SWEETWATER VALLEY CIVIC ASSOCIATION
MEETING HELD AT SWEETWATER COMMUNITY CHURCH
MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING
OCTOBER 7, 2026

Directors Present: President Felix Felix, Vice President Mike Clowers, Treasurer Stephen Stonehouse, Secretary Liz Stonehouse, Mike Parnell, and Sharon Coleman.

Members Present: Dennise Elliot, Steve Elliot, Bill Coleman, Judy Tieber and Tony Tieber.

Guests Present: Fire Chief Mike Smith, Sheriff Sgt. Luis Carrillo, Ardyel Lim, Marianne Delatorre, Marla Farrange, and Heather Kriletich.

1. **Call to Order:** 6:37 PM by President Felix Felix at the Sweetwater Community Church. Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **Special Welcome:** A welcome greeting was provided to our members, guests, representatives of our elected officials, and to those contemplating joining the SVCA.

3. **Attendance:** Members were reminded to sign in for attendance record accuracy.

4. **Approval of September 3, 2026 Minutes:** President Felix called for a motion to approve. Mike Parnell motioned to approve, Steve Elliot seconded. Passed.

5. **October 2026 Treasurer's report:** Treasurer Steve Stonehouse provided the following:
$2,748.41 Previous balance
-$45.00 PayPal to Mail Chimp for September
-$210.00 Ck#881 Paid to Keep It Growing, September Web Fee
+$170.00 Membership Dues Received
$2,663.41 Ending balance

6. **Bonita-Sunnyside Fire Department:** Fire Chief Mike Smith provided an update on the activities and operations of the Bonita-Sunnyside Fire Protection District. Chief Smith reported that the department experienced a relatively moderate month, responding to approximately 160 calls for service. He noted that the recent heat wave appeared to keep more residents indoors, resulting in fewer emergency calls than normal.

Chief Smith advised that the department remains actively involved in statewide wildland fire operations. Bonita-Sunnyside personnel have been deployed to several incidents, including the Timber Fire, Dome Fire, and other fires throughout California. The district continues to provide Fire Line Paramedics who serve as advanced life support personnel for firefighters operating in remote fire environments. Several district employees have been deployed for more than six weeks and are expected to return in the coming weeks.

Chief Smith highlighted several community-relations activities completed during the month, including participation in numerous September 11 remembrance events. He thanked SVCA and other community organizations for supporting the Fire Department and helping honor those who lost their lives

during the attacks of September 11, 2001. The department also hosted one of its periodic auction dinners and participated in the Taste of Bonita, which Chief Smith described as an excellent opportunity to meet and interact with residents outside of emergency situations.

From a fire prevention standpoint, Chief Smith reported that the department's Prevention Bureau and Fire Marshals remain active conducting inspections throughout the District. Approximately 13 planned inspections were completed during the reporting period, with particular emphasis on care facilities, vegetation management, and seasonal fire and life-safety inspections as the department works through end-of-season fire prevention requirements.

Chief Smith also provided a training and recruitment update. He explained that the District continues to support the Heartland Fire Training Academy in El Cajon, where firefighter-paramedics receive their initial training and participate in live-fire exercises at the regional burn facility. The department is currently conducting recruitment efforts to fill a firefighter-paramedic vacancy created through promotions. Interviews and testing are underway, and the District anticipates extending a conditional job offer in November. If all requirements are successfully completed, the new firefighter is expected to begin field assignments early in 2027 following academy and training requirements.

Chief Smith reported positive news regarding the District's fire apparatus replacement program. He announced that the department recently received confirmation of a $1 million state appropriation secured through the efforts of Assemblymember

Alvarez. Combined with previously secured funding, approximately $1.8 million has now been identified toward the purchase of a replacement fire engine. Chief Smith noted that the engine was ordered approximately three-and-a-half years ago, but manufacturing delays continue to affect delivery timelines. The fully equipped apparatus is now expected to cost approximately $2.3 million.

During the question-and-answer session, discussion occurred regarding the recent fire on San Miguel Road. Chief Smith reported that firefighters successfully prevented the fire from spreading beyond two outbuildings and a recreational vehicle. While some animals were lost in the incident, many others survived, and no civilian or firefighter injuries occurred. Chief Smith expressed appreciation for the mutual-aid assistance provided by neighboring agencies, including Chula Vista, National City, San Diego, and Lakeside Fire resources. He also confirmed that the incident remains under investigation to determine the cause and origin of the fire.

