

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, BORREGO SPRINGS COMMUNITY SPONSOR GROUP

**\*\* MINUTES\*\***

Wednesday, December 4, 2024, 4:30 p.m.

In-person at the Borrego Library, 2850 Country Club Rd, Borrego Springs & also via Zoom

**THE PUBLIC IS ALWAYS WELCOME TO OUR MEETINGS**

**WE REPRESENT YOU WHEN ADVISING THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO ON LAND USE ISSUES**

Please note that discussion items might be arranged according to interest for public discussion and might not exactly follow the agenda as given below.

**A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

**John Peterson, President - Present**  
**Judy Haldeman, Vice President - Present**  
**Bill Berkley - Present**  
**Jim Dax - Present**  
**Bruce Durbin - Present**  
**Bill Haneline - Present**  
**Rebecca Falk - Present**  
**Nancy McRae, Secretary - Present**  
**Seat #7 - AWAITING APPROVAL OF COUNTY BOS**

**B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE MEETING of November 6, 2024**

**Motion: Jim Dax**  
**Second: Bill Berkley**  
**Motion: Approved by all, except Judy Haldeman who abstained (was not present at last meeting)**

**C. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION (will be limited to 3 min):** Opportunity for members of the public to speak to the Group on any subject matter within the Group's authority that is not on the posted agenda.

No public communication was put forth.

**D. ACTION ITEMS**

1.. Review of the County Scoping Letter for Rams Hill. Cathy Milkey of T2 presenting. Also, Daniella Hofreiter, Planning Manager with the Department of Development Services, will also be present to hear our discussion and to answer any questions from the Board Members or the public. The presentation by T2 will also include a summary report on the approved visual study for the project. *(Note: the T2 presentation did NOT include a summary report on the visual study. They said this will be provided later.)*

Berkley and McRae were recused from discussion due to a perceived conflict of interest of owning real estate in Rams Hill. They were able to participate as members of the public.

**Daniela Hofreiter:** Although the scoping letter should have been sent back to applicant after 30 days, it took eight months due to complexity of application.

**Shannon Smith:** Presenting information on Rams Hills (RH) mission, update. Sustainable golf, housing options expanded, be a key element of economic vitality of Borrego Valley. Dedicated to providing world class golf course. Good jobs, meaningful careers and supporting broader community. RH owned by a family with 5 generations of roots in SD. Currently operating out of Denver. Donations and sponsorships, support of schools. 90 employees, year-round work, free summer lunches for team and families, medical insurance. Environmental Stewardship: solar since 2015, offset 100% of water use by fallowing agriculture land. Reduced water use - down 35% from prior owner, year-round operation. Public monitoring of wells. Sustainable turf completion in 2024, expected to provide additional 25% reduction in water use, for total of 50% less water than prior owner.

**Willie Lopez, GC superintendent:** Was a worker building RH back in the 80's, family is from here. Reviewed value of turf conversion.

**Updates on Project - Mark Lemon, RH Consultant:** golf casitas, approved by BSCSG in 2017 and got permits from county. Will be moving forward, submitting building permits later this month, buildings in same location, same #

of building, slightly less square footage, some changes in project design, everything is single level, will be straw bale construction.

**Rodney Bruce, RH Construction Manager:** Extraordinary Public Benefit - work force housing, working on getting 2 homes in Deep Well permitted, start construction this month, build internal Borregoan work force construction team. Working to achieve monthly housing costs between \$1500 - \$1750, working with financing program to make ownership attainable for low- and very low-income households. Also want to house teachers, EMTs, park rangers, etc. Providing work force housing equal to 10% of future RH housing.

**Shannon Smith, Project History & Update:** Do something different from prior failures. Desert-centric neighborhoods. Destination golf business model (different from DeAnza and Torrey Pines). Over 15K golfers come to Borrego each year. Entitled to: 1570 homes of which 265 have been built, (1070 future homes owned by T2), 347 acres golf, 350 hotel rooms, medical center, fire station, commercial areas. No change in number, only in placement, no change in acreage, reduced retail uses. What RH is asking for: re-zone to allow flexibility in locations, Development Agreement (DA) provides extraordinary benefits for community and 30-year timeline for development; Phased relocation of private open space easement, Specific Plan Amendment

Updates since April 2024 meeting: T2 received comments on technical studies required by County. We will incorporate any edits or changes and resubmit to County. We have been meeting regularly with BWD to discuss their infrastructure needed to serve project. T2 will pay for all.

