



Eastern Sierra Council of Governments (ESCOG) - Joint Powers Authority (JPA)

Minutes of Special Meeting

March 13, 2026, 8:30 a.m.

437 Old Mammoth Road, Suite Z, Mammoth Lakes

Members Present: Vice Chair Chris Bubser, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Karen Schwartz, Board Member Paul McFarland

Members Absent: Board Member Trina Orrill, Board Member Karen Kong

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Chris Bubser called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m.

1.1 Acknowledgement of Remote Participation of Board Member Griffiths Pursuant to Government Code 54958.3(c)(4) (travel while on official business of the

Board Member Jeff Griffiths reported that pursuant to Government Code 54958.3(c)(4) (travel while on official business of the legislative body and/or another local agency) he was attending the meeting remotely from the Yosemite Valley Lodge for a Civic Well Conference and said that there were no other adults present with him at his remote location.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Whitebark Institute Environmental Planning Program Director Tracy Misiewicz led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no comments given at this time.

4. CLOSED SESSION

The Board went into closed session at 8:36 a.m.

4.1 Public Employee Performance Evaluation – Pursuant to Government Code §54957 – Title: Executive Director

The Board returned from Closed Session at 9:24 a.m. and announced that no reportable action was taken.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

Wildfire Coordinator Kristen Pfeiler provided additional details regarding the information in the staff report for Item 5.2.

There was discussion between Ms. Pfeiler and members of the Board.

Moved by Board Member Lynda Salcido

Seconded by Board Member Paul McFarland

Approve the Consent Agenda.

For (6): Vice Chair Chris Bubser, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Karen Schwartz, and Board Member Paul McFarland

Absent (2): Board Member Trina Orrill, and Board Member Karen Kong

Carried (6 to 0)

5.1 Approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting December 11, 2025

5.2 Receive Wildfire Coordinator Staff Report

5.3 Receive Recreation Coordinator Staff Report

5.4 Receive Inyo Mono Broadband Consortium Activities Report

5.5 Receive and File California Advanced Service Fund Application Submitted February 20, 2026

6. POLICY MATTERS

6.1 Call for the Selection of Chair and Vice Chair

Board Member John Wentworth nominated Vice Chair Chris Bubser for the position of Chair of the ESCOG.

Board Member Jeff Griffiths nominated Board Member Trina Orrill for the position of Vice Chair of the ESCOG.

Moved by Board Member John Wentworth

Seconded by Board Member Paul McFarland

Appoint Chris Bubser as Chair of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments.

For (6): Vice Chair Chris Bubser, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Karen Schwartz, and Board Member Paul McFarland

Absent (2): Board Member Trina Orrill, and Board Member Karen Kong

Carried (6 to 0)

Moved by Board Member Jeff Griffiths

Seconded by Board Member Paul McFarland

Appoint Trina Orrill as Vice Chair of the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments.

For (6): Vice Chair Chris Bubser, Board Member Jeff Griffiths, Board Member Lynda Salcido, Board Member John Wentworth, Board Member Karen Schwartz, and Board Member Paul McFarland

Absent (2): Board Member Trina Orrill, and Board Member Karen Kong

Carried (6 to 0)

6.2 Receive a Presentation on the Eastern Sierra Wildfire Alliance & the West Mono Basin Project

Executive Director Elaine Kabala provided background information about this item and introduced Whitebark Institute Environmental Planning Program Director Tracy Misiewicz.

Ms. Misiewicz outlined the information in the Whitebark Institute Update.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Wildfire Coordinator Kristen Pfeiler provided information about a meeting hosted by High Sierra Energy Foundation last night regarding home hardening techniques.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala, Ms. Misiewicz, Ms. Pfeiler, and members of the Board.

6.3 Receive a Presentation on the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments 2026 Workplan

Executive Director Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the ESCOG 2026 Workplan.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala and members of the Board.

Staff was given direction to pursue more implementation grants, including the application for the Eastern Sierra to become an Economic Development District (EDD), to broaden convening and execution in project areas under a broad definition of economic development. Transition the ESCOG into becoming an implementation body, not just a convening body and pursue economic development projects to meet regional needs. Executive Director to meet with the member agencies and member agency appointees about providing services in-kind and/or a membership contribution increase and to prepare an ask for an amount that would be optimal for five years as well as a scope of services.

6.4 Receive Sierra Jobs First Project Implementation Update and Provide Direction on Board Engagement

Executive Director Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the staff report.

Board Member Jeff Griffiths left the meeting at 10:49 a.m.

Legal Counsel John Carl Vallejo announced that with Mr. Griffiths departure from the meeting, the Board still had a Brown Act quorum but no longer had a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) required quorum for any sort of direction or action to be taken since there would no longer be an Inyo County representative attending the meeting. Mr. Vallejo said the Board could proceed to receive a presentation.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala, Mr. Vallejo, and members of the Board.

6.5 Executive Director Update Report

Executive Director Elaine Kabala outlined the information in the staff report.

There was discussion between Ms. Kabala and members of the Board.

7. BOARD MEMBER/AGENCY REPORTS

Board Member John Wentworth provided an update on the Golden State Connect program and spoke briefly about a development project that was presented at the Town of Mammoth Lakes (TOML) Town Council meeting last week.

Board Member Karen Schwartz announced that the City of Bishop had received a couple of grants, one in the amount of \$2.4M as a loan with principal forgiveness for the preliminary engineering report for the Bishop Area Wastewater Treatment Plant and the other in the amount of \$4.5M for rehabilitation of their entire wastewater system. Ms. Schwartz said they had just kicked off their Park Master Plan Survey and requested that members throughout the region take the survey. She also spoke about the North Tahoe Community Alliance, and said it was a model she would like Bishop to use with their partners.

Board Member Paul McFarland said that there was a Painted Lady Butterfly migration in the region which would likely continue for another week or two. Mr. McFarland reported that the County had approved a contract with a firm to assist them with redesigning the Office of Emergency Management, which would also include the Wildfire Coordinator position. He said that the Caltrans project in Lee Vining would be delayed because the bid came in significantly over budget and it would be rescoped and sent back out to bid.

Board Member Lynda Salcido reported that the County was approved by the California Disaster Assistance Agency to back fill and help with phase two clean up at the Pack Fire site.

Board Member Karen Schwartz reported that the City of Bishop had received a grant in the amount of \$26M for the Silver Peaks project.

There was discussion between Executive Director Elaine Kabala and members of the Board.

8. REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

There were no future agenda items requested.

9. **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Chris Bubser adjourned the meeting at 11:07 a.m. to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Angela Plaisted, Assistant Clerk