

ITEM 4A

Coachella Valley Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes February 12, 2026



The audio file for this committee can be found at: <http://www.cvag.org/audio.htm>

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** – The meeting was called to order by Chair Gary Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs Councilmember, at 10:32 a.m. in the Coachella Valley Water District, Steve Robbins Administrative Building Training Room, 75515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert.

Following the pledge, roll call was taken and it was determined that a quorum was present.

Members Present

Mayor Pro Tem Ernesto Gutierrez
Mayor Pro Tem Frank Figueroa
Director Anthony Bianco
Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner, *Chair*
Councilmember Dana Reed
Mayor Elaine Holmes, *Vice Chair*
Mayor Linda Evans
Director Amber Duff
Mayor Evan Trubee
Councilmember Grace Garner*
Councilmember Ted Weill
Mayor Pro Tem Kathleen Fitzpatrick
Councilmember Jan Harnik
Councilmember Ben Guitron

Agency

City of Cathedral City
City of Coachella
Coachella Valley Water District
City of Desert Hot Springs
City of Indian Wells
City of Indio
City of La Quinta
Mission Springs Water District
City of Palm Desert
City of Palm Springs
City of Rancho Mirage
Riverside County – District 2
Riverside County – District 3
Riverside County – District 5

Members Not Present

Director Alex Cardenas
Councilmember Stephanie Virgen
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez

Imperial Irrigation District
Riverside County – District 1
Riverside County – District 4

**arrived at Item 2*

Chair Gardner led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance. There were no agenda modifications. Coachella Valley Water District Director Anthony Bianco recused himself from item 4B due to owning property in close proximity to the property referenced in the item.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

An emailed public comment was received from Lory Salazar Vasquez of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding Item 5D and the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission's legislative efforts related to the burrowing owl.

Emailed public comment was received from Michael Harrington regarding Item 5C. Mr. Harrington also addressed the Commission in person, expressing his support for the ranger

program and noting his desire to see increased efforts focused on biological resources in addition to cleanup activities.

Donald Ziegler, a resident of Palm Desert, addressed the Commission regarding Item 5B to emphasize the urgent need for cooling centers powered by microgrids. He encouraged CVCC and the Coachella Valley Association of Governments to pursue available Proposition 4 funding, noting that millions of dollars are accessible for such projects.

3. COMMISSION CHAIR / DIRECTOR COMMENTS

Executive Director Tom Kirk welcomed everyone and reminded Commissioners about the meeting room logistics.

Mr. Kirk provided an update on the burrowing owl, noting that staff continues to work closely with the appropriate agencies to address the letter received from the Department of Fish and Wildlife. He confirmed that staff will continue to share updates as more information becomes available.

A video update was shared with the Commission highlighting the recent cleanup efforts made possible through the \$500,000 CalRecycle grant.

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

IT WAS MOVED BY MAYOR EVANS AND SECONDED BY COUNCILMEMBER GUITRON TO APPROVE THE CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS.

- A. Approve the minutes of the January 8, 2026, meeting**
- B. Authorize the Executive Director to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Coachella Valley Water District for the future acceptance of a flowage easement on property intended for required habitat restoration, and authorize the Executive Director and/or Legal Counsel to make clarifying edits prior to execution**
- C. Adopt Resolution No. 2026-01 authorizing the CVCC, as an eligible multijurisdictional body, to utilize the teleconferencing provisions established under Senate Bill 707**

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 13 AYES, 1 ABSTENTION AND 3 MEMBERS ABSENT FOR ITEM A.

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 13 AYES, 1 RECUSAL AND 3 MEMBERS ABSENT FOR ITEM B.

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 14 AYES AND 3 MEMBERS ABSENT FOR ITEM C.

**Mayor Pro Tem Ernesto Gutierrez
Mayor Pro Tem Frank Figueroa
Director Anthony Bianco**

**Aye
Aye B, C/ Abstain from A
Aye A,C/ Recuse from B**

Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner	Aye
Director Alex Cardenas	Absent
Councilmember Dana Reed	Aye
Mayor Elaine Holmes	Aye
Mayor Linda Evans	Aye
Director Amber Duff	Aye
Mayor Evan Trubee	Aye
Councilmember Grace Garner	Aye
Councilmember Ted Weill	Aye
Councilmember Stephanie Virgen	Absent
Mayor Pro Tem Kathleen Fitzpatrick	Aye
Councilmember Jan Harnik	Aye
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez	Absent
Councilmember Ben Guitron	Aye

4.1 ITEMS HELD OVER FROM CONSENT CALENDAR

None

5. DISCUSSION / ACTION

A. Acquisition of two parcels in the Thousand Palms Conservation Area

CVCC acquisition manager Diana Rosas presented the staff report.

APPROVE RESOLUTION 2026-02 FOR ACQUISITION OF TWO PARCELS CONSISTING OF APPROXIMATELY 10.0+/- ACRES IN THE THOUSAND PALMS CONSERVATION AREA AT A COST NOT TO EXCEED \$105,000 PLUS CLOSING AND TRANSACTION RELATED COSTS NOT TO EXCEED \$5,000; AND AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE ALL NECESSARY CONTRACTS AND TAKE SUCH OTHER ACTIONS AS NECESSARY FOR THE ACQUISITION

THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 14 AYES AND 3 MEMBERS ABSENT.

Mayor Pro Tem Ernesto Gutierrez	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Frank Figueroa	Aye
Director Anthony Bianco	Aye
Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner	Aye
Director Alex Cardenas	Absent
Councilmember Dana Reed	Aye
Mayor Elaine Holmes	Aye
Mayor Linda Evans	Aye
Director Amber Duff	Aye
Mayor Evan Trubee	Aye
Councilmember Grace Garner	Aye
Councilmember Ted Weill	Aye
Councilmember Stephanie Virgen	Absent
Mayor Pro Tem Kathleen Fitzpatrick	Aye
Councilmember Jan Harnik	Aye
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez	Absent

B. Update on State Legislative Efforts

Tasha Newman from the Pacific Policy Group provided an update on state legislative efforts, including outlining what to expect in the coming year.

Member discussion ensued with Ms. Newman answering questions from the Commission regarding the updates provided.

No action was taken as this was an informational item.

C. Development of the Conservation Ranger Program

Management Analyst Will Steichen presented the staff report.

Member discussion ensued with Mr. Steichen answering questions from the Commissioners regarding the usage of drones and the potential avenues that will be explored to hold those engaging in illegal activity accountable.

No action was taken as this was an informational item.

6. INFORMATION

A. Attendance Record

B. Contracts under Executive Director's signing authority

C. Acquisition Status Report

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next **Coachella Valley Conservation Commission** meeting will be held on Thursday, April 9, 2026, at 10:30 a.m. at the Coachella Valley Water District, Steve Robbins Administration Building Training Room, 75515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert, 92260.

12. ADJOURN

Chair Gardner adjourned the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Elysia Regalado, Deputy Clerk