

MINUTES

**City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE
April 10, 2025**

Meeting Location:

Balboa Park Club Santa Fe Room
2150 Pan American Road West\
San Diego, CA 92101

Mailing Address:

Balboa Park Administration Building
2125 Park Boulevard
San Diego, CA 92101-4792

ATTENDANCE:

Members Present

Allison Soares
Howard Blackson
Makeda Cheatom
Chris Eddy
Michael Robinson
Tim Shields

Members Absent

Dang Nguyen
Kathy Vandenheuvel

Staff Present

Jon Richards
Tyler Canales
Anthony Harrington
Viviana Zermeno

CALL TO ORDER

Allison Soares called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES March 6, 2025

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mr. Shields/ Mr. Robinson

A motion was made by Ms. Vandenheuvel and Mr. Shields seconded by to approve the March 6, 2025, meeting minutes. The motion carried unanimously (5-0-0).

NON- AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Web Form:

James Lonergan - I saw a news article about charging parking fees at Balboa Park. This is a bad idea. This is the most expensive city in the US yet the services that are provided are substandard. Balboa Park is our cultural commons, and parks & cultural spaces should be somewhere for all to enjoy. Park amenities are already too expensive for some people to experience our city, and yet now you will charge for parking.

Given that it takes a decade to get anything approved in this city, I can gather that the parking fees will not occur alongside an increase in frequent, safe and affordable transit into the park. If you don't add transit, or reimplement a citywide scooter or bike program, then why the are you charging for parking? This is a tax on the working class, that is what it is. Despite the park being centrally located in the city, it is hard for a lot of San Diegans to get to. Charging them for parking while not adding ways to get to the park is inhumane. This is a stupid, short-sighted decision. No increase in fees without adequate services, either through increased transit or park amenities!

Abigail Zielke - I've heard you are planning to charge for parking in Balboa Park. I work in Balboa Park 40+ hours a week (but not for the city). Like many of the Balboa Park employees, I don't make enough to live far enough inland to take the bus, and I can't afford another monthly fee. What are you planning to accommodate park employees?

Alyssa Hom - I am reaching out to see if the committee has a virtual option available for attending these meetings. I won't be able to join in person, but I'd love to participate if there's a way to do so remotely. I did not see a virtual option in the minutes or upcoming agenda. Is it be possible to post the virtual meeting link there?

In-Person:

Paula Ball – Visited the Botanical Building. Would like to see it available as a wedding venue.

Daniele Laman – 100-foot Eucalyptus tree fell towards the International Cottages, damaging the House of Czech. City staff cleared the tree immediately. Waiting for lead abatement to begin on the House. Don't have a timeline for repairs at this time. Stated all the upcoming lawn programs for the International Cottages.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

None

STAFF REPORT

Michael Bravo, 78th District – None

Emily Bonner, Council District 3 – None

SDPD - None

Jon Richards, Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation – Introduced Emily Piatanesi as the new Policy Advisor for the Mayor's office. She will be covering covering Balboa Park, Mission Bay and Shoreline areas. The Prioritization Framework was approved with the recommendations from the previous meeting and is online. Mayor will release his draft budget on 4/15. City Departments will present their budgets 5/5-5/9. Mayor will release his revised budget on 5/14. Council will vote on the budget on 5/21. Budget will be finalized on 6/10. 6-month Balboa Park calendar is online and updated. Upcoming events: Race for Autism on 4/12, State of the County at The Natural History Museum on 4/16, Earthfest on 4/19 and Art Alive on 4/22.

Emily Piatanesi, Mayor's Office – Draft Budget will be presented on 4/15. Still in discussions/planning phase for paid parking. Looking at the issues holistically and there is no timeframe set for implementation yet. The Parking Reform package that is going to City Council was Citywide and not specific to Balboa Park.

