



# INYO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 19, 2023

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## Board Honors Employees, Weighs Legislative Priorities

INDEPENDENCE – The Inyo County Board of Supervisors’ third meeting of 2023 saw the elected officials taking steps to secure grant funding, recognizing both longtime and brand-new employees, and receiving updates on projects critical to economic development.

Following is an overview of the discussions had and action taken.

### TENURES RECOGNIZED

The Board officially welcomed several new employees and, as has been tradition since 2019, took the time to honor numerous staff members for reaching service milestones during the Fourth Quarter of 2022, and to offer its gratitude for their dedicated service.

Those honored included:

- Public Works – Shane Rily (20 years), John Bigham (15 years), and Justin Drew (5 years)
- Sheriff’s Office – Juan Martinez (20 years), Joe Kapturkieicz (15 years), Wendy Stine (10 years), Seneca Willis (10 years), Phil West (10 years), and Julio Gonzalez (5 years)
- Health & Human Services – April Eagan (10 years), Vanessa Ruggio (5 years), Timothy Whitney (5 years), Marissa Whitney (5 years), and Jean Bigham (5 years)
- D.A.’s Office – Rick Beall (10 years)
- Probation – Scott Gadea (5 years)
- Clerk-Recorder’s Office – Brenda Delgado Botello (5 years)
- Information Services – Benjamin Mitchell (5 years) and Knight Porter (5 years)

### DIAL 2-1-1

At the request of both Health & Human Services and Emergency Services, the Board approved applying to the California Public Utilities Commission to become a 211-designated county.

211 is a nationwide hotline accessible via phone, text, and online, providing information and connecting individuals to local resources related to crisis and emergency help, healthcare and housing assistance, and food programs and benefits. In 2020, the hotline was designated by governors and health departments in 32 states as the official COVID-19 resource line. As the pandemic subsides, most calls received now are for essential needs like food and shelter.

211 Inyo County was implemented in 2020 and made available for a limited time in partnership with the Interface Children and Family Services, in Camarillo, CA. According to Emergency Services Manager Mikaela Torres, the hope now is for the Office of Emergency Services to assume a leadership role in partnering with agencies, local businesses,

and other county government operations to get critical information out to residents and visitors – whether before, during, or after a disaster, or just to improve overall communications between government and the public.

### **DISASTER DECLARATION**

Inyo County has joined numerous counterparts across the state in declaring a state of emergency due to widespread flooding.

The Board approved Resolution No. 2023-03 on Tuesday declaring the existence of a local emergency resulting from the atmospheric river event that started January 9 and caused extensive flooding throughout the county, with several roads and state highways damaged. Homes and businesses were also impacted and damaged by flooding. Avalanches in the community of Aspendell resulted in additional damaged property and emergency evacuations.

Members of the Board expressed their heartfelt gratitude to local first responders, including Inyo County’s Road Crew, who jumped into action to save both lives and property during the recent storms and make safe travel possible on area roads and highways. As of Tuesday, Pine Creek Road above Rovana and Movie Flat Road in Lone Pine were still closed.

Emergency Services Manager Mikaela Torres explained that declaring a local emergency will support potential requests for disaster assistance by the County and local agency partners.

### **MOST IMPROVED SAFETY AWARD**

Members of the Inyo Board of Supervisors joined Tuesday in congratulating two County departments for making significant safety improvements during 2022.

Risk Manager Aaron Holmberg and new Safety Coordinator Tehauna Tiffany presented Risk Management’s annual “Most Improved in Safety” awards to the Inyo County Road Department and Animal Services. The former was recognized for its efforts at the Bishop Road Yard, and the latter for its work at the Inyo County Animal Shelter in Big Pine.

“Continuous improvement is the hallmark of a successful safety program,” Holmberg wrote in a report to the Board. “The annual safety award strives to acknowledge continuous improvement in employee and facility safety, and to encourage such improvements throughout all county locations.”

