

Making the Sweetwater Valley the best place to live.

P.O. Box 232, Bonita, CA 91908 www.sweetwatervalleyca.org



SWEETWATER VALLEY CIVIC ASSOCIATION MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING February 2, 2022

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:45 by Vice President Sharmane Estalono via Zoom. She welcomed everyone to the meeting. We began with the Pledge of Allegiance. Sharmane asked for a moment of silence to honor the men and women of our Armed Forces, Law Enforcement, Fire and Safety Professionals; and an appreciation of those currently serving to protect us, including Health Care workers and Teaching Professionals. At approximately 7:00, Judy Tieber, the President and Tony Tieber, the Secretary and several other members joined the meeting. This disconnect was caused because several people were using the incorrect Zoom Address. Once everyone was on the Zoom, Judy, as president, thanked Sharmane, and Judy began with item #2 on the Agenda.

Directors Present: Judy Tieber, Steve Stonehouse, Tony Tieber, Sharmane Estolano, Mike Clowers, and Sharon Coleman.

Members Present: John & Harriet Taylor, Jim Woodford, Jim Groth, Prudence Prince

Guests Present: Bonita-Sunnyside Fire Chief Michael Sims, Andrew Harvey from Supervisor District 1, Nora Vargas' Office, John McCann Chula Vista Council member, Amanda Angulo from Council member John McCann's office, Sheriff Candidate Kelly Martinez, Matt Rubel (Campaign Manager), Crime Prevention Specialist Julio Garcia, Chula Vista Police Dept Lt. Gino Grippo, Other guests present were Barbara Poukkula. Brian Felber, Corina Pandeli, Carri Fernandez, Delia Arancibia and others identified only by their first name.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Judy asked for a motion to approve minutes. Stephen Stonehouse moved to approve; Judy Tieber provided the second. Minutes approved as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Stephen Stonehouse reported the February 2022 Treasurer's Report.

	<u>February</u>
Checking	\$ 628.19
Certificate of Deposit	\$2,464.50
Ending Balance	\$3,092.69

There were expenses for supplies, KIG web Services (2 months) and the Kiwanis Club Sign. The Treasurer's report was accepted as presented.

Fire Safety: Bonita Fire Chief Mike Sims: Chief Sims reported the CVFD transport compliance rate for January was 97.8%. The Chief gave a "shout out" to Josh Krimston who was the Bonita FD Firefighter of the Year. Currently, Bonita FD Captain Mike Smith is assisting as a rater with the Imperial Beach FD for their Engineer Promotional exam. The Chief noted that the 34th Heartland Fire Academy is in the second week, and the training is going well; 18 recruits started the program but only 16 remain. Bonita FD Engineer Bryan McInnish is serving as one of the

instructors at the Academy. This month, Chief Sims will be taking Engineer MCInnish to a leadership conference in Irvine.

During February, Bonita Fire Department crews will be cutting down dead palms along the river bottom. The chief requested that we give them a honk and a wave. Starting in March, the contractor, selected by the Bonita FD, will also be cutting dead palms and transporting the debris to the land fill. Judy requested that all trails remain open during this work.

Law Enforcement Reports:

CHP, Officer Salvador Castro: Not present

Sheriff Dept. Crime Prevention Specialist, Julio Garcia: Crime is up in the area, but Bonita still has the lowest crime rate in South County. Although crime is up, arrests are also up. One major issue is car break-ins. The advice is to never leave items in your car in plain view. Many crimes are occurring close to the freeways since these locations provide easy “get-away” options. Specialist Garcia showed a Crime Map which illustrated where crimes are being committed in Bonita.

Specialist Garcia addressed the homeless by indicating they have a unit in the Bonita area that works the homeless issue. At one encampment, the sheriff’s homeless unit offered 12 people remedial services, including housing, but only 2 accepted the unit’s offer. Nonetheless all the homeless in that location moved, probably to a new location, but will probably come back to this location, eventually.

The Sheriff Department is interested in school safety as regards to traffic and positioning officers in Bonita school areas to protect the school children. Recently, there have been 2 sheriffs who have spent 1.5 hours on patrol near schools. Judy thanked the Sheriff’s Department for patrolling Sweetwater Rd at Valley Vista school.

