SWEETWATER VALLEY CIVIC ASSOCIATION
MEETING HELD AT BONITA MUSEUM and CULTURAL CENTER
MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 3, 2026

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

Members Present: Dennise Elliot, Steve Elliot, Bill Coleman, Mark Kukuchek, Judy Tieber, Tony Tieber, Daryl Hern, Barbara Scott, Tom Pocklington, Wendy Wilson, Frank Borik, and Jim Groth.

Guests Present: Fire Chief Mike Smith, SD Sheriff Lt. Christopher Galve, CHP Officer Marcus Marlin, Sgt. Luis Carillo, Ardyel Lim, Genevieve DePerio Fong, Robert Sanchez, Marianne Delatorre, Ernesto Castenada, and Mayor John McMann.

1. **Call to Order:** 6:05 PM by President Felix Felix at the Bonita-Museum and Cultural Center. 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 August 5, 2026 Minutes:** President Felix called for a motion to approve. Liz asked that an amendment be made to remove SVCA member Jake Hill as he was not present. President Felix called for a motion to approve the August 5, 2026 Minutes with the amendment. Liz Stonehouse motioned to approve and Mike Clowers seconded. Passed unanimously.

5. Liz Stonehouse provided the September 2026 Treasurer's report.

$2,903.41 Previous balance
$45.00 PayPal to Mail Chimp
-$210.00 Ck#880 Paid to Keep It Growing August Web Fee
+$100.00 Membership Dues Received
$2,748.41 Ending balance

6. **Bonita-Sunnyside Fire Department:** Fire Chief Mike Smith provided an update on the Bonita-Sunnyside Fire Protection District activities. Operationally, the department had a busy month responding to more than 200 calls. In addition, two fire-line medics from the local region were assigned to fire operations in Big Sur. As a result, the department is currently operating under a staffing drawdown, while remaining committed to maintaining local coverage and responding to emergencies in the community.

The Fire Marshal continues to conduct inspections and work with community members to identify and mitigate fire hazards, particularly during this time of year.

Chief Smith also shared positive news regarding the department's funding request. He recently received confirmation from Assemblymember Alvarez's office that the department's request for $1 million toward a new fire engine

has been included in the state budget. The department is awaiting final approval. This funding would help close the gap on the purchase of a new fire engine, which is expected to cost nearly $2 million.

Lastly, Chief Smith noted that the Fire Department will participate in the upcoming Taste of Bonita, where the crew will be serving their famous chili and interacting with the community, he encouraged the public to attend.

7. SD County Sheriff/CHP

A. SD County Sheriff: Lt. Chris Galve of the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, welcomed the group and thanked the community for the opportunity to reconnect with SVCA. Lt. Galve reported that crime activity in our area has remained relatively steady, responding to approximately 200 service calls and 160 deputy-initiated activities per month.

The monthly average for crimes against persons, including assaults and domestic violence, is approximately four (4) incidents per month and crimes against property average approximately 7.5 to 8 incidents per month.

During the question-and-answer period, a resident reported using the County's "Tell Us Now" reporting system to report tree branches overhanging a traffic signal at Sweetwater Road and Briarwood Avenue, making the signal difficult to see for motorists turning onto Briarwood. The resident received a call from the Sheriff's Office but was uncertain whether the call was simply acknowledging receipt of the report or whether the issue had been referred to the Sheriff's Department.

Lt. Galve noted that reports of this type may be routed to another County agency or potentially to CHP, depending on the issue. He encouraged the resident to contact him if assistance is needed in determining the appropriate agency and invited members and residents to raise any questions or concerns.

B. CHP: Officer Marcus Marlin provided an update on the department's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, which was recently reestablished in the Bonita area. Officer Marlin explained that he and his partner are responsible for addressing community traffic and parking complaints, school-zone enforcement, and other proactive traffic-enforcement activities. Their coverage includes Bonita, Lincoln Acres, and Otay, as well as 4S Ranch. Officer Marlin reported the following combined statistics for himself and his partner: 413 traffic citations, 26 parking citations, 13 vehicles taken into storage, and 62 72-hour parking warnings/notices.