Vice President Mike Clowers thanked the Fire Department for its continued work along Proctor Valley Road, particularly vegetation-clearing efforts that have significantly reduced wildfire hazards in the area. Chief Smith acknowledged the partnership and credited County Roads personnel for much of the work while noting that the Fire Department assisted with vegetation mitigation efforts. He emphasized the importance of attending community meetings in order to stay informed and maintain a fire-safe community.

Additional discussion focused on ongoing challenges associated with purchasing new fire apparatus. Chief Smith explained that

fire engines are highly specialized and customized emergency vehicles, and that agencies throughout California continue to experience long manufacturing delays and substantial cost increases. He noted that the District's 2012 frontline engine cost approximately $600,000, while a fully equipped replacement engine is now projected to cost approximately $2.3 million. Residents also referenced recent news reports regarding delays within the fire apparatus manufacturing industry and the rapidly increasing costs associated with emergency-response equipment.

Chief Smith concluded his report by thanking the community for its continued support of the Bonita-Sunnyside Fire Protection District.

7. SD County Sheriff/CHP

A. SD County Sheriff: Sgt. Luis Carillo of the San Diego County Sheriff's Department provided an update on public safety activity within the Bonita area. Sgt. Carillo reported that property crime activity during the reporting period included two vandalism incidents, one fraud case, one larceny theft, two residential burglaries, two thefts from vehicles, and one vehicle theft. He noted that deputies continue to respond to a wide variety of calls for service throughout the community, including issues involving transient populations and other public safety concerns.

Sgt. Carillo provided details regarding a recent residential burglary on Orchard Lane that resulted in a significant law enforcement response involving patrol deputies, K-9 units, and

Sheriff's helicopter support. He reported that two of the three burglary suspects were apprehended and that efforts continue to identify and arrest the third suspect. The residence, which was undergoing renovations at the time of the incident, had previously been targeted. Sgt. Carillo advised that some of the homeowner's property was recovered as part of the investigation. He also credited nearby K-9 personnel, who were conducting training exercises in the area, with assisting in the rapid response.

Several residents asked questions regarding K-9 deployment procedures. Sgt. Carillo explained that public warnings are issued before a K-9 is released and that these announcements are intended to provide suspects the opportunity to surrender before a search begins.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding the continued increase in illegal e-bike and electric motorcycle activity throughout the community. Residents expressed concerns about unsafe riding behavior, excessive speeds, and the use of motorized vehicles in areas where they are prohibited. Sgt. Carillo advised that the Sheriff's Department is working with County officials and CHP to identify solutions and educational efforts aimed at reducing the problem. He explained that deputies must carefully evaluate whether to initiate or continue pursuits involving juvenile riders because of the potential danger to the riders, deputies, and the public. He noted that incidents involving e-bikes often present significant liability and safety concerns.

Residents were encouraged to continue reporting violations so that incidents can be documented and analyzed. Sgt. Carillo

explained that law enforcement agencies are able to identify patterns, locations, and times of activity based on reported incidents and have begun tracking and charting information that can be shared with partner agencies, including CHP, to assist with enforcement efforts.

Discussion also focused on concerns regarding motorized e-bikes and electric motorcycles operating within the local bike park. Members of the public expressed frustration regarding recurring activity in the area. Sgt. Carillo explained that enforcement can be difficult unless deputies directly observe violations and noted that addressing the issue often requires coordination among multiple agencies. During the discussion, it was announced that the County was in the process of replacing the lead park ranger assigned to the area.

Questions were also raised regarding the Sheriff's pursuit policy and drone program. Sgt. Carillo stated that the Sheriff's Department does not maintain a strict no-pursuit policy, but supervisors evaluate each pursuit based on public safety conditions and numerous operational factors. He further explained that the Sheriff's Department utilizes drone technology when available, although staffing and funding limitations differ from programs operated by neighboring jurisdictions.