A discussion arose regarding the Safety Center in Bonita. The response was provided by Jim Woodford. This led to a question from Harriet Taylor regarding the Sr. Patrol and the Sunnyside School patrolling by the Sr. Patrol, which has been extremely limited because of covid. Jim projected that the Sr. Patrol would be at Sunnyside School again beginning in March. The Sr. Patrol needs volunteers, and the academy training schedule is later this year in Poway. Since this is a long-distance drive, the suggestion was made that training happen once a year closer to Bonita. People wondered if the Sheriff Deputies could be at the Sunnyside School during peak traffic times when most needed. Specialist Garcia indicated that he would bring the Sunnyside school traffic issue at his next meeting with officers

A discussion arose about car break-ins at the Morrison Pond staging area. The break-in times seem to be in the late afternoon (i.e., 4-6 p. m.). Officer Garcia took note of the issue but reminded everyone that the deputies’ shift starts at 6:00 p.m. and they need 30 minutes to check out and interface with the officers on the next shift. This entire process takes about 45 minutes.

The Sunnyside Safety Patrol officer, Barbara Poukkula, the Sunnyside principal, and Sharon Quinn (Sunnyside safety committee) talked about Sunnyside School and traffic control. The school’s safety patrol starts at 7:05 a.m. and lasts until approximately 7:45 a.m. when school starts. Traffic gets heavy at 7:20 a.m. In the afternoon, school dismisses at 1:50 p.m. There are also safety patrols on Central at Bell Bonnie Brae at the same time as on San Miguel Rd (SMR). On Friday, school dismisses earlier so all patrols start at 12:50 p.m. Several other discussions occurred regarding Sunnyside School such as the location of deputies when they support the

school and the solar project currently underway at the school and its affect on traffic. Specialist Garcia asked Barbara to send him the names of people at Sunnyside school that Sheriff officers should contact so traffic control will be more efficient. Jim Growth addressed the traffic issue on SMR by indicating speed was a problem especially on Saturday and Sunday when most people use the bike park.

A discussion about the theft of catalytic converters was addressed by Specialist Julio Garcia who noted this is a problem in north and east counties, for the last four months but not in Bonita. There are some thefts in the South Bay.

Chula Vista Police Officer: Lt. Gino Grippo of the Chula Vista Police Department: Since this was Lt. Grippo's first meeting with the SVCA, Council Member John McCann introduced the C.V. police officer who has been on the Force for 18 years and does an excellent job. John, then, turned over the discussion to Lt. Grippo

Lt. Grippo reminded us that part of Bonita is in Chula Vista and C. V. officers are in that part of Bonita as part of their standard patrol activities. Judy told the Officer that Chula Vista police officers in the CV part of Bonita are appreciated. Again Lt. Grippo indicated that they do have several officers in Bonita on a regular basis and that 2 canine patrols are close by. Lt. Grippo also indicated that traffic is a concern and people agreed that traffic is a top concern. People also said that officers on motorcycles work very well when enforcing traffic laws. Further discussion revealed that CV police and the sheriff work together during emergencies and that traffic enforcement is jurisdictional.

Further discussion included panhandling on Bonita Road and E Street, cooperation among the CHP, Sheriff and CV Police, homeless along the 805, and involving the Sr. Patrol in some situations.

Elected Representative Reports:

House of Representatives Sara Jacobs' Office Christopher Frantz: Not present

Council Member John McCann: The Council member noted the trash strike has ended but Republic Services is still not back to full performance. He further indicated that Chula Vista has a plan to pay off the SR125 toll road and is moving forward with that plan which includes CALTRANS taking over maintenance of the SR125. Some of the Councilman's activities on SR125 have involved State Senator Ben Hueso. Discussion followed with the consensus that the elimination of toll was far in the future. Most people seemed more concerned about the toll from SR54 to San Miguel Ranch Rd which causes excessive traffic in Bonita by drivers wanting to avoid the toll. Councilman McCann admitted that solving the toll problem is a "heavy lift" but that progress toward a solution is being made. John Taylor addressed the financing for the SR125 which requires \$40 million in 2027 to pay off an installment of the loan. John Taylor was under the impression that SANDAG might adjust the toll to help pay the installment and hoped they would not increase the toll to help pay the installment. Council McCann told us that he believes that the first phase of the plan is to get SANDAG to refinance the current loan and he is hoping that the entire loan can be paid off in 10 years. Jim Groth indicated that US Representative Jacobs may have federal funding available, and that John McCann should contact her.

