Final Final Final

Desert Tortoise Council
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

27 September 2026
Zoom Online Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mari Quillman at 10:05 a.m. (PDT). Action items are in blue, with responsible parties in red. **Motions made, seconded, and approved (or not) are shown in bold red font.**

Attendees: Board members: Kristin Berry, Peter Woodman, Judy Hohman, Ken MacDonald, Maggie Fusari, Mari Quillman, Bruce Palmer, Becky Jones, Max Havelka, Mary Lane Poe, Andrea Currylow, Rick Applegate, Debra Hughson, David Carr, and Operations Manager, David Hedrick. **Absent**: Ed LaRue, Michael Tuma, and **Guests**: None. The meeting was attended by Council members Chris Wiese, Maribel Lopez, and Karen Beyers.

A. Welcome/Announcements/Introductions: None.

B. Review Agenda: New issues were incorporated as needed.

C. Approval of Meeting Minutes of 7/26/2026: Ed LaRue prepared draft minutes of the most recent virtual Board meeting, which were distributed, reviewed, and approved today as final. Mari requested that the spelling of Dave Hedrick's last name on page 7 of the Draft Meeting Minutes be corrected. After this change, a **motion was made by Kristin Berry, seconded by Ken MacDonald, and unanimously approved to accept the draft minutes with this change to be final.**

D. Review of Board Actions since Last Board Meeting:

1. 401K discussion: On 7/30/2026, nine Board members assembled to discuss establishing a 401(k) on behalf of David Hedrick, the Council's only employee. Following input from a half dozen Board members, on 8/8/2026, Mari summarized all the findings, concluding that only a 401(k) retirement plan, administered by ADP, for a monthly cost of $234, with the potential for the Council to match his contributions is the only option open to us. In an email dated 8/9/2026, Judy Hohman clarified, "The Board needs to attract, hire, and retain highly qualified and dedicated employees to accomplish the mission of the Desert Tortoise Council. Offering a retirement plan is an employee benefit that will help the Board with attracting and retaining employees. The Board selected a 401(k) retirement plan for Council employees. This retirement plan offers the greatest flexibility in establishing, contributing to, and managing an employee's retirement fund when compared to other options." **On 8/8/2026, Rick Applegate made the motion, seconded by Ken MacDonald, and subsequently endorsed by the remaining 14 Board members to help David Hedrick establish a 401(k) retirement plan, administered by ADP, for a monthly cost of $234 to the Council and Hedrick, with the potential for the Council to match Hedrick's contributions, and an expectation that his future raise(s) will consider the monthly administration fee, with these details to be determined**.

2. NFWF Grant Awarded: On 8/12/2026, David Hedrick distributes this email: "The Board of Directors of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has approved $688,325.66 for the DTC's 'Expanding Highway Exclusion Fencing to Reduce Mojave Desert Tortoise Mortality' (CA) project, pending successful completion of their programmatic and fiscal review process."

E. Special Discussion Items: None

F. Next Meeting Dates: Future dates for the next two Board meetings are as follows: 11/8/2026 and 1/10/2027, on Zoom, beginning at 10:00 a.m. (PST).

OFFICER/COMMITTEE REPORTS

G. Operations Manager's Report: David Hedrick was unable to attend the meeting but submitted a report[1] that was read by Mari. The Introductory Course is full with about 60 people on the wait list. The "Tortoises on Tap" event at Flightline Taproom in Ridgecrest will occur on November 1, 2026 as the evening social event after the Intro Course's field course with some special guests. With the creation of the Grants Google Drive, Andrea Currylow, Mari Quillman, Michael Tuma, and Dave Hedrick are working to get all of the Grants and Academic Funding Committee materials saved to the Drive for easy access and to track and complete tasks. Automatic monthly payments have been set up for the Hesperia storage unit. 2027 Symposium planning meetings began on September 22. Next meeting is October 6 at 7 pm (PDT) and your input is requested. We already have ~$9-$10,000 in Symposium sponsorships donated/pledged. We are going to evaluate a "conference app" that is available through Wild Apricot for Symposium use. Dave continues to post content on social media.

