

**Board Meeting Minutes**  
**March 3, 2011**  
**Placerville Town Hall**  
**549 Main Street**  
**Placerville, CA 95667**



**I. Call to Order**

Board Chair Kirwan called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM.

**II. Oath of Office of New Members**

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul administered the oath of office to new Boardmembers Karen Finn, Representative of Department of Finance; Dick Pland, Tuolumne County Supervisor; Tom Wheeler, Madera County Supervisor; Linda Arcularius, Inyo County Supervisor; and Ted Owens, Nevada County Supervisor.

**III. Roll Call**

**Present:** John Brissenden, Linda Arcularius, Brian Dahle, Dick Pland, Tom Wheeler, Bob Kirkwood, Karen Finn (Representative for Department of Finance), B.J. Kirwan, Ted Owens, Bill Nunes, Bob Johnston, Todd Ferrara, Kathy Hardy, Dan Jiron and David Graber.

**Absent:** None

**IV. Approval of December 2, 2010 Meeting Minutes (ACTION)**

There were no changes to the meeting minutes.

**Action: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Owens seconded a motion to approve the December 2, 2010 meeting minutes. Boardmembers Dahle, Finn, Arcularius, Pland and Wheeler abstained from voting. The motion passed unanimously.**

**V. Public Comments**

Ron Briggs, Supervisor, El Dorado County District 4, extended a welcome to the Board and said he hoped the Board found the previous day's tour to Wakamatsu Ranch and Coloma State Park educational. He thanked the community members who supported the tour and reception. Briggs said the SNC has been playing a very crucial role in helping El Dorado County to reach its goals, and especially appreciated the support for Finnon Lake project.

Board Chair Kirwan thanked Briggs for the wonderful tour and reception of the previous day.

Frank Stewart, member of Quincy Library Group and the board of the California Fire Safe Council expressed his concern that funding for County Fire Safe Council coordinators throughout the Sierra Nevada is being reduced, particularly in light of cutbacks in federal Secure Rural Schools funding, which is a primary source of support for the coordinators. He asked that the SNC do what it can to help.

Boardmember Wheeler commented that it might be appropriate for the SNC to write a letter in support of continued federal funding.

Executive Officer Jim Branham commented that the SNC could not fund the coordinators with Proposition 84 Bond funds as had been previously suggested, but said the Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative Coordinating Council is going to consider approving a letter of support for Secure Rural Schools funding at its meeting later this month. He added that if the SNC Governing Board would like to take a similar position, it would need to be agendaized as an action item for the June meeting. Christine Sproul, Deputy Attorney General, concurred with the need to place the item on the agenda for the next Board meeting in accordance with the requirements of the the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act.

**VI. Board Chair's Report**

Board Chair Kirwan noted that John Laird was appointed by Governor Brown as Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency and that he had expressed a strong interest in attending the SNC Board meetings. Boardmember Brissenden said Laird would do a great job on behalf of the Sierra, which is an area the Secretary truly values.

**VII. Executive Officer's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**

Executive Officer Branham said that Kim Carr has moved to a new position with the SNC, and Julie Bear is acting as the Mt. Whitney Area Manager. He also noted that the SNC will be affected by the current budget crisis. He noted that the bond sales have been delayed until the fall, so the SNC is dependent on cash on hand at this time.

Boardmember Finn pointed out that the Governor's budget assumed that no bonds would be sold in Spring. She clarified that the problem the State is facing is that it has too many unspent bond funds, so the decision was made to suspend new bond sales until there is a clearer understanding of existing funds and cash needs..

**a. Budget and Staffing**

Amy Lebak, Personnel and Business Services Officer, gave the budget and staffing report. Lebak reported that the SNC is developing a variety of scenarios to prepare for different potential budget outcomes. She updated the Board on the SNC's efforts to comply with existing Executive Orders reducing wireless devices and fleet vehicles by 50 percent, as well as the hiring freeze. Lebak reported that SNC is in compliance with the wireless order and would be meeting with Department of General Services on the fleet vehicle reduction piece later in the day. She also let the Board know that the SNC had requested and was granted an exemption to the hiring freeze to fill the Mt. Whitney Area Manager vacancy. Branham added that in reality, a reduction in the SNC fleet would mean staff would not be out in the Region as much as they would like.