Councilman McCann addressed Rohr Park by indicating no condos are planned and that upgrades to the park have already been made and more upgrades are planned for the park and the golf course within the park. Councilman McCann indicated he is pursuing a master plan for Rohr Park and wants to form a committee of stakeholders including representatives of Bonita on the Committee.

People wanted to know about the status of the Berdeski strip mall on Bonita Rd. and whether Chula Vista was working to get improvements there. Councilman McCann indicated a new roof is in process on one of the buildings and that Chula Vista is working with the owner to get other improvements accomplished. Chula Vista's plan for the shopping center is to work in a similar fashion as they did with the Von's shopping center on Bonita Road.

Andrew Harvey, Supervisor Nora Vargas Representative: Andrew noted that the Traffic Advisory Committee (TAC) will accept new appointees in March 2022. He noted that Supervisor Vargas' district changed because of the Independent Redistricting Commission report. She gained some areas while losing others; Bonita remains in District 1. Andrew indicated that Shigella bacterial infection cases had abated, and no new cases have been reported. Jim Groth thanked Andrew for working with County staff to get the La Finca property fenced and cleaned up.

New Business. Guest Speaker. Undersheriff/Candidate Kelly Martinez

Judy's introduction of Kelly Martinez, currently serving as the Undersheriff of San Diego County.

I am excited to announce our guest for this evening's meeting, Kelly Martinez, who serves as the current Undersheriff of San Diego County. Kelly is an announced candidate for the position of Sheriff, San Diego County, and was just included in Sunday's SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE feature article on Phenomenal Women in Law and Public Safety. Kelly was recognized for her more than 36 years of service and leadership to the citizens of San Diego County.

While our Civic Association is a-political, in that we do not endorse candidates running for public office, we feel it is important to:

- know the candidates,
- what are their priorities,
- how best will they accomplish their stated objectives,

- and, perhaps most importantly, how responsive will they be to our local concerns and important issues.

With that in mind, our association crafted candidate discussion questions that have been forwarded to Ms. Martinez. We hope these questions will be the starting point for a meaningful discussion with time for questions.

Kelly, please feel free to organize the rest of this meeting however you wish. I only add that we try to conclude our meetings by 8:30 p.m.

With that, I now turn the meeting over to Kelly Martinez, Candidate for the Office of Sheriff, San Diego County.

Undersheriff/Candidate Martinez gave a shoutout to Specialist Garcia and thanked him for the work he does. She gave a brief history of her work experience starting her career at Las Colinas. Her husband led a canine unit here in Bonita. She reported that she runs the day-to-day operations in the Sheriff's Department and administers a \$1B budget. She the listed the large numbers of job responsibilities that the Sheriff's Department has.

Undersheriff/Candidate Martinez underscored her current endeavors and those she would pursue if elected to office of Sheriff, San Diego County. The first goal is the hiring of new officers and retention of current officers. Many current officers are retiring. In addition, she noted that the jails have both an acute shortage of healthcare professionals and deputies. Existing health care professionals are on mandatory overtime. She indicated that there is a shortage of 187 Health Care Professionals. She is working to resolve these issues with staff increases and better pay.

Her second goal is to ensure public safety and noted there has been an uptick in violent crimes where guns are used. Theft has also been a problem.