**Mark Lemon - Open Space History:** Original proposed development (DiGiorgio) in 1974 was 1 unit per acre and 3,200 homes. Planning Commission voted 6-1 to approve. BOS considered density was too high. Reduced to 1570 homes in 1976 with 1600 acres open space in perpetuity as a buffer zone between development and park. 1980 first Specific plan.

Proposal: Vacate the 1600 acre easement, replace with new easement on exactly same acreage which allows for process to replace open space at 110% ratio. Develop 100 acres first, see how it goes.

**Shannon Smith:** Visual resources study has been accepted by the County. There will be changes in the view. Compare existing approvals to proposed. T2 has clarified the the replacement of open space will be phased so that 1600 total acres of open space (not necessarily the original open space) will always be protected.

Project Next Steps: Continue to work with the County. Continue to listen to your questions and concerns. Working toward a better Rams Hill and a better, stronger Borrego.

#### **Questions from BSCSG -**

Bill Haneline: Does the 1600 acres abut the state park? A: Part of it does. Made density changes at border to state park. Q: How come you so badly want the 1600 acres? Views? A: Create desert centric neighborhood.

Durbin: What is a desert centric neighborhood? A: Living on the desert as compared to living in the desert. Homes are more dispersed. Native landscape. Golfers don't take pictures with homes on the fairway - golfers want the open vistas.

Dax: Open space is permanent. How can it not be permanent now? A: BOS has a process to vacate public easements. Q: You have entitlements to develop 1000. Why are you not developing those? Vacant lots throughout the valley. Not many homes being built. Where is the demand for luxury homes? A: We designed this as a phased relocation of open space.

Haneline: Where is low income housing? A: There is a wide array of product in RH. Workforce housing.

Falk: Of current entitlement of 347 ac for golf, how much has been watered? North GC being irrigated now? A: No. - Falk wants to point out that even though T2 cut the entitlement those golf courses haven't been used anyway. Good info on new grass, but there was a directive from BOS in 1986 that required over time to keep reducing water usage. It's great that you're doing it, but it's in conformity with 1986 requirement. A: Have gone through water rights adjudication. Falk: Negotiations with BWD - "at this point in time we cannot provide RH with water." Questioned assertion that water that is used for GC does not affect water quality or use by residents. All that is up in the air right now. It's not in the bag. A: Water supply assessment - wait until the sustainable use study is completed. Falk: Open space in 1986 amendment BOS made it clear that part of the

reason they were approving development was large amount of contiguous open space adjacent to state park. She is worried about that. A: Will elevate that for next presentation. Housing has to be connected to sewer and out of flood plain.

Ray Lennox - District Superintendent of Parks - State Park concern is open space easement. BS Community Plan talks about creating a buffer zone, density goes down as you get closer to the park, would like to propose working group between park, county, community, RH so that buffer zone is intentional. Approves the housing initiative. Working group to come up with solid plan. A: Spoiling the park would be contrary to our business interests.

Falk: Requested Daniela Hofreiter - Don't go before BOS in summer. No one from BS is here. Is worried about 30 year time frame. So much can change. There is no like-kind property with similar value, and no oversight on what it will be replaced with.

Peterson to County: Planning department is concerned with compliance with the law. A project is the totality of the project, not just a part of it. Piece-mealing. CEQA says if you remove restrictions on 1600 acres the whole of the action must be reviewed assuming it is all impacted. Must specifically identify what the mitigation will be. Even if mitigation is at some future time, it must be detailed now. Can't review the project without knowing that.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** There was extensive public comment both in person and via Zoom. Some of the commenters were Mark Joregenson, Pam Wiedenkeller, Peter McRae, Elena Thomson, David Garmon, Bill Berkley, a resident in Club Circle, a woman visitor from Northern California and other members of the public whose names were not clearly heard. Almost all were adamantly opposed to the vacation of 1600 acres of public land set aside in perpetuity. Some also expressed concern about using scarce water on a golf course, the loss of ocotillo forest and broken promises from earlier developers. However, Berkley, speaking as a member of the public, said the benefits that T2 provides are worth losing that open space easement, particularly when we have 650,000 acres of state park around us. Thomson said we need to work together to make this a win-win situation; housing is an issue everywhere in California. Kathy Milkey (T2 legal counsel) corrected a public statement that T2 had basically left Club Circle hanging out to dry because although T2 is under contract to own the Borrego Springs Resort, they do not own it yet.