Officer Marlin thanked the community for the emails and traffic concerns being submitted and encouraged residents to continue providing information. Officer Marlin provided the following contact information for the CHP COPS program:

Email: 645-COPS@chp.ca.gov
San Diego CHP Office: (858) 293-6000

A resident reported that, approximately four or five months earlier, there had been a series of incidents involving individuals leaving used tires at several locations, including Bonita Baptist Church, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and near the Fire Department. The County subsequently removed the

tires. The resident asked CHP to remain alert for similar activity in the future.

Officer Marlin said he would remain proactive and watch for the issue.

Another resident thanked CHP for bringing the COPS program back to the community, noting that the program had been absent for approximately 10 years and expressing appreciation for its return.

8. Continuing Business:

A. Membership Drive: President Felix reported that SVCA is in the midst of its membership drive, with membership applications available at the front entrance. He expressed appreciation to members who have already renewed their memberships and encouraged others in attendance to consider joining the Association. President Felix emphasized that civic engagement and participation help improve the quality of life in the community and that increased membership provides greater opportunity for the community to work together and accomplish shared goals.

B. SVCA Elections: President Felix asked Denise and Secretary Liz Stonehouse to assist with tallying the election ballots. Members holding ballots were instructed to vote for the nominated candidates by raising their yellow ballots. Members were then given an opportunity to indicate if they were not in favor of the selected candidates; no opposing ballots were raised.

Secretary Liz Stonehouse announced the election results:

- President: Felix Felix
- Vice President: Mike Clowers
- Secretary: Liz Stonehouse
- Treasurer: Stephen Stonehouse
- Seat 2: Steven Elliott
- Seat 4: Richard Scott

Following the announcement, newly elected Vice President Mike Clowers, thanked those in attendance and commented on the number of new faces at the meeting. He encouraged attendees to return to future meetings and become more involved in the community.

9. New Business

A. Request for Approval to Sponsor Taste of Bonita:

President Felix presented a request for SVCA to sponsor and volunteer at the Taste of Bonita, scheduled for Saturday, September 19, 2026, from 5:00 - 9:00 p.m. at the Bonita Museum and Cultural Center, 4355 Bonita Road.

Volunteers identified to assist with the event included Liz Stonehouse, Stephen Stonehouse, Steve Elliott, Mike Parnell, and Dennise Elliot.

Secretary Liz Stonehouse will coordinate with the volunteers regarding event logistics and responsibilities. SVCA will provide a banner for the front of the table, as it did the previous year, and chairs will be available for volunteers.

Liz also noted that additional bowls may be needed, as they ran out of bowls during the previous year's event. President Felix asked whether SVCA should purchase additional bowls, and the group agreed.

Liz Stonehouse moved to approve SVCA sponsorship and participation in the Taste of Bonita, Mike Parnell seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

B. Request for Approval to Sponsor Bonita-Sunnyside Fire Department 911 Appreciation Day: President Felix presented a request for SVCA to sponsor Bonita-Sunnyside Fire Department Appreciation Day on September 11, 2026, honoring the Fire Department through food, visits, and expressions of appreciation. The discussion included volunteers, menu, and budget resulting in the following:

- Volunteers: Liz Stonehouse, Stephen Stonehouse, Steve Elliott, Sharon, and Daryl Hern.
- Proposed Menu: Chicken fajitas, Atomic Brownies, and seltzer soft drinks.
- Budget: Maximum of $150.00.

Liz Stonehouse moved to approve, Stephen Stonehouse seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

C. Request for Approval of Friends of the Bonita-Sunnyside Library, Frank & Stella Borik as Associate Members: President Felix presented a request to approve Frank and Stella Borik of Friends of the Bonita-Sunnyside Library as Associate Members of SVCA. He noted that the bylaws permit the Association to approve Associate Members that do business in the community and expressed appreciation for their local involvement and support. Liz Stonehouse moved

to approve, Mike Clowers seconded. Motion approved unanimously. President Felix welcomed Frank and Stella Borik to the group**.**

10. Elected Officials Representatives Reports:

A. Genevieve DePerio Fong, from the office of Congressman Juan Vargas reported the following:

Genevieve DePerio Fong, representative for Congressman Juan Vargas, introduced herself and congratulated the newly elected and returning members of the SVCA Board for the 2026–2027 term.

Ms. DePerio Fong reported that Congress, including Congressman Vargas, had voted to pass a continuing resolution to extend federal government funding through the beginning of December, pending the President's signature. She noted that federal funding is important to communities such as Bonita because the County relies on federal dollars to provide important services.