**b. Strategic Plan Update**

Assistant Executive Officer Joan Keegan recapped for the Board the steps taken to develop the draft Strategic Plan and summarized the themes of the discussion. SNC Staff has conducted workshops throughout the Region, drawing 140 attendees. The first draft of the plan will be presented to the Board in June. More outreach will continue with stakeholders before the June meeting. The final draft, following a public comment period will be presented to the Board at the September meeting.

Boardmember Wheeler asked if the Madera Visitor's Bureau had been contacted. Keegan said she was not certain, but noted that the SNC had conducted significant outreach to the recreation and tourism community. She indicated they would follow up with the Madera group.

Board Chair Kirwan noted that former Boardmember Paolo Maffei had served on the Strategic Plan subcommittee and a replacement would be needed. Boardmember Owens volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.

**c. System Indicators Update**

Keegan reviewed with the Board the process to date related to development of a set of indicators to be used to evaluate the status of the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region. She identified a number of challenges affecting the effort, including the contract freeze and difficulties finding consistent data due to the fact that most data is collected by county boundaries, not the SNC boundaries. She said the project is getting very close to being complete, noting a couple of changes from the originally approved indicators, including the addition of green business establishments/employment and "business churn" and slight changes to the fire risk and carbon storage-related indicators. Keegan said two indicators—access to high speed internet and total value and quantity of water exports—will not be available in June, because this data have been problematic to find.

Keegan thanked SNC Staff Chris Dallas, Elizabeth van Wagendonk and Steve Beckwitt for their hard work on this project.

Boardmember Kirkwood asked for clarification on the purpose of the indicators compared to individual grant-funded project performance measures, developing some measures of success for the Region as a whole, or by Subregion.

Keegan explained that the project performance measures are reflected in the SNC's annual report, and that together the Regional system indicators and project-specific performance measures will be used to promote regional understanding, make sound investments, inform strategic planning, and report results of the SNC's overall efforts.

Boardmember Graber asked about the frequency of updates to the data, to which Keegan responded that information will be posted on the SNC Web site and updates will depend on the actual data sources and how often they update their information. Graber also offered that the USGS was tasked by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior to develop carbon sequestration rates at a fine scale and they should be available in the next couple of years.

Boardmember Pland said that Tuolumne County has a profile and community indicators project updated in 2008, and would send a copy of that plan to Keegan.

Boardmember Johnston noted that there is a statewide indicators project commissioned by CalTrans. Jay Lund at UC Davis is the expert on the water transport. He added that poverty rate as measured by subsidized lunches is also available spatially from the Department of Education. He pointed out that “green business” has a problem with clear definition and data and asked to be kept in the loop on this project.

**Public Comment:**

Mike Keene, a member of the public, said that as a past forest hydrologist, he believes there is already a lot of data out there that is available, such as the Sierra Nevada framework.

Keegan said that the data used by this effort has been collected from other agencies, such as counties, the Department of Finance, economic development agencies, etc. What has proved the most successful is when the data is in a GIS format, which eliminates the boundary issues. She encouraged anyone who has ideas of other data sources or thinks we’re missing important data to please contact her.

**d. Sierra Nevada Forest and Community Initiative (SNFCI) Update**

Branham said the SNC is making steady progress and the process has reaffirmed that this is a good direction for the SNC.

SNFCI Coordinator Kim Carr reviewed the history of the Initiative with the Board and presented the staff report. She said the ultimate goal is the “triple bottom line:”

1. protect and restore our current forest,
2. start doing forest treatments at a faster pace, and
3. show the local economic benefit, and the social aspects of communities working together to maximize local benefit.

Carr said the next meeting of the SNFCI Regional Coordinating Council is March 22 in Auburn, and the subsequent meeting will be in June. Two outcomes that

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are anticipated at the Auburn meeting are the letter of support for the reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act funding of the Fire Safe Councils, and also reauthorization of the Stewardship Contracting Authority. These are being handled by the SNFCI Coordinating Council's Policy Committee.