A third goal is to address the cannabis situation, with an emphasis on unlicensed facilities. In 2020 the Sheriff's Department set up an enforcement team which she intends to continue. She indicated that licensed cannabis dispensaries are under reasonable control, and the plan is to eliminate unlicensed dispensaries during 2022, since this was the goal of the 2020 enforcement team. She further addressed on-premises use of cannabis and her concerns and plan to address the issue. She is concerned about on-site consumption and then driving. She plans to collaborate with the County, who sets the cannabis rules, to ensure the safest environment for all people in the County regarding all forms of cannabis use but especially on-site use. She indicated that a Safety Campaign is warranted to inform on-site users, that there is an alternative to their driving after use, such as Uber.

Another goal of Undersheriff/Candidate Martinez is investing in the jails. Investment hasn't been done in a long time and is dearly needed. She reminded us that people incarcerated in jails don't stay there forever and eventually are released; and the Sheriff's department must account for that release.

Judy mentioned the issue of Sr. Patrol training and wanted a training location to be in the South Bay vs. always in Poway. Undersheriff/Candidate Martinez recognized the Sr. Patrol and the benefits they bring to Bonita and other communities. She noted the next Sr. Patrol academy will start on February 22, 2022. Candidate Martinez floated the idea of on-line training, such as using Zoom or Teams combined with on-site training. Jim Woodford, a Sr. Patrol member for 15 years, told us he trained in Poway. He noted the Sheriff has a large facility in Rancho San Diego that could be used for training. Undersheriff/Candidate said she was familiar with that facility and was aware of other facilities that could be used such as the one at Southwestern College.

People talked about the Safety Center located at the Greg Cox Civic Center and the benefits of the Safety Center to the Bonita area. People thought the Safety Center might be underutilized. Some thought retired military veterans might be a source for new Sr. Patrol officers. Jim noted that the Safety Center accommodates three groups: The Sheriff Deputies, the Chula Vista Police, and the CHP and all three have a stake in how the location is operated. He further noted that Chula Vista has developed their own operations center, located in the Otay Ranch area, and that they now use the Chula Vista center and has not the Bonita center. Jim noted the Sr. Patrol in Bonita used to have 20 members but currently has only 12. Consequently, they can only put out a car 3 x week vs. two cars/day in the past. Jim noted that they have office space at the Bonita/Sunnyside Fire Department and use the facilities there for parking their cars and the Speed trailer. The parking lot at the Safety Center is not adequate for parking the cars and the trailer.

Jim Woodford postulated that retired military vets would be an asset in hiring. John Taylor thought it might be a good idea to reach out to the American Legion for recruits. Other people thought that recruitment was a good idea because they did not want the Safety Center to close. Jim noted that the Sheriff's Deputies do write their reports at the Safety Center. Jim Woodford noted they were having trouble attaching and towing the Speed trailer.

In reference to Candidate Martinez, Jim Groth thought people should research why there is a lack of recruits and perhaps incentives might make a difference. Candidate Martinez said she would look at all alternatives including thought certain underemployed workers, or people looking for a career change, might be considered as recruits. Judy supported Jim Groth and noted San Diego is a wonderful place to work but need support from all levels of the Sheriff's Dept to both retain and hire new workers. The Candidate told us that it takes one year to train a recruit.

Candidate Martinez indicated the Sheriff's Dept. has received \$100 million to recruit jail-based healthcare professionals. However, the Sheriff's Dept. must compete with other types of healthcare facilities for the same workforce. In closing, Candidate Martinez noted she will be Acting Sheriff starting Friday, February 4th. We thanked Candidate Martinez for her time and interest in our community.

Continuing Business: None

Community Forum:

Traffic/Roads – Mike Clowers provide the following written report.

On Friday, January 28th the County Traffic Advisory Committee approved the installation of an all-way stop on Proctor Valley Road at Jonel Way/Bonita Meadows Lane.

TAC also approved a three-way stop in the Highlands at the intersection of Central and Country Trails.

These two items will go to the Board of Supervisors on May 18th for final approval.

After receiving some community concerns about the speeding thru the school zone on Sweetwater Road at Valley Road adjacent to Valley Vista Elementary School I went there to take a closer look. There is currently a School Zone Warning "when children are present" signs east- and west-bound. There is a School crosswalk at Valley Road that is monitored by a signal light.

