100 degrees.

For context, standard flows in the Lower Owens are about 40-90 cfs.

WEBSITE UPDATE

Official public records dating as far back as 1881 can now be purchased online and downloaded from the Clerk-Recorder's webpage.

Clerk-Recorder Danielle Sexton announced that her office recently went live with an ecommerce credit card platform that allows for easier access to records like birth, marriage, and death certificates. She described several other upgrades made to the site, including the addition of a photo album of weddings officiated by Clerk-Recorder's staff at the Inyo County Courthouse. Sexton said she hopes to entice other couples to tie the knot in the County Seat.

Check out the upgrades at <https://www.inyocounty.us/services/clerk-recorder>.

PLANNING FEES

The Board on Tuesday approved an ordinance that will amend the Planning Department's service fee schedule to include fees for processing landscape applications under state law.

Planner Danielle Visuano explained that the state's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELo) requires either prescriptive compliance or performance compliance reviews of landscaping applications for new construction and rehabilitation of residential and commercial property. MWELo is aimed at promoting water conservation and efficiency, and includes strict guidelines for planning, designing, installing, maintaining, and managing landscapes. Even the less extensive and complex prescriptive review is tedious and time-consuming, Visuano said. The ordinance approved by the Board will allow Planning to recoup its costs for the reviews. Staff proposed requiring a \$126 fee deposit for MWELo prescriptive compliance applications and \$210 for MWELo performance compliance applications.

The Board approved the ordinance but expressed displeasure with MWELo itself, which they said adds to construction costs amidst a housing shortage and disincentivizes property owners from landscaping – counter to another State of California goal of eliminating “heat islands.”

Board members instructed staff to make the process as non-onerous as possible for the public.

ADU DESIGNS COMING SOON

In another step toward bringing housing solutions to Inyo County, the Board approved a contract with Design Path Studio of Encinitas, CA to provide architectural designs for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), which have been identified as an innovative and effective option for increasing housing stock.

Assistant Administrator Meaghan McCamman explained that the ADU designs will be pre-reviewed by Building and Safety to ensure compliance with the California Building Code, and then made them available at no cost to the public. She said the designs will help reduce costs and speed up the building process for anyone constructing ADUs. The designs will be made available in tandem with low-interest loans to construct ADUs.

Design Path Studio was the successful respondent to a Request for Proposals (RFP) issued by the County in March seeking a firm to design architectural, structural, and engineered building plans, details, and supporting calculations for six different unit types, two different floor plans per unit type, with up to three architectural styles each. McCamman noted that the RFP specifically included ADU options for which plans are not already available – so that Inyo County isn't duplicating work already completed and to fill in the gaps on a wide spectrum of ADU designs available to builders across numerous counties.

EXCELLENT PERFORMANCE

County Administrator Nate Greenberg offered his congratulations to Risk Manager Aaron Holmberg, who received high marks from Public Risk Innovation, Solutions, and Management (PRISM) during a recent audit.

PRISM, a pool for public risk entities that offers cost-effective insurance solutions as well as risk management services to its members, found that Inyo County “is fortunate to have a low claim exposure and has developed an in-house system that handles the claims in a manner that meets or exceeds industry standards, PRISM Claims Handling Guidelines and CAJPA (California Association of Joint Powers Authorities) criteria.”

In similar news, Inyo County's Child Support Services department recently scored well with the California Department of Child Support Services, which noted the regional program demonstrated “outstanding performance” in 2022 for establishing child support orders in 96.4 percent of its cases.

“The dedication of Eastern Sierra Child Support Services has placed the California Child Support Program in a better position to improve overall performance and to serve children and families,” a letter from CDCSS Director David Kilgore states. “I wish to personally express my appreciation for all the work you and your staff have accomplished to improve the lives of California's children and families and acknowledge your contributions to the State's overall performance ...”

#####