Another subcommittee is the local forest collaborative working group. This group has convened twice since Columbia. It is developing an inventory of the number of groups—about eight to 12—that seem to fit into the goals of what SNFCI is about.

Calaveras County Supervisor and SNFCI Coordinating Council Co-Chair Steve Wilensky said that one important milestone has been achieved in that all 22 counties in the SNC Region have signed onto the SNFCI resolution.

Wilensky said that coordination of funding across jurisdictional lines is needed. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Secretary Vilsack's all-lands approach is an attempt to put the funding pieces together.

Wilensky said U.S. Forester Randy Moore has put forth the clearest picture in the past 40 years of what needs to be done in the forest, so that we can have a civil forum to get beyond the old arguments, and focus our efforts on those opportunities that are clearly before us.

Boardmember Nunes said the SNFCI Resolution appealed to the 22 counties because it contained three nuggets:

1. Opportunity to reduce litigation, with more money going to the forest instead of courtroom;
2. The reduction of the risk of forest fires...treating the forest, reducing the fuel load, bio-mass to cogeneration plants, and;
3. Economic picture...not just sustaining the mountain communities but improving them.

Boardmember Jiron said the U.S. Forest Service has its Forest Planning Rule out for 90-day comment and would appreciate receiving input on that.

Boardmember Arcularius agreed with Jiron regarding the planning rule. She said SNFCI needs some strengthening in the social part. She added that she will be attending a roundtable meeting in Washington D.C. next week, which is an important meeting to open up communication at that level.

**e. Mokelumne Watershed Environmental Benefits Project Update**

Branham said that due to the interest and support from some statewide and local groups, this project was an opportunity to “ground truth” some of the academic discussions about ecosystem services, and what it means from an investment or policy perspective.

Carr said the Sierra has many natural, environmental benefits that are valuable to society such as clean, reliable water, carbon storage in soils and trees, sustainable fish populations and opportunities for recreation. The goal is to provide private and public land managers with incentives and investment to maintain and implement conservation practices to ensure the sustainability of the watershed.

Carr said the primary steps of this first project phase include the formation of a 20-person work group of diverse organizations, including Resource Conservation Districts, East Bay Municipal Utility District, the U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Gas and Electric, the City of Lodi, and others.

Boardmembers responded positively to Carr’s presentation and expressed their support for the project. Boardmember Dahle thanked Carr for her work on behalf of all of those who live at the top of the watershed who want these issues to be addressed for all of the watersheds in the Sierra.

Boardmember Kirkwood said there is a project called SWEEP that is looking at the effect of forest management practices on water supply and quality and suggested that staff explore the potential to share information between the two projects.

Boardmember Hardy encouraged Carr to look at the City of San Francisco/Hetch Hetchy model where the City is making payments primarily to Yosemite National Park and the Stanislaus National Forest to maintain the health of the upper watersheds which then benefits the water that gets to the downstream users.

**f. Sierra Day in the Capitol**

SNC Program Manager Kerri Timmer reported that Sierra Day in the Capitol is April 6, and the theme this year is “The Journey of Water,” from the Sierra to other parts of the state. She acknowledged The Sierra Fund and the Sierra Nevada Alliance for initiating and planning the initial Sierra Day in the Capitol. She said this year’s event will focus on the economic impacts, benefits, investment in the headwaters and the area of origin. The SNC is thankful to have the involvement this year of Mountain Counties Water Resources Association. She encouraged the Board to attend and interact with the legislature as part of the stakeholder teams who will be visiting the members’ offices.

**g. Sierra Nevada Water Report**

Branham reported the Water Education Foundation (WEF) is preparing a Sierra Nevada report, with a requirement that WEF would maintain final editorial content, which the SNC felt would be the best approach to ensure credibility of the report. The SNC added a number of organizations to the review process, including water agencies, and other organizations which have had comments about the past activities in the Sierra. He said the SNC would have preferred that the few references to “legacy” issues taken from the Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project would not have been included without providing additional context as to the positive changes that have occurred and the value of those activities. It will be a strong report to assist policy makers in making the connection between fire, water, and healthy forests, which has not been addressed in other water reports. He added that it will be a “foundational report” and hoped it would be ready by Sierra Day in the Capitol.