The 2020 award went to HHS Aging and Social Services for improvements at Statham Hall in Lone Pine and the 2021 award went to Eastern California Museum.

### **NEW FILM COMMISSIONER**

Inyo County Film Commissioner Jesse Steele presented his first written report to the Board, providing an update on his efforts to bring the Film Commission into the social media spotlight; network with other film commissions throughout the region and state; build on a resource and location database that has not been updated since 2004; and connect with filmmakers on various projects, including a short film filmed at CalTech’s Owens Valley Radio Observatory and Chevy commercial.

Steele also reported working with local agencies to streamline the permitting process for filmmakers and the agencies themselves – a plan Board members were particularly excited about. They also appreciated a post-production survey Steele created to gather hard data about how much money was spent by crews locally, where they spent the money, and what other local resources they utilized.

### **LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

Board members heard from consultant Kristi More of The Ferguson Group, the County's federal lobbying firm, on D.C. matters relevant to Inyo County. She also presented the draft 2023 Inyo County Federal Platform. Revamped and expanded in 2018 with the input of all department heads and individual board members, the document lists Inyo County's legislative priorities and is updated annually following meetings between More and County officials and staff. Specifically, the platform lists what types of legislation the County will support or oppose, allowing each Board member the flexibility to take the position identified in the document, on behalf of the Board, without waiting for a full vote of the Board.

At the behest of Supervisor Trina Orrill, two listed priorities will be removed: supporting legislation that expands the ability of counties to conduct all elections via all-mail balloting; and supporting legislation that raises standards of required training for elected and appointment department heads in areas such as finance, personnel, and management. Supervisor Orrill saw the latter priority as an obstacle to recruitment efforts and the former as unnecessary.

Chairperson Roeser discussed concerns with the priority to support "legislation that provides the option for rural counties to conduct elections via 'Vote by Mail.'" The Board ultimately agreed to keep the priority in the document but, at Roeser's suggestion, with the addition of language making it clear Inyo County does not want to disenfranchise voters.

More will make the requested changes and bring the platform back for Board approval on Feb. 7. The document will be distributed to legislators to make them aware of Inyo County's local, rural issues so they may better lobby for the county's interests.

#### **BROADBAND GRANT FUNDING**

Perhaps the most exciting development on Tuesday was the news that Inyo County has been awarded a whopping \$1 million to develop plans and complete the necessary design and engineering work necessary to expand broadband into some of the County's underserved areas.

Information Services Director Scott Armstrong explained that the \$1M Local Agency Technical Assistance Grant is one of two broadband planning grants applied for in 2022 through the California Public Utilities Commission. The other grant application was submitted by the Eastern Sierra Council of Governments, requesting \$600,000 (\$200,000/year for three years) to re-instate the Inyo-Mono Broadband Consortium and hire a Regional Broadband Coordinator to assist the court ESCOG partners (Inyo County, Mono County, City of Bishop, Town of Mammoth Lakes) with broadband expansion plans.

Both grants were approved by the CPUC on January 12.

Video of Tuesday's meeting can be viewed online at:

<https://inyococa.civicclerk.com/Web/Player.aspx?id=3183&key=-1&mod=-1&mk=-1&nov=0>

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**ANIMAL SHELTER SAFETY AWARD CAPTION:** Inyo County Safety Coordinator Tehauna Tiffany (far right) presents Animal Services Supervisor Julie Richardson with a 2022 Most Improved in Safety Award, as Lt. Tim Bachman and Risk Manager Aaron Holmberg (far left) look on.

**ROAD DEPT. SAFETY AWARD CAPTION:** Inyo County Safety Coordinator Tehauna Tiffany (far left) presents Road Superintendent Shannon Platt with a 2022 Most Improved in Safety Award, as Heavy Equipment Mechanic Carlos Sualez, Public Works Director Mike Errante, and Risk Manager Aaron Holmberg (l-r) look on.