Before concluding the discussion, Marianne Delatorre from Supervisor Paloma Aguirre's office advised attendees that the County had initiated development of a countywide ordinance addressing e-bike and electric motorcycle issues, particularly those involving off-road electric motorcycles being operated on public roadways and in areas where their use is prohibited.

B. CHP: Representative unavailable, no update was provided.

8. Elected Officials Representatives Reports:

A. Marla Farrage, Senior Council Assistant, representing the Office of Mayor John McCann provided the following: Chief of Staff Amanda Fredeluces is currently on maternity leave and recently welcomed a healthy baby girl. Ms. Farrage stated that both mother and child are doing well.

Ms. Farrage reported that Mayor McCann continues to meet regularly with residents, businesses, organizations, and community leaders throughout Chula Vista. Recent activities included discussions regarding Caltrans encampments and efforts to address homelessness, public safety, sanitation, and quality-of-life concerns. The Mayor recently attended the State of Bonita event, Bonita Fest Melodrama, El Grito celebrations, and several 9/11 remembrance activities.

She also announced an upcoming Public Safety Town Hall scheduled for Saturday morning from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at the MAC Community Center and invited residents to attend.

B. Ardyel Lim representing Senator Steve Padilla's Office relayed the following: Mr. Lim reported on several outreach activities completed by the Senator's office following the close of the legislative session. He highlighted a successful Senior Resource Fair that provided fraud prevention, insurance,

consumer protection, and financial literacy information to senior residents.

Additionally, Mr. Lim reported that Governor Newsom signed thirteen of the Senator's fifteen bills. Legislative priorities included artificial intelligence regulation, consumer protections, insurance reform, environmental concerns, and protections for vulnerable populations. He noted that two bills were vetoed, including legislation related to AI use in mental health treatment and a bill addressing Imperial County representation matters.

Mr. Lim also announced an upcoming screening and discussion of the documentary *Can't Look Away*, which focuses on the impact of social media and technology on youth. The program was scheduled for October 13 at Southwestern College. Additional information was provided regarding CalKIDS scholarship opportunities and MTS's reduced-fare PRONTO program.

In response to a question concerning funding for the Bonita-Sunnyside Fire Department's new fire engine, Mr. Lim reported that Senator Padilla's office previously provided support for requests seeking state funding assistance.

C. Marianne Delatorre, Senior Community Rep. for SD County District 1 Supervisor, Paloma Aguirre reported the following: Ms. Delatorre began by thanking the SVCA and community members for participating in the recent State of Bonita event and reported that concerns raised during that

meeting continue to be monitored and addressed by County staff.

Ms. Delatorre discussed recent efforts to address commercial vehicle storage and parking concerns near the Sweetwater Road animal shelter. New signage has been installed prohibiting vehicle storage and sales parking in the area, and enforcement efforts are underway. Residents were encouraged to utilize CHP's dedicated community reporting email for parking, speeding, and other traffic-related concerns.

Addressing ongoing e-bike safety concerns, Ms. Delatorre informed on the recent approval of a countywide injury-tracking dashboard and discussions regarding future enforcement and education measures. A future e-bike community forum is planned for November.

announced an upcoming El Niño preparedness workshop that will focus on flooding, evacuation planning, emergency alerts, and sandbag resources. Residents were encouraged to report known flooding areas so County Public Works can conduct preventative maintenance. She also reported continued advocacy and funding efforts related to the San Miguel Road drainage and roadway improvement project.

Additional announcements included an invitation to Supervisor Aguirre's Día de los Muertos celebration and information regarding CHP's specialized community traffic enforcement team serving Bonita and surrounding areas.

9. Special Guest Presentation:

A. Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT) Presentation, presented by Clinical Director, Heather Kriletich: Heather Kriletich, Clinical Director of the Mobile Crisis Response Team (MCRT), provided an overview of the County's behavioral health crisis response services. The program, operated through Telecare, partners with local law enforcement agencies while responding independently to appropriate mental health and substance-use-related crises throughout San Diego County.

Ms. Kriletich explained that MCRT was established approximately five years ago to provide an alternative response model for behavioral health emergencies, helping reduce demands on law enforcement and emergency rooms while connecting individuals with appropriate services and support. The program provides countywide coverage and responds to people of all ages experiencing mental health crises, substance-use issues, grief, caregiver stress, depression, anxiety, psychosis, and other behavioral health concerns.