The community would like to see flashing yellow school zone warning lights installed in the east- and west-bound lanes on Sweetwater Road that are set to a determined time throughout the day, just like the warning signs on San Miguel Road at Sunnyside Elementary School.

County roads maintenance crews were in the Sunnyside area cleaning up tumble weeds, brush and the sidewalk leading up to Sunnyside Elementary School from Bonita Road. I also received a phone call from department manager Steve Croft of the County Roads Maintenance Department. Steve told me he has only three people on staff and they are not able to get help from the Probation Dept to assist with brush clearing.

Pothole repairs, graffiti removal,	County:	Chula Vista:
Burned-out streetlights:	(877) 684-8000	(619) 397-6000
Illegal dumping:	(858) 694-2212	(619) 397-6000

Planning Group – Steve Stonehouse reported that the last Planning Group meeting included election of officers, a decision to table the sign request by the local 7/11 and heard and passed a set-back variance request at 3985 Vista San Miguel.

Membership – Sharon Coleman told us the new SVCA medallion was installed on the Welcome to Bonita sign and looks nice. She has the old medallion which perhaps the Bonita Museum might like to have. Sharon then gave a membership update:

Org/Profit Partner - 4, Org/Non-Profit Partner- 6 (includes 1 Gold), Silver/Family- 1 Family- 20, Individuals- 12, Gold- 19. She also mentioned the various costs associated with membership: Gold \$250, Silver \$100, Family \$25, Individual \$15, and Organizations \$50

Sr. Volunteer Patrol - Jim Woodford reported there were no patrols in January. However, one person manned the Safety Center front counter twice a week for a total of 36 hours.

Trails: Mike Kukuchek. Mark was not available.

Sweetwater Valley Civic Association

List of Concerns for discussion with candidates for the Office of San Diego Sheriff

1. If you are elected Sheriff of San Diego County, how will you address our specific community safety issues related to living in an unincorporated area located in the middle of a large metropolis?

- a) The only places we see a Deputy's car in Bonita are at Donny's Café and the Safety Center. Their visual presence is almost non-existent.
 - b) Our traffic issues are significant with Chula Vista through-traffic from the south and east and San Diego/National City traffic cutting through Bonita from the north. Bonita is a "free zone" with no consequences for traffic violations and unsafe driving.
 - c) The Bonita Safety Center is an important community asset, but it is closed. The door is locked even when Sheriff's vehicle(s) are parked outside.
2. We value our Sr. Volunteer Patrol, but we are seeing a downward trend in recruitment and retention. The location of the current training venue in Poway for 10 days on heavy traffic commute days (Monday-Friday) is a major deterrent for retired people. We try to avoid going anywhere during busy commute times. Would you consider rotating this training program between the Poway and the Rancho San Diego Substations?
 3. Littering is against the law. How can the Sheriff's Dept. help to deter illegal dumping such as we see along Proctor Valley Rd (in the County area), Quarry Rd, Morrison Pond, and a few other places?
 4. How can the Sheriff's Dept and the CHP communicate and cooperate to provide more continuous traffic control oversight? For example, during the busiest commute times in Bonita the CHP staff is busy on the freeways. The CHP officer can only spend mid-day patrolling in Bonita one or two days/week and never on weekends. Can the Sheriff Deputies be covering the traffic violation hot spots during those times? We are desperate to provide safe school crossings for students both in the morning and the afternoon. We almost had a child and parent hit by a driver who did not stop for the red-light school crossing on Sweetwater Road at Valley Vista Elementary School. We have the same issue on San Miguel Road for the Sunnyside Elementary School students.
 5. Would you consider establishing a Traffic Division within the Sheriff's Department?
 6. Do you have a vision for the best way the Sheriff's Dept. can play a role in the on-going homeless issues plaguing our community? (Panhandling, littering, illegal camping etc.)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
 Anthony P. Tieber
 Secretary, SVCA

Mission Statement: The Sweetwater Valley Civic Association is the direct conduit to local County elected and appointed officials, law enforcement and emergency first responders to discuss and resolve issues related directly to our quality of life within the Sweetwater Valley communities.