Peterson - Propose that we write a letter from the BSCSG expressing concerns we heard - we need a vital RH - 90% of the problems come from 10% of the proposal.

Haldeman - what is different from what we wrote in May?

Peterson - new info in terms of scoping letter

Durbin - more interested in the responses from developer to county letter

Falk: Daniela, are you taking notes?

Daniela: Yes, I have been taking notes. Speak to what John mentioned regarding the whole of the action. We have asked RH to establish parameters for where their mitigation is going to be - not willy nilly, when you vacate then you'll tell us where your open space will be - no that won't work. Evaluating all the impacts of the whole of the project - nothing being deferred until later. Don't need to spend the time to write another letter. The sentiments are the same as expressed in May. Negotiating with developer on extraordinary benefits that would need to be provided to get 30 year light for the project. Need to clarify: what does this mean with the 30 years. You are welcome to call or email me and ask questions about the process. Always available to any member of the public who has any questions about the project.

Falk to Daniela: Do you anticipate getting what you need from T2 by Dec date? A: It will probably be extended. I was supposed to get their scoping letter in 30 days. It took me 8 months.

Haneline: Tonight was first time so many in the community has come in to voice views, some on social media also. A letter expressing about how the citizens are feeling about this project would be useful. Peterson: Table issue of letter. Durbin: Any comments from constituents is just a letter that goes into the file. A letter from us will be more impactful when we have more information about the outcomes.

2. Election of Officers for the BSCSG 2025. Nominations are open to all Board members. Potential officers for 2025: Chair, John Peterson, Vice chair Jim Dax, Secretary Nancy McRae.

**Motion: Haldeman - Approval of all 3**

**Second: Haneline**

**Approval: Unanimous**

3. Review of the BSCSG Rules of Order, Becky Falk presenting

As background, we sent out options per policy I1 for what to use when policy doesn't cover it, February 2017 voted to pick Rosenberg's Rules of Order, but it never showed up in minutes. So we need re-affirm our votes. We have used it in the interim. Recommend to re-affirm vote from 2017. Re-vote to accept.

**Motion: Durbin - Accept Rosenberg's Rules of Order for BSCSG meetings**

**Second: Haldeman**

**Approval: Unanimous**

#### E. NON-ACTION ITEMS:

1. Status update on the Borrego Springs Micro Grid. Presenter, Sylvia McNally, Municipal Infrastructure Advisor SDG&E.

Rob Knudsen, Romi Pal, Tim Knowd - Strategic Undergrounding Projects

Subset of wildfire mitigation program. Tier 3 Extreme, evaluating all electric facilities in these areas, prioritizing what areas they will be focusing on. Objective is to reduce wildfires in area. This affects Ranchita, so discussion was stopped.

Migrogrid update - Laurence Abcede and Beverly Raposa. *(Note: This discussion was technical and difficult to hear and follow as speakers were on Zoom. These minutes do not incorporate the entire presentation)* There is a significant amount of work being done in Borrego on energy storage. Migrogrid out of service since February 18, 2023. Replacing 34 transmission poles when they had a catastrophic failure. Wasn't feasible to replace just the radiators, need to replace generators. In November 2023 put in new remote control system. The batteries are under construction in yard, existing battery, new battery and generator can cover 85% of conditions. Installed ultra capacitor to maintain stability. Demonstrating its ability to meet needs. Commissioning new battery by mid-January. Tesla battery. Replacing with 2.5 megawatt Tier 4 final, cleanest tech for diesel. Active construction on-site through year-end and early January. In-service date end of Q1 to run generators with microgrid. Peterson: Can some of us come out there. A: Yes.