MCRT teams include licensed clinicians, case managers, and peer support specialists. Teams are capable of conducting field assessments and, when necessary, initiating psychiatric holds pursuant to Section 5150 of the Welfare and Institutions Code. Ms. Kriletich explained that team members transport individuals in specially equipped vehicles as an alternative to traditional law enforcement transportation whenever appropriate.

Residents received information regarding response procedures, dispatch protocols, response times, and the use of the County's Access and Crisis Line and the 988 crisis number. Ms.

Kriletich emphasized that MCRT is available 24 hours per day and can respond throughout San Diego County.

A question-and-answer session followed regarding resources for veterans, program funding, response capacity, school-based mental health services, and the growing need for behavioral health support throughout the region. Ms. Kriletich reported that MCRT serves approximately 900 individuals per month and noted that the program continues to expand its services and staffing levels.

10. Continuing Business:

A. SVCA Sponsorship of the State of Bonita Address with District 1 Supervisor, Paloma Aguirre, Update:

President Felix provided a recap of the September 3rd State of Bonita Address hosted by SVCA in partnership with County Supervisor Paloma Aguirre's office. He reported that the event was well attended and provided residents an opportunity to ask questions and engage directly with County leadership regarding issues affecting the community. Several attendees commented favorably on the event format, noting that written questions and structured discussion allowed for a productive exchange of information while keeping the meeting on schedule.

President Felix reported that Supervisor Paloma Aguirre presented SVCA with a proclamation recognizing the organization's continued service and advocacy on behalf of the community. During the presentation, President Felix thanked current and past board members, volunteers, and community

leaders for their dedication and service to the Sweetwater Valley community.

Special recognition was given to several longtime volunteers and supporters. Certificates of appreciation were presented to Sharon Coleman and Judy Tieber in recognition of their years of service and commitment to SVCA and the community. Attendees expressed appreciation for the event and for the Supervisor's willingness to engage directly with residents on community concerns.

B. Fire Fighters & First Responder Appreciation Day

Update: President Felix reported on the September 11 Fire Fighters and First Responder Appreciation Day event hosted by SVCA in honor of the Bonita-Sunnyside Fire Department. Although firefighters were called away several times during the event to respond to emergencies, SVCA members were able to spend time with personnel and express the community's appreciation for their service and dedication

SVCA members discussed the significant support provided by volunteers and local businesses. Donations of food and supplies were received from community members and businesses, including Bonita Valley Market and other local establishments. President Felix and several members expressed appreciation to all volunteers who donated their time, food, and resources to ensure the event's success.

Volunteers recognized during the discussion included Sharon Coleman, Steve and Dennise Elliott, Daryl Hern, Liz Stonehouse, Stephen Stonehouse, and numerous additional contributors. Members noted that the firefighters greatly

appreciated the homemade meals and that food remained available for station personnel for several days following the event.

A discussion followed regarding Fire Department operations and traffic-calming measures. Several members revisited concerns about speeding in residential neighborhoods and discussed the potential impacts that speed humps, speed cushions, and other traffic-control devices can have on emergency response vehicles. Members discussed the need for continued dialogue and research into solutions that address both neighborhood traffic concerns and emergency response

C. Taste of Bonita, Update: President Felix provided a recap of SVCA's participation in the Taste of Bonita held at the Bonita Museum and Cultural Center. Members reported that the event was well attended and provided an excellent opportunity for community outreach and engagement.

SVCA volunteers staffed the event, assisted with activities, and represented the organization throughout the evening. Members commented on the positive atmosphere, strong vendor participation, and excellent community turnout. The Bonita-Sunnyside Fire Department again participated in the event and served its popular chili while simultaneously remaining available for emergency response calls throughout the evening.

Several members thanked the Taste of Bonita organizers and volunteers for their efforts and noted that event logistics and fire apparatus placement worked particularly well this year,

allowing firefighters to quickly respond to emergencies when necessary.

11. New Business:

A. Appoint Nomination Ad Hoc Committee: President Felix announced the need to appoint a Nomination Ad Hoc Committee to begin the process of recruiting candidates to fill the vacant SVCA Seat 1 position. Following discussion, Liz Stonehouse and Steve Elliott volunteered to serve on the committee. No additional volunteers were identified.