BALBOA PARK NON-PROFIT PARTNER UPDATES

Forever Balboa Park – Katy McDonald – 300 volunteers came to volunteer recognition dinner. The volunteers provided \$1.2 million worth of value through their efforts last year. Contractor has been selected for Phase 2. Spark Awards will be on May 22nd, starting in the Botanical Building and then going to the Prado Restaurant. Nominations are still being accepted at this time. Final Tree plantings will be on 4/11 with volunteers from Cox and 4/25 for Arbor Day. Carousel Day will be in July.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – Peter Comiskey – Will be a very difficult budget year. A lot of funding is gone. Need to invest in Arts & Culture and Balboa Park is important for it. BPCP would prefer that paid parking would not happen but appreciate that we have been part of the discussions. Need to start with a

higher vision which could include increased transit to the park and in fixing Park Blvd current configuration.

Committee of 100 – Kevin Carpenter – Thanked Jon and staff for access to projects. Onsite work for Municipal Gym will not begin until after Labor Day. Working on pricing for some historical marking systems. Thanked BPC for having the Design Review Committee on the agenda.

Save Starlight – Steve Stopper – Not present.

Village Arts & Education Foundation – Frank Casciani – Not present.

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENT

None

CONSENT ITEMS

Item 1. Approval of Culture & Cocktails: Art Party.

Item 2. Approval of San Diego Sustainable Food Festival.

Item 5. Balboa Park Master Plan Update.

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mr. Blackson/ Mr. Shields

A motion was made by Mr. Blackson and seconded by Mr. Shields to approve items 1 and 2 and to table item 5. The motion carried unanimously (6-0-0).

DISCUSSION ITEMS

None

INFORMATION ITEMS

Item 3. Balboa Park Design Review Exploratory Committee

Public Comment:

Ross Porter – Early review of design makes for better parks and happier people. Designs will be much better. Nothing happens unless you want it.

James Hardy – In favor of what is presented. Consensus building is very important for better outcomes. Will be a tremendous thing.

Committee Comment:

Tim Shields – Does this include review of every project or just the projects BPC wants to bring forward?

Michael Stepner (Responded) – Only the major projects that come forward, none of the small maintenance projects.

Tim Shields – Inquired if there was design threshold that would be required.

Michael Stepner (Responded) – Would leave that up to BPC.

Tim Shields – I don't see how adding the extra review doesn't complicate the current process.

Michael Stepner (Responded) – It allows early review to try and address issues before they get to BPC.

Tim Shields – Does that apply to exterior of building or interior and would the committee be advisory only?

Michael Stepner (Responded) – Would apply to exterior only and would be advisory.

Chris Eddy – Would the committee have the authority to send projects and make changes mandatory?

Michael Stepner (Responded) – Committee would only make comments. Final projects would do what they want, per the city's approval.

Chris Eddy – I don't see how beneficial it would be without authority to make design changes.

Mike Stepner (Responded) – I have found benefit to pointing things out early in the design process.

Howard Blackson – Should the committee be for Balboa Park or all of Parks and Recreation?

Mike Stepner (Responded) – Talked about bringing it to all of Parks and Recreation. Would be good to test it on a smaller scale.

Jon Richards – Would need to increase the committee size and need volunteers that would have expertise. This could cause issues with having a quorum for meetings.

Howard Blackson – BPC has no finalized bylaws yet, only draft ones.

Michael Robinson – Based on experience you always want to look at projects holistically.

WORKSHOP ITEM

Item 4. Special Event Proposal Form Review

Public Comment:

None

Committee Comment:

Chris Eddy - Inquired if the Committee had to approve all events larger than 100 people.

Jon Richards (responded) – No. The form presented is used to determine if the event needs to be brought to BPC.

Chris Eddy - Add a place to ensure the event has insurance.

Allison Soares – Combine numbers 4 and 11. Need to ensure that applicants know who to contact for number 9.

Howard – Tab over a, b, c and d in number 2 so format is matching.

ADJOURNMENT – 5:15 pm

Notice of Next Balboa Park Meeting:

May 1, 2025
4:00 P.M.
In-Person

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Canales
District Manager