H. Treasurer's Report: Mari provided an electronic version of the Treasurer's Report[2]. Mari compared the July 31[3] and August 31 reports from the accountant that showed little change in the Council's financial status. Ken has a possible treasurer for the Council, Jacqueline Murphy. She is a CPA. Mari Quillman has an appointment to interview her. Under the Bylaws, Mari has the authority to appoint an interim Treasurer until one is vetted through the Nominations Committee and elected. We received (1) a letter from California Franchise Tax Board that the Council is in good standing as a non-profit organization and does not owe taxes; (2) letters from the IRS that unemployment was withheld in three different years and they sent refund checks; and (3) a letter from California Department of Justice (DOJ) that requires the Council to register with its raffle department before conducting raffles and to submit an annual report (two different forms). The process for registering each year and filing the report is in the Treasurer's Report. The Council is now registered through 2024. We need to register and report for 2025 and 2026. The CPA checked to make sure the Council has filed all required forms with IRS and State of California and she reported that we are up to date. Mari Quillman will contact the payroll firm and advise them of the IRS letter and request they stop paying this tax. • Judy Hohman will add to the Calendar that in November the Treasurer will ensure that raffle registration is submitted to CA DOJ for the Symposium raffle in February and the raffle report is submitted in March. **Motion made by Ken MacDonald, seconded by Becky Jones, and unanimously approved to accept the Treasurer's Report as final.**

[1] https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/w0oh5kw43u38l0egdev25/Operations-Manager-Report-Sept-26.docx?rlkey=a0uukddrhf7g714jr8oq24ekz&dl=0

[2] https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/53yzl3r91wewn8wmlazrh/Desert-Tortoise-Council-Inc-Financials-August-2026.xlsx?rlkey=wplkeq9450fr2plq1louvs4nb&dl=0

[3] https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/oo0qlu4ll1rvwywudsmsj/Desert-Tortoise-Council-Inc-Preliminary-Financials-July-2026.xlsx?rlkey=800pktc1a5sb71qczh8wtszai&dl=0

I. Financial Planning Committee Report: No written report was submitted. This committee [Ken MacDonald, Rick Applegate, and David Hedrick] needs to set up a meeting with the CPA, introduce themselves, and inform the CPA of the current DTC procedures. The CPA and Financial Planning Committee should develop and implement a protocol on how to work together. Also, the Financial Planning Committee needs to schedule quarterly meetings with the CPA per the Bylaws and review the annual tax return and internal audit with the CPA. When these dates and actions are known, Ken MacDonald, Rick Applegate, and David Hedrick will inform Judy Hohman who will add dates and procedures to the Board Calendar.

J. Corresponding Secretary's Report: Becky Jones submitted a written report[4]. The letters received from the IRS, CA DOJ, and CA Franchise Tax Board identified in the Treasurer's Report were received and forwarded to Mari. The checks were deposited in the Council's bank account. The invoice for the Council's insurance was received.

K. Membership Committee's Report: David Carr submitted a written report[5]. The Membership Committee has monthly meetings the second Wednesday of the month and the Board is invited. The Council has 416 active members out of 1,137 total membership records; 83 people carry a Student membership record, but only 14 of those are currently active. The Committee is reviewing membership structure and pricing and considering adding a discount if members auto renew. They are cleaning up the Wild Apricot database and revising the printed membership application to match the electronic application. They are identifying ways to get more students engaged in Council activities; conducting outreach to universities for points of contact to communicate directly with students; looking at revising the newsletter and recruiting an editor; and offering mentoring or being mentored. Maggie suggested that David Carr contact Dave Hedrick about the calendar membership year; when membership renewal or first time membership is paid in the fourth quarter, it extends for the next calendar year.

L. Ecosystems Advisory Committee's (EAC) Report: In an electronic version of his report[6], Ed LaRue reported that there were 17 projects identified and 13 reviewed by the Board in the reporting period between 7/26/2026 and 9/27/2026. In Ed's absence, Judy thanked the Board for their quick reviews of draft letters, and thanked the four independent reviewers on the EAC for their excellent work. Kristin asked about the new Department of the Interior (DOI) NEPA regulations and notifying interested parties about proposed actions. Judy responded that DOI agencies are no longer required to notify the Council of proposed projects and public comment periods. This is challenging because there are many agencies within DOI and several office websites within each agency that must be searched to find this information.