B. Recruitment to Fill Vacated Seat 1: President Felix reviewed the recruitment process previously utilized by the Association and directed the Ad Hoc Committee to begin outreach to membership and potential candidates. Committee members will coordinate communications and report back to the Board regarding recruitment progress and candidate interest

12. Community Forum:

A. County Traffic Advisory Committee – VP Mike Clowers, Update: Vise President Mike Clowers reported on recent County Traffic Advisory Committee activities affecting the Bonita area. He advised that a traffic study had been completed at the intersection of Bonita Mesa Road and Mesa Vista Way following requests from area residents. Based on traffic counts and engineering analysis, the committee unanimously approved a recommendation to convert the intersection to an all-way stop. The recommendation will

proceed to the County Board of Supervisors for final consideration.

Vise President Clowers explained that traffic engineers collected vehicle count and speed data using temporary traffic monitoring equipment and determined that the location met the warrants necessary for installation of the traffic control improvement.

B. SCPG Meeting on Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) - Chair Felix, Update: President Felix provided a summary of discussions held during the recent Sweetwater Community Planning Group meeting regarding proposed Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS). He explained that County representatives presented information concerning battery storage technology, permitting requirements, and future regulatory efforts.

President Felix shared concerns regarding the fire risks associated with large-scale battery storage facilities, as well as potential environmental impacts involving hazardous materials, airborne contaminants, and groundwater contamination. Discussion included questions related to battery lifespan, disposal, recycling practices, emergency-response planning, and long-term environmental stewardship.

Members noted that emerging technologies often present benefits as well as unintended consequences, citing other historical examples in which environmental or public-health concerns emerged years after widespread adoption. Residents were encouraged to review County information, participate in

public meetings, and provide feedback to County decision-makers as the ordinance development process continues.

President Felix advised that copies of the County presentation materials would be made available to interested residents upon request.

C. SVCA Membership - Secretary Liz Stonehouse, Report:

Secretary Liz Stonehouse provided the following membership information:

Five returning members:

- Andrea Liam
- Jesse Conner
- Covery Newton
- Greg and Cheryl Cox
- Janet Erie

One New Member:

- Sandra Vivas

The Board and members were encouraged to continue promoting membership and inviting neighbors, family members, and local organizations to participate in the SVCA.

13. Other Announcements and Items Not on the Agenda:

A. Marianne Delatorre invited the SVCA to participate in an upcoming community preparedness event on October 13 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Members agreed that the Association should

set up a table with its banner, brochures, and membership information. The event was described as an opportunity to connect with residents and introduce the concept of neighborhood captains who could help neighbors identify available resources during emergencies. The event was open to residents of Bonita, Spring Valley, and Lincoln Acres. Delatorre had sent a PDF flyer and asked that it be posted to the SVCA website.

B. Steve Stonehouse shared information about California Senate Bill 296, recently signed by the Governor, concerning property-tax relief for qualifying California residents who are 100% disabled veterans. He said eligible low-income veterans may qualify for a full exemption up to the applicable property-value limit, while those above the income threshold may qualify for a partial exemption. He encouraged members to share the information with eligible veterans and noted that applicants must apply through the County because the benefit is not retroactive.

Members also discussed flooding concerns along San Miguel Road. Information had been shared with three residents affected by prior flooding, and the County was continuing to address drainage and floodplain matters. Ms. Delatorre said she would be canvassing San Miguel Road the following day from approximately 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., beginning near Conduit Road and proceeding toward Proctor Valley, to speak with residents and distribute flyers. Members offered to join her. She clarified that flyers would be handed directly to residents or left at doors, not placed in mailboxes.

14. **Adjournment:** There being no further business, President Felix Felix adjourned the meeting at 8:55 PM.

Next Meeting: November 4, 2026

Respectfully submitted by Liz Stonehouse, Secretary

Mission Statement: The Sweetwater Valley Civic Association (SVCA) fosters and promotes community spirit and civic pride through proactive engagement with the County, local elected and appointed officials, law enforcement, emergency first responders, and community groups/organizations with the goal of improving the quality of life within the Sweetwater Valley community.