2. Summary of field trip to the La Casa Del Zorro solar field. Bill Haneline presenting.

Vivian Wilke, GM and Matthew Wile (?). Wilke doesn't know anything about the vegetation out there. John Wells in September 2022 met with Joy, landscape architect who worked on library park. She suggested creosote. They didn't want to put in irrigation. If the creosote were hand watered for a year it would live, brittle bush might also work. Vivian said she's new to this, but whatever John Wells said, she'll do it. John Wells told Becky it was a process, had to get approved at the County. Haldeman recommends going back to square one. Dax there is a fair amount of creosote growing there. Ask them to water it. County just recently went to Lupe Sanchez to buy plants for new median. Put in native barrels, something with more height. Durbin - invest in a few boulders (can do landscaping without plants). Boulders are a one-time expense. Falk: Should be on all four sides. Berkley - was there irrigation water? Haneline: Wilke said no. Haneline will try to get her to come to next meeting. Bill Haneline and Jim Dax to go out to meet with her.

Peterson: Anne's nomination has been at 5th district for over a month. Has to get on agenda through the clerk. John is working on that.

Haldeman: Final request as a BSCSG member: When Bonnie Petrarch was on the board, she was liaison between BSCSG and code enforcement. There are some glaring issues, particularly the one on the circle (trash, etc. by Fredericks). Falk: Code enforcement is no longer willing to work with liaison. Bruce Durbin volunteered to be liaison and will talk with Haldeman to get more specifics on her complaint.

**F. GROUP BUSINESS:**

- 1. Resignation of Judy Haldeman Seat #5. Review of Board Seats, including potential officers for 2026.
- 3. Subcommittee Reports: None
- 4. Meeting Updates: None
- 5. Correspondence received: None

**G. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion: Dax**

**Second: Berkley**

**Approval: Unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.**

The next regular meeting is scheduled for **January 8**, 2024, at 4:30 at the Borrego Springs Library Community Room, 2850 Country Club Rd, Borrego Springs, California and via Zoom. Note that this is the **second** Wednesday of the month considering that the first Wednesday is New Years Day.

The Chair has appointed the following BSCSG Members to serve as points of contact for the following areas:

- a) Road Maintenance, Bill Haneline
- b) Dark Sky Ordinance and issues, Rebecca Falk
- c) Association of Planning Groups, Jim Dax
- d) Review of the Sponsor Groups rules of order, Rebecca Falk
- e) Landscaping at the La Casa Solar Panel Field, Bill Haneline
- f) Code Enforcement Liaison, Bruce Durbin

Emails sent to the Chair at [petersonenv@hotmail.com](mailto:petersonenv@hotmail.com) will be forwarded to the appropriate person.

Potential topics for the January agenda include: 1) review of the increased value for sustainable yield within the Borrego Valley Groundwater Basin from the Watermaster Board, 2) review the legal practice concerning potential conflicts of interests between actions before the BSCSG and individual Board Members.

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**If this Agenda is revised, a revised copy will be posted 72 or more hours prior to the meeting. The final Agenda may include additional Administrative or Non-Action items.** For further information and to be added to the Sponsor Group email list to receive agendas and agenda packets, contact the Chair at [petersonenv@hotmail.com](mailto:petersonenv@hotmail.com) . Address U.S. mail to: Community Sponsor Group, P.O. Box 1371, Borrego Springs, CA 92004-1371. For agendas, minutes and Community Plan, visit: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/gpupdate/comm/borrego.html> .

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Access and Correction of Personal Information You can review any personal information collected about you. You may recommend changes to your personal information you believe is in error by submitting a written request that credibly shows the error. If you believe that your personal information is being used for a purpose other than what was intended when submitted, you may contact us. In all cases, we will take reasonable steps to verify your identity before granting access or making corrections.

<p><b>Borrego Springs Community Sponsor Group Members:</b>          Chairperson: John Peterson Vice-Chairperson: Judy Haldeman, Secretary: Nancy McRae          Members: Bill Berkley, Jim Dax, Bruce Durbin, Bill Haneline, Rebecca Falk, Seat #7 open.</p> <hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/> <p>Standing Committees (with both Sponsor Group members and members of the public): None</p>
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