Boardmember Pland said he was concerned whether the board is being asked to endorse the report before having had a chance to read it. He said he has only seen an early draft of part of the report that referred to the 15-year-old Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project (SNEP) report which had some negative portrayals of former practices in managing the forests. He said he is concerned that this report is based too much on the SNEP report.

Branham responded by saying that while there are references to the legacy issues, but in total, Branham said, the report is very positive and makes the point about the importance of managing the forests and about the importance of working landscapes. Branham said that WEF is under contract to produce the report and it is their report.

Boardmember Arcularius asked if there is a point in time where the board looks at the ability to edit a report that the SNC has funded. She said in the future it would fit in with the other goals of the SNC, in terms of building support and collaboration, to have some review before giving up editorial rights.

Boardmember Kirkwood suggested disclaimer language be added to inform the public that while the SNC funded and provided information and guidance on the development of the report, it does not own the editorial content.

Chair Kirwan suggested that the Board allow the Executive Officer to work with WEF to ensure that the issue is addressed appropriately.

**h. Geotourism MapGuide Project Update**

Mt. Lassen Area Manager Bob Kingman reviewed with the Board the progress of the project which is being implemented in partnership with National Geographic and the Sierra Business Council. He showed the Web site, stressed the unique

aspect of the user-generated content and noted the information which was available at the display table. Kingman provided an update on progress in the

Southern Sierra, He noted the entire project will be completed in 2011 and that work with local communities to sustain and further develop their geotourism assets will continue to keep the momentum going and maintain freshness of Web site.

**i. Central Subregion Report**

This item was removed from the agenda due to time constraints.

**VIII. Deputy Attorney General's Report (INFORMATIONAL)**

Deputy Attorney General Christine Sproul noted that there are "Assuming Office" statements for new Boardmembers to file with SNC Board Liaison, Theresa Burgess. She pointed out that Boardmembers have an obligation to take ethics training and that a Web link will be sent to them, so they can complete the online training.

Sproul also suggested that the SNC is in a good position to synthesize various reports that are being developed about water in the State and build on them in crafting its strategic plan and meeting its mission.

**IX. Consideration of the SNC 2011 Action Plan (ACTION)**

Executive Officer Branham introduced the draft 2011 SNC Action Plan which identified actions and relevant performance measures to be undertaken and/or completed within calendar year 2011. Branham requested Board approval of this plan.

**Action: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Dahle seconded a motion to approve the proposed Sierra Nevada Conservancy 2011 Action Plan. The motion passed unanimously.**

**X. 2010-11 Grant Awards (ACTION)**

Executive Officer Branham introduced the item by noting that this solicitation process had a few technical glitches, but explained that all information was made available to the public well within the public notice period. Branham noted that the effort had been beset by many challenges, not the least of which was a relatively small amount of money and so many good project applications. He pointed out that the projects presented represent four times more demand than available funding.

Branham reported that because of the large number of applications and SNC's desire to be inclusive of outside expertise, a different evaluation process was used for this grant round.



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SNC Grants Administrator Angela Avery presented the background and the timetable. There were 129 applications received in September, representing \$40 million in requests. Of these, 29 projects were recommended: 12 acquisition or site improvement projects totaling \$8 million, and 17 projects totaling \$2 million that include planning work leading to “on-the-ground” projects.

Area Managers Bob Kingman and Julie Bear reviewed the projects by Subregion that were included in the Board packet.

Boardmember Kirkwood said it was a remarkably strong set of projects. He applauded the process to winnow it down and the rigor of the scoring process with professional review. He added that the strength of the recommendations is clear and the strength of the process is wonderful.

Boardmember Graber said he was struck by how strong these projects were as compared to a few years ago and said that was attributed to the SNC staff helping to educate the applicants. Board Chair Kirwan also expressed her appreciation of the review process and said it made it easier for those on the Board to participate and understand. Boardmember Wheeler thanked the staff for helping to attract better applications. He said the South Subregion had better projects this time.