M. Media Committee's Report: Chair position is open. No report was provided.

N. Strategic Planning Committee's Report: Bruce Palmer submitted a written report[7]. This Committee has contacted two firms, including Impact by Design and The Board Doctor. Pricing and identified actions differ substantially between the two proposals submitted by these firms. Despite ongoing efforts, this Committee has not been able to meet to complete its review of the comments regarding The Board Doctor's proposal. One of The Board Doctor's identified actions

[4] https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/t4o9f6tjw3fe8kmni5zyv/Correspondig-Secratary-Report-9-27-26.docx?rlkey=mbda2szmng3jdbhtrrtyauevm&dl=0

[5] https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/rk449ud476rdada248gc3/DTC-Membership-Committee-Report-with-Attachment-Sept-27-2026.docx?rlkey=9f58vg7ts3fvrveayvplxeqow&dl=0

[6] https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/7rhucl297or7su0g0yuwb/EAC-report-DTC-Board-9-27-2026.docx?rlkey=qmfv8vzup8xaup5mdzeu8094f&dl=0

[7] https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/jro88imn54pl7g3qhqtac/Strategic-Planning-report-Sept-2026-v3.docx?rlkey=d1gewdcg2y304ypff2smq5ih9&dl=0

as part of revising the strategic plan and participating in a workshop is to interview the members of the Council to obtain their input. This would likely occur around the Symposium. However, we are short on time if a contract is to be awarded and implemented by February 2027. Mary Lane Poe volunteered to serve on this Committee Bruce Palmer, Rick Applegate, Max Havelka, and Andrea Currylow expressed a commitment to move forward soon with the needed review.

O. Bylaws and Policy Revisions – Parliamentarian Report: Bruce reported no changes.

P. Grants and Academic Funding Committee's Report: Michael Tuma did not attend. Michael informed Mari he is unable to continue as Chair of this committee. Michael, Mari, and Dave met to discuss transitioning this committee's actions to Andrea as the interim committee Chair. Dave established a Google Drive for this Committee. Andrea Currylow needs to let Dave and Mari know her availability to discuss this transition. Mari Quillman will ask David Hedrick to announce the Morafka and Student Travel Awards.

Q. Agency Coordinating Committee's Report: No report.

R. Desert Tortoise Certification Committee's Report: Having been newly formed at the 7/26/2026 Board meeting, this is the first report of this new committee. Andrea Currylow reported that this committee held a meeting with California Department of Fish and Wildlife Regions 4, 5, and 6 to inform staff in all three regions where the tortoise occurs on the certification process. The committee will have the first field practical late winter/early spring around the time of the annual Symposium.

S. Mexican Tortoise Conservation Committee's Report (MTCC): Chair position is open. No written report was provided. Maribel Lopez has offed to implement some of the responsibilities of this Committee. Mari Quillman will contact Michael Tuma, the past Chair of this Committee, and have him contact Maribel.

T. Bolson Tortoise *Ad Hoc* Committee: Max Havelka provided an oral report. Bolson tortoises were transmittered and released. In October volunteers will assist with health assessments. This past year had atypical weather with a dry spring and summer and with extreme wet weather late in the rainy season. Mari and Judy met with Shawn Sartorius and Vance Wolf of USFWS to discuss what the Council needs to do to receive the reported $150,000 given to the Council in the FY 2026 Congressional Appropriations Bill. The Budget and Finance staff from USFWS will need to be involved in future discussions with another meeting agreed to occur in mid-October. The goal is to complete all required information and any agreement by December 31, 2026. The goal is to spend the funds on helping the Bolson tortoise soon after that. Mari Quillman will talk with the CPA to determine what the Council needs to do to comply with tracking the federal grant the Council was awarded in the FY 2026 Congressional Appropriations Bill.

U. Training Program Committee's Report:

1. Introductory Training Course Committee's Report: Maggie Fusari reported the Intro Course[8] is moving forward on schedule. As a new membership benefit, we will offer access to recordings of the lecture portion of the Course. Board members are invited to join the training remotely or in person. Andrea will be joining the lecture portion of the Course. Field instructions should be sent to Pete with field preparation beginning in a couple of weeks. Ed is the emcee with Ed and Dave in charge of Council merchandise.

[8] https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/63w22lbaiz87mgdc5rg5n/Intro-Course-report-Sept-27-2026.docx?rlkey=3brkjd19xkyghsv5t7sqeoku0&dl=0

2. Advanced Training Courses Committee's Report: Mary Lane Poe provide an oral report. Amanda Scheib reached out to the Tortoise Group for access to tortoises for the training but has not heard from them.

V. Education and Outreach Committee's Report: Chair position open. No report was given.

W. Annual Symposium Program Committee's Report: Kristin Berry provided a written report[9]. Requests for abstracts have been sent out. There will be a session on coyotes that includes the results of an eight-year study. Kristin and Debra request ideas for papers or sessions. Dave Hedrick will send out a reminder email for Call for Papers and Posters and Debra Hughson and Kristin Berry will follow up with reminders to potential individual professors and their students. Kristin contacted Eric Goode to attend the Symposium and present about the Turtle Conservancy facility at Ojai and his new film, "Monsters of God," concerning the illegal trade in reptiles. She also asked him to provide a raffle donation – a stay at his inn in Ojai and a tour of the Ojai Conservation Center.

