1. Quality of Life:

Carolyn Stark started the meeting by asking Dick Oliphant to provide an update on the Coachella Valley Economic Blueprint. Dick stated that the CVEP transition committee has been busy fundraising. Presently, they have $100,000 commitments from Palm Springs and Indian Wells and a $50,000 commitment from Desert Hot Springs. The group is confident that all nine cities will commit. They understand that not every city can participate on the same level but all participation will be the key for a successful blueprint. He said the transition team recently sent out an RFP for the advertising and promotion of this effort. Fourteen companies applied and the contract was awarded to the Kiner and CV Strategies team. Dick stated that a CVEP CEO Council / Advisory committee that will be chaired by Jerry Fogelson, a retired Chicago executive. Also, serving on this committee is Dr. Ed Gordon who is a workforce expert. The group is working on recruiting for the CEO position which they hope to have filled by June. Steve Weiss asked if they a search firm assisting in the process. Dick stated that the advisory board is still exploring how they will handle recruitment.

Carolyn stated that she and Chauncey Veatch have a prepared a proposed plan of action for the Lyceum. She asked Chauncey to talk about the areas of study that could be examined during the next 16 months. Chauncey stated the priorities that have continually come up are jobs, housing, public safety, education, healthcare and environment. He said that these are not in any particular order or priority and are consistent with the Blueprint. Lisa Vossler Smith asked if an “other” category that includes the Arts and entertainment should be added. She stated that they have been organizing focus groups and that young professionals continually list entertainment as a top priority. Steve Weiss agreed that recreation and the Arts are attractions and retainers and should be a part of the evaluation process. Carolyn stated that these should be added to the list as they are important to building a quality of place and are also the building blocks for getting to next level. She stated that it’s important to work to maintain, grow and promote our quality of place in order to have a healthy place to live and raise our family. Bill Powers stated that nothing gets done without a job and that maybe jobs should be the focus and then have the rest fall under this category. Dick suggested inviting Dr. Ed Gordon to come speak to the group next month to discuss these and their relationship to workforce development. Mary Roche asked whether we are getting ahead or duplicating the job of the Economic Blueprint by choosing to focus on jobs. Don Perry stated that we are serving as reinforcement. Carolyn stated that we focused on “jobs” last year by supporting CVEP in
the Blueprint creation and added that we should serve as a resource to CVEP and other community organizations as that is one of the purposes of the Lyceum.

Carolyn said that we should map out our time on analyzing these areas. Lisa stated that at some point subcommittees will need to be formed as it is hard to cover everything in an hour and a half every month. Steve suggested getting Lyceum members to commit to areas they are more interested in. Mary said that initially everyone needs to be together to share their diverse ideas. Dick stated that picking one subject for 3 months can allow for everyone’s participation. Kate Spates asked if there will be a write up at the end of the process. Carolyn stated the Lyceum did a case study for the energy and the economic summit and then “charged” an organization to continue the work. She thinks this should be the way again – it was done with energy (CVAG, CVEP, BIA) and then last year with the economy (CVEP). Kate asked if CVEP’s media partners should be invited to participate in this process. Mary agreed that it is valuable for them to join in as it would help them gain a better understanding of the process.

Aurora Wilson stated that a super category that addresses the economic downturn and its impact on the quality of life should be addressed. Fred Bell agreed and said that people who have lost trade jobs are not staying here because finding another job is close to impossible. Kate stated that the extension of the unemployment benefits is not motivating people to search for jobs. Lisa asked when or how long do we continue providing these benefits. Dick stated that we can’t afford it. Mary stated that there is a massive population that has lost wealth with pay cuts and furloughs. Bill Powers stated that there are 60,000 unemployed people who want to work so our focus needs to be in getting them back to work. Aurora stated that we need to look at how we can survive during these tough times especially since federal and state money is no longer coming into different areas which in turn are creating a ripple effect.

Eduardo Garcia said that our conversation is turning to how our quality of life is being jeopardized by the economic downturn. He said we need to consider talking about how foreclosures affect the community or how large class sizes affect our education. He said that right now many of the municipalities are spending most of their money on law enforcement as a result of the economy. This downturn is really putting people, organizations, businesses and government in survival mode. Fred stated that we need to talk about our social responsibility as we go through these difficult times. We need to ask ourselves what is our social responsibility as a business and as an employer. What are we going to do for our employees who lose their jobs? How can we lesson the blow? Eduardo mentioned that furloughs seem to be an attempt to lessen the impact as it helps not to lay off workers. Aurora said that she would like to see Tourism and Transportation addressed. Dick stated that Agriculture is also important.

The group agreed that the real theme for the Lyceum focus this year is “How is the Economic Downturn Affecting Quality of Life in the Coachella Valley?”