Boardmember Arcularius said she was pleased to be able to make these awards and appreciated efforts to help build capacity in grant writing in Sierra communities. She said she appreciated the step to have boardmembers involved in committee reviews and enjoyed participating.

Boardmember Pland said that during the subregion conference call he raised concerns about Ackerson Meadows but appreciated the staff’s response to his questions. He said that while Yosemite supported the project, he wanted to point out it isn’t in the National Park.

Branham noted that the SNC would welcome ideas and thoughts from the Subregional representatives on ways to improve the process of communicating proposed projects to local governments in the Region. He indicated that the current notification process rarely results in comments until very late in the process.

Arcularius responded that Boardmembers should also take on the responsibility to inform members on the Boards of Supervisors of counties within the Subregion. She also said she continues to be concerned about acquisitions and will have more to say about that topic in the next grants discussion.

### **Public Comment:**

Dan Corcoran, Environmental Manager El Dorado Irrigation District, identified multiple benefits of the Hazel Meadows/Creek project before the Board and urged support.

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Cheri Jagers, Recreation Superintendent El Dorado Irrigation District summarized the importance of the Hazel Creek project and asked for the Board's support.

Mark Egbert, El Dorado RCD encouraged the Board to adopt staff's recommendations, recognizing the quality of the projects and attributed that to SNC staff work and their time in the field. He asked that the SNC continue to give staff the opportunity to get into the field to see potential projects.

Mark Rowney, Mariposa Public Utilities District said this is the first project (The Stockton Creek Preserve) in this watershed that includes 500 acres of land. The project will improve trails and water quality in area. He thanked staff and the Sierra Foothill Conservancy and urged approval.

Chuck Peck, Sierra Foothill Conservancy stated that the Topping Ranch project is a culmination of over 15 years of work, building on public and private investment in protecting Finegold Creek and the corridor on either side of the Topping Ranch. He urged support of the project

Bridget Fithian, Sierra Foothill Conservancy and the Upper Merced River Watershed Council (UMRWC) urged support of the Topping Ranch and UMRWC project. She commended SNC staff for the excellent communication and for making efforts to be out on the ground connecting with diverse stakeholders.

Cam Tredennick, Senior Project Manager, Western Rivers Conservancy indicated he was excited to continue working projects protecting portions of the Deer and Mill Creek watersheds. He noted that the SNC staff was very helpful and responsive on the projects.

**Action: Boardmember Owens moved and Boardmember Kirkwood seconded a motion to adopt necessary CEQA findings for project SNC 419, the Lower Ash Creek Wildlife Area Restoration Project; adopt necessary CEQA findings for project SNC 322, the Hazel Creek and Hazel Creek Campground Restoration Project; authorize the grants listed in Agenda Item X, Exhibit A, with the exception of project 361, Rodden Ranch Conservation Easement which is conditionally approved pending final support of the appraisal from Department of General Services; and authorize the Executive Officer to file the appropriate CEQA documentation including NODs and NOES with the State Clearinghouse and enter into necessary agreements for all approved grant projects. Boardmember Brissenden recused himself from voting on project #407 Humbug Creek Watershed Assessment and Management Plan. The motion passed unanimously.**

Boardmember Kirkwood asked that in the next round the applicants should separate the summaries so that information is more readily available.

**XI. 2011-12 and 2012-13 Grants Program (ACTION)**

Executive Officer Branham summarized actions at last meeting and noted that the staff report has laid out options. He noted that it may be a while before more bond dollars are available, and exactly when that money could be spent is unknown. The SNC is moving forward on an "as-cash-needed" basis at this point. Branham added that this is an opportunity for the Board to make sure the SNC is on the right track relative to its strategic plan.

Grants Program Manager Kerri Timmer said the SNC wants to be as strategic as possible as it moves forward with last \$10 million in Proposition 84 grant dollars. She summarized actions to date, previous direction from the Board and how the funds were distributed.

Some initial concepts were presented for consideration at the last Board meeting. Based on input from the Board and stakeholders, Timmer said the SNC has presented the Staff Report ideas and asked the Board for additional guidance to help develop a specific recommendation for consideration at the June Board meeting.

