

DESERT REGIONAL TOURISM AGENCY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS | MEETING MINUTES-SEPTEMBER 2026

California Welcome Center – Yucca Valley

Meeting: Regular Board Meeting | September 24, 2026 | 2:00–3:04 p.m.

Presiding: Terry Taylor-Castillo

Location: Joshua Tree Retreat Center - Sanctuary

1. Attendance and Quorum

Directors recorded: Julie Bruley; Terry Taylor-Castillo; Bill Neeb; Michelle Maresh.

Directors absent: Zee Bell-Drury; Jacque Guevara

Staff recorded: Linda Poindexter

Guest: Matt, Yucca Valley Film Festival.

2. Approval of Agenda and Prior Minutes

Agenda: Motion by Julie Bruley, seconded by Bill Neeb; Motion carried.

August minutes: Motion by Bill Neeb, seconded by Terry Taylor-Castillo; Motion carried.

Email-approved items: Acceptance of Jacqueline Guevara's Board Member Application. Motion by Julie Bruley, seconded by Bill Neeb; Motion carried.

3. Treasurer's and Gift Shop Reports

The Treasurer's report was presented by Kathie. Funds were moved to a money market account to earn higher interest. Park-pass sales were reported as strong, with increased Hummer-tour demand for passes.

Gift shop revenue was reported as down. Additional or updated signage options were considered.

4. Welcome Center and Program Updates

Visitor traffic was approximately 400 below 2025 levels; foreign visitation was also down. The Welcome Center feather flag was not consistently displayed due to high winds creating difficulty for staff to take out/bring in; staff-friendly methods for securing a flag were under discussion. Recommend moving to a permanent ground-stake system.

Harvest Hosts bookings are occurring. Attendance at a Harvest Hosts Escapade RV conference in Arizona is under financial review by Kathie.

Art contest: 91 entries and more than 1,000 People's Choice voters were reported. Installation of new artwork was planned as soon as possible. Sample marketing was considered successful.

Art Tours catalogs are being distributed. Art Tours bags continued to sell, including prior-year sponsor items. The Visit California Fall meeting is postponed pending a new hire, with February or March discussed as possible timing.

Picnic tables / outdoor area: Parking-lot constraints, required curbs and ADA access were discussed, with an estimated cost of \$20,000. Staff/volunteer field trips to Reset or Desert Christ Park were also discussed; a message was left for Roxanne about a tour.

Mural project has stalled. Linda will contact Celeste as the new point of contact for the public arts program before the end of October to project an update.

5. Business and Board Actions

New Board Member

Michelle Maresh, a 43-year resident and retired teacher, submitted her Board Member Application to the board for consideration.

Motion / action: Motion to accept Michelle Maresh's Board Member Application.

Moved / seconded: Julie Bruley / Bill Neeb. Motion carried.

Yucca Valley Film Festival co-host participation

Matt invited DRTA/CWC to co-host the eighth Yucca Valley Film Festival. The proposed involvement included providing water and/or soda, arranging two to three volunteers, possibly preparing five gift bags for the November 8 closing day, and considering breakfast food trucks for November 7.

Motion / action: Participate as a co-host on the terms discussed. Approve budget for up to \$300 for non-alcoholic beverages.

Moved / seconded: Julie Bruley / Bill Neeb. Motion carried.

Harvest Hosts parking-space signage

Signage was proposed to identify marked Harvest Hosts parking spaces.

Motion / action: Approve \$400 for Harvest Host signage.

Moved / seconded: Julie Bruley / Bill Neeb. Motion carried.

Marketing test through December

A trial of social-media marketing, See's Candies and streaming was discussed. The goal is to shift from "seat-of-the-pants" social media to a trackable strategy focused on e-commerce and driving physical foot traffic.

Motion / action: Test marketing through December at up to \$1,200 per month.

Moved / seconded: Julie Bruley / Bill Neeb. Motion carried.

6. Board / Public Comments and Future Agenda

No board comments or public comments were recorded.

Items proposed for future discussion: mural on the building's west side (Frank investigating; Jeff Brady and Commissioner Matt Rousch mentioned); picnic/lunch area for staff and visitors; food truck rodeo; potential JTGC revival; "rest stop" signage and coordination with the Chamber; picnic tables; potential solar parking covers; possible Reset Experience and Desert Christ Park field trips; and review/reset of the 2025–2026 planned agenda.

7. Closed Session / Personnel Action

Personnel matters discussed. Now that there is supervisory staff 7 days a week, there is no need for a 3rd person on the weekends. As a result, it is recommended we lay off the extra staff as there are no other days she is available to cover.

Motion / action: Tonya Chiu to be laid off as of October 4, 2026, as a cost cutting and staffing reduction needs measure.

Moved / seconded: Julie Bruley / Bill Neeb. Motion carried.

Additional restructuring needs recognize the need to update Linda Poindexter's title from Operations and Activities Manager to Chief Operations Officer to be more in line with the needs of the organization.

Motion / action: Effectively immediately Identify Kristina as Front Office Coordinator, removing the disciplinary actions from her job duties and rename Linda Poindexter as Chief Operations Officer (COO) of California Welcome Center staff.

Moved / seconded:

8. Adjournment and Next Meeting

Adjournment at 3:04 p.m.

Next meeting: October 22, 2026, 1:00–3:00 p.m.; Town liaison meeting 12:30–1:00 p.m.

Prepared by: Julie Bruley **Date:** 09/24/2026

Board approval: _____ **Date:** _____