



The voice of our community

**Board Meeting
January 13, 2026 – 4:15 PM
MINUTES**

**In-Person at the Montecito Community Hall/Library
And Virtually Via Zoom**

I. Call to Order at 4:16 PM by Chair Macfadyen. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum

Present: Albertson, Bode, Bollay, Craigie, Denson, Duran, Gherson, Hedrick, Herting, Lundgren, Macfadyen, Pennino, Prince, Rockenbach, Serrani, White, Wittman

II. Approval of December 9, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

Abstained : Denson, Albertson, Bode, Craigie, Gherson, Rockenbach
Bollay/Serrani Motion Approved

III. Public Comment for Items not on the Agenda-Polly Levine, MA member, would like to see gas leaf blowers banned in Montecito as it is in city of Santa Barbara and other cities, due to elevated noise levels and being toxic to the environment. She would like them to be replaced with battery/electric operated. Aida Thau with County Supervisor Roy Lee's office, remarked that their office is addressing the issue, it is agendaized for the next County Supervisors' meeting, and she will connect interested supporters of the issue.

IV. Community Reports

Chief Neels-MFD-Chief Neels thanked the community, the MA and MUS for the 1/9 event. Last storms brought about eight inches of rain. All systems acted in appropriate way and there was no residential flooding. The chipping program starts in February. Damage to Hot Springs Road area is in process of repair.

Sheriff Dept.-Lt. Rich Brittingham- Update on recent events. One person was scammed out of \$27k and gave the money to someone in a parking lot. Trespasser at Laguna Blanca School and the suspect was arrested. Reported that the Miramar substation construction is underway.

Montecito Sanitary District-John Weigold-Reported that they will conduct a rate study. Any beach closures due to sewage is County Health's jurisdiction.

Montecito Union School-Anthony Ranii-They replaced all gas leaf blowers with electric ones. E-Bike safety is a big concern that they are addressing. They are having success with literacy and phonics, and no kindergarteners need remedial reading help. A new music teacher will be hired and they are building their reserves back and adding a second day of nature rangers and adding a skateboarding club.

Aida Thau, Chief of Staff, Roy Lee, 1st District Supervisor-Reported that the issue with Butterfly tunnel has been fixed. There have been reports of vandalism at Hot Springs pools and they are working with Forestry Department to address the issues. The County is projected to have a deficit. The County lease with the MA is being worked out and they will offer a fifty percent market value for rent.

V. Agenda

- i. SCE Presentation: Project Focused on Increasing Load Capacity & Enhancing Grid Resilience Natalie Yanez, Government Relations Manager Robert Peralta, SCE Engineering Manager**

Presentation given with questions and answers covering their strengthening and modernizing the grid for Montecito. They are in the planning stage and looking at ways to remove an antiquated system. The plan will eliminate the substation and move the circuits to a more robust higher voltage. This will allow for a more robust, higher voltage and capacity in Montecito. The project is scheduled to be completed by 2028 and the new substation by 2029. Some wires and poles will be removed. With an improved system there will be more ability to move the load around. There are some customers that cannot expand as they would like and this addresses that. There was discussion from audience around undergrounding and the presenter said that the CPUC is who approves undergrounding and they did not approve of all that SCE requested. Access to residents' yards is necessary to be able to upgrade the system. Drones are used and allowed if licensed in the air space.

ii. Lotusland Project Updates – Adam Flint, COO

Tree removal took place for safety of community and fire mitigation, and they are reforesting the area. They are working on water security with underground reservoir storage and tours will be given in February. Money was privately raised. Replanting and reforestation and a tropical garden as well as native hedgerows will take place. Gathering areas will be created and tile restoration is taking place. Cultural preservation and neighborhood charm is the goal.

VI. President's Report-Bill Macfadyen addressed as the new president of the board, expressing his reason for originally joining the board was his belief that he could be useful. He stated that the real power is in numbers and the MA must broaden base not just with numbers but with engagement.

VII. Executive Director Report- Houghton Hyatt-Reported that measurable progress was made in 2025 with a consistent independent voice with community partners. Public safety was addressed and hosted a safety town hall, helped with the sheriff substation, and Hands Across Montecito celebrated its fifth anniversary. Community connection was fostered with the 4th of July celebration and the 40th Beautification Day. In 2026, advocacy will continue and will hold a board retreat with budget planning, which will be approved at the February board meeting.

VIII. Treasurer Report- None

IX. Committee Reports

- A. Land Use-A meeting will be held to discuss Eucalyptus trees; there is an environmental group requesting review. Discussion regarding crosswalk across E. Valley Road.
- B. Events-Mindy Denson-July 4th event already have two vendors. Beautification Day is set for Saturday November 7th, and we are in discussions with MUS to host. Tree decorating will be held December 3rd at 3:00 p.m.
- C. History-Trish Davis thanked MA for award at Beautification Day. She does not turn down meeting requests and is available to assist.
- D. Outreach Committee- No one is in position yet, committee chairs will be named at the board retreat.
- E. Safety Response Subcommittee-None
- F. Hands Across Montecito-Outreach walks every month and all are encouraged to attend. Outlined group of supporters: MA, CityNet, and Earthcomb. Handing out clear trash bags is supportive of the unhoused with belongings and collecting trash. Earthcomb works with Heal the Ocean. Next walk is January 21 at 8:30 a.m. at the Chevron station, MA, Sheriff, CityNet, and Earthcomb all attend.

X. Old Business-None

XI. New Business- Board to select date for retreat.

Adjourned 5:47 p.m.