Timmer said the next steps would be as follows:

- Direction from Board today
- Solicit more input from stakeholders
- Owens/Graber committee to help develop formal proposal
- Present to Board in June
- Final guidelines in September
- Launch after Board meeting in September

Boardmember Nunes said he does not agree with the proposal to spend funding on agricultural lands/working landscapes before forest health projects. He would like the funding to go to fire safe councils, fuel reductions and those projects that will also provide an economic benefit as soon as possible.

Timmer said that the SNC's suggestion to spend funding on forest projects in the second year is only because of the time it takes to develop those kinds of projects.

Nunes said no fire safe types of projects were approved this year and feels that they may need more outreach and assistance with the process. He said that since these fire safe projects fit right in with SNFCI, he would like to see the Board make it a high priority.

Branham said the SNC wants to figure out how to engage the Fire Safe Councils to get more quality project applications.

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Boardmember Wheeler said he agreed with Boardmember Nunes. He asked if staff can staff help the Resource Conservation Districts and Fire Safe Councils to help make them more competitive, especially given that they often receive matching funds.

Wheeler also encouraged projects relative to water storage/sediment removal. Timmer said there may be an avenue to address that problem now that the SNC sits on the Department of Water Resources Water Plan Update State Agency Steering Committee as a voice for the Sierra.

Boardmember Owens also spoke in favor of forest health projects, and support to applicants. He suggested workshops to help proponents build their projects.

Boardmember Brissenden said he supports forest issues as well, and added to the SNC should make certain that funding for conservation easements are aimed at lands that are truly threatened.

Boardmember Dahle also expressed concern with the conservation easements that are perhaps not truly threatened by commercial development. He said lands should be checked for zoning, Williamson Act status, etc, and looked at closely to make sure the system is not being "gamed."

Boardmember Kirkwood said he supports a more Region-wide distribution, not earmarked for Subregions. The SNC has a statutory method to spread it around, but has gone beyond what has been required to honor that requirement. It seems we can move to a Region-wide approach for the remaining funds.

Owens said the Region-wide approach is more of a result of the economic situation we are in and not necessarily a long term approach.

Timmer said SNC is only suggesting we not set a project target by Subregion, and that staff will continue to look across the entire geographic Region.

Arcularius asked for more landowner participation, from those people who are working 12-hour days out there on the land, which affects their ability to develop projects.

Branham said the SNC does need help with that, has tried to reach out, and is open to any suggestions. Arcularius agreed to assist in this effort.

### **Public Comment:**

Mike Keene had a question as to why an award could be made to a federal land management agency.

Branham replied that all federal agencies can apply under the Proposition 84 and SNC statutes. The project in question scored very high and was therefore

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recommended. He indicated that such projects on federal lands must show benefit beyond the boundaries of the National Forest.

Frank Stewart, California Fire Safe Council (CFSC) Boardmember asked the SNC to wait and see what happens with the US Forest Service Fiscal Year 2011-12 Budget indicating that federal funding may be limited in the future. He also stated that the SNC should help CalFire complete their programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for fuel reduction projects.

Steve Wilensky, Calaveras County Supervisor and SNFCI Co-Chair said the SNFCI group should serve as good advisors to the Board. He said it would be a good idea for the SNC to form a landowner/working landscape community to advise the SNC, similar to SNFCI.

Kirkwood asked for some more understanding of how the two-year strategy will help the process for project development.

Nunes received consensus from the Board that the motion would state that the two focus areas were "working landscapes and healthy forests," and not choose one over the other in terms of importance or timing.

**Action: Boardmember Kirkwood moved and Boardmember Wheeler seconded a motion to direct staff to solicit public input on pursuing a two-year grant program based on the policy direction outlined in Alternative 2 of the staff report, consistent with the comments of the Board, and to bring back a formal proposal in June 2011.**

**Boardmember Kirkwood amended the motion and Boardmember Dahle seconded to include both working landscapes and healthy forest as areas of focus for the grant program, but not identify a priority for year one or two. The amended motion passed unanimously.**

**XII. Boardmembers' Comments**

There were no comments from the Board.

**XIII. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**XIV. Adjournment**

Board Chair Kirwan adjourned the meeting at 1:38.