X. Fundraising Committee's Report: Ken MacDonald provided an oral report and updated the Board on the status of the two grants awarded to the Council for tortoise exclusion fencing in California from Desert Tortoise Recovery and Sustainment Partnership (RASP). For the first grant, Ken's company will conduct the class 1 literature search for cultural resources. The second grant for $688,000 was recently awarded to the Council pending NEPA compliance for the first grant. Ken thanked Debra for her work on the first grant that showed substantive progress and allowed the Council to be tentatively awarded the second grant. Ken reported we are close to "putting the fence in the ground" for the first grant. Mari Quillman needs to review the contract with the fence contractor. Ken thanked the Board for taking the risk and hiring Just Grants who identified and, working with this committee, submitted the two proposals. Ken MacDonald needs to provide a scope of work and cost estimate for all work done under the grants. Ken MacDonald and Debra Hughson need to issue two RFPs, one for permitting and one for monitoring the construction of the fence.

Y. Awards Committee's Reports: Kristin Berry provided a written report. She requested nominations from the Board for potential awards. A nomination may be for an individual or a group. The Council's webpage has descriptions of the awards and who has recently received them.

Z. Long-Term Translocation Site: Peter Woodman gave an oral report. Monthly checking of transmittered tortoise continues. There is no further update.

AA. Master Calendar: Judy Hohman provided a written report[10] concerning the action items on the Board Calendar from late July (previous Board meeting) to mid-November (next Board meeting). Of these items, the important deadlines to meet are announcing the Morafka and Student Travel Awards October 1 (assigned to David Hedrick) and for each committee chair to submit their 2027 budget to Mari by October 15. Mari Quillman will distribute a spreadsheet with the 2026 committee budgets as a reference.

[9] https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/q0w7eybbn80aehk1ildvq/REPORT-SYMP-Program-and-Awards-Committees.docx?rlkey=u4ihsgi2k7en8fghm9s28hlqa&dl=0

[10] https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/cmic0a4adgvkqrcj8foun/Calendar-of-Activities-July-to-November-2026-Board-Meetings.docx?rlkey=uhnz4rd0dr28xfzwcv7mvzv7r&dl=0

BB. Personnel Review for July 2024 to July 2026 for David Hedrick: Mari Quillman will remind David Hedrick that he needs to send her his individual personnel reviews for 2024 and 2025.

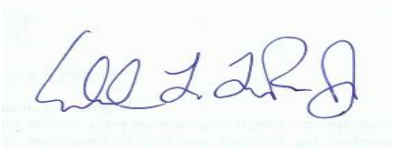
CC. 401k Retirement Account: Since the last Board meeting, this account for David Hedrick has been established.

NEW BUSINESS

DD. Sue Fox's Book Revision: A written report on this book, "The Desert Tortoise," and the author's offer were provided[11]. Sue Fox is offering the book to post on the Council's website or to sell in visitor centers operated by entities such as BLM and NPS. The book was written for young readers, meaning ages eight and older but is applicable for adults who are not wildlife biologists. Maggie Fusari would like to facilitate the evaluation of the book. She has requested an electronic copy to review and for ease of updating. She anticipates the book would be a second edition, that is, an updated edition, with no new information added. She will need input from knowledgeable people for the update. As a final product, the Board should consider whether we want to publish the book as a pdf or a hard copy. Maggie Fusari will set up a committee to help her with the update including people not on the Board.

Adjourn: **A motion was made by Ken MacDonald, seconded by Judy Hohman, and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 12:36 pm (PDT)**.

Draft minutes were recorded and respectfully submitted to all Board members and non-Board member participants on October 5, 2026 by Judy Hohman, filling in for Ed LaRue, Recording Secretary, who later edited the minutes as necessary to have them endorsed with or without revisions during the Board meeting of November 8, 2026.



Edward L. LaRue, Jr.
Desert Tortoise Council, Recording Secretary

[11] https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/ic2me3vq32sqo8lv47t7w/The-Desert-Tortoise-Book-Cover.jpg?rlkey=nxgs2aiil1pxpvytbqbv4a1ct&dl=0, https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/9v6n372b6d2e999dokmfp/Note-from-Ed-Re-Sue-Fox-book.docx?rlkey=xungjkprh5t36qylov3tt7dqo&dl=0, https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/10g4ejyr802er9rymr1fx/Note-from-Sue-Fox-Author.jpg?rlkey=b0sjs70vbcquu4vws8wc2ak2a&dl=0