She also discussed changes being considered regarding federal grant requirements and encouraged community organizations with questions about federal grants to contact Congressman Vargas' office.

Ms. DePerio Fong announced that the Service Academy Night will be held Thursday, September 10, at 5:30 p.m**.** at the SPDC site in National City. The event provides high school students and parents with information about applying to U.S. military service academies, including the Naval Academy and West Point. Flyers were made available.

Ms. DePerio Fong also reported that Congressman Vargas had sent a letter to the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Navy regarding concerns about conditions experienced aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, including reported supply-delivery delays and other conditions while the vessel was at sea. She said Congressman Vargas and other members of the San Diego congressional delegation wanted to ensure that similar conditions do not continue for future vessels.

Ms. DePerio Fong noted that the USS Abraham Lincoln was making a stop before returning to the United States.

She invited residents with federal questions or concerns to contact Congressman Vargas' office.

Contact: Genevieve DePerio Fong, (619) 422-5963

B. Ardyel Lim from Senator Steve Padilla's Office mentioned the following report: The State Legislature had adjourned the previous Tuesday following several weeks of legislative activity.

Mr. Lim reported that Senator Padilla has more than a dozen bills heading to the Governor for consideration. The Senator's communications team is preparing a legislative update containing descriptions of the bills and their intended purposes. The information will be made available through the Senator's social media and Mr. Lim's office.

Mr. Lim congratulated the athletes, families, coaches, and the Bonita community on the success of the Bonita Little League and its participation in the Little League World Series.

Mr. Lim announced the following upcoming community events:

- Senior Resource Fair: September 21. Details regarding time and location were still being finalized. Mr. Lim will provide information to SVCA leadership when available.

- South County Albondigas Luncheon: September 25 at Kimbal Coastal Eatery in National City. Senator Padilla will speak regarding insurance and artificial intelligence.

- American Red Cross Blood Drive: September 28, 12:00–6:00 p.m., at the Chula Vista Elks Lodge. Senator Padilla's office will partner with the American Red Cross.

Mr. Lim also provided information regarding CalKIDS, the State's college-savings program for eligible children. Funds may be used for qualified college expenses, including tuition, room, supplies, and computer equipment. Community members were encouraged to review the CalKIDS program information and contact the Senator's office with questions regarding eligibility or applications.

Finally, Mr. Lim announced that Senator Padilla's office is seeking to hire a District Representative and encouraged interested individuals to review California Senate employment opportunities for information and application instructions.

11. Community Forum:

A. County Traffic Advisory Committee Mike Clowers, updates: As the District 1 representative on the County Traffic Advisory Committee, Director Mike Clowers meets with committee approximately every six to seven weeks to consider a variety of County traffic matters, including potential traffic signals, stop signs, and other traffic-related issues.

Director Clowers encouraged community members to bring forward traffic concerns that they would like considered at a future meeting. He will take those concerns to the Committee for discussion.

B. SVCA Membership: Secretary Liz Stonehouse, reported the following SVCA membership information:

- 36 current members, including 32 renewals.
- 18 Gold members, including two new (Stephen and Dennise Elliott).

The Board and members were encouraged to continue promoting membership and Ms. Stonehouse thanked the Elliott family for their support.

12. Other Announcements & Items Not on the Agenda for Consideration:

A. Robert Sanchez - San Diego County Public Works: planned for the Bonita community.

Mr. Sanchez provided information on two current projects

- Bonita Road Bicycle Safety Improvement Project, which will extend along Bonita Road from Central Avenue to the area near the community church and slightly beyond. The project includes installation of bike lanes, speed-warning signs, and green pavement markings in designated areas.

- FCBT Vista Coronado Natural Drainage Channel Repair Project, which will repair and maintain the flood-control facility.

Community members raised questions about the bicycle-lane utilization and project costs. Mr. Sanchez offered to provide additional information and noted that a significant portion of the bicycle project is grant-funded by the state.

B. General Public Comment - Bonita Little League: Jim Goth requested that SVCA consider recognizing the Bonita Little League for its recent accomplishments and participation in the Little League World Series. He commented that it was especially meaningful to see the Bonita name represented around the world and asked the Executive Board to consider an appropriate way for the Association to honor the players.

President Felix responded that SVCA would look into the request.

13. **Meeting Adjourned:** President Felix adjourned the meeting at 6:45PM.

Next Meeting: October 7, 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.