



SENIOR AFFAIRS ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting Minutes

WEDNESDAY, September 17, 2025

In Person Meeting: 12:00 Noon

Location: **Park de la Cruz Community Center**
3901 Landis Street, San Diego, 92105

Agenda

Item 1: Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Gwenmarie Hilleary called the Senior Affairs Advisory Board meeting to order at 12:08 p.m.

Antoinette Alioto, Marissa Feliciano, Gwenmarie Hilleary, Jacqueline Jackson, Mary Scott Knolls, Michelle Matter, William Peetoom, Bob Prath, and JB Robinson present.

Rosemary White Pope absent.

Item 2: Information – Emergency Preparedness Presentation

Captain John Morris from the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) and Assistant Fire Chief Dan Eddy from the San Diego Fire Department (SDFD) provided an overview on current emergency preparedness systems, challenges, opportunities for improvement, and how to better serve older adults.

Gwenmarie Hilleary opened the discussion by highlighting the growing aging population and the importance of ensuring that emergency response strategies adequately address the needs of older adults. Captain Morris explained that most emergencies in San Diego are natural disasters, and in those cases SDPD works in conjunction with SDFD and the Office of Emergency Services. He emphasized the use of communication tools such as the Genasys App, which provides location-based notifications and allows families to track alerts for multiple addresses, and Alert San Diego, the County's reverse 9-1-1 system that requires residents to sign up online at alertsandiego.org. Additionally, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are issued through cell towers to notify all phones in a specific area. Education on these tools primarily occurs through community meetings, Fire Safe Councils, and Captains Advisory Board gatherings, which engage neighborhood watch groups and other community organizations.

Assistant Chief Eddy described SDFD's role in emergency operations and stressed the need for greater advocacy to ensure older adults are aware of both Genasys and Alert San Diego. He noted that SDG&E plays an important role in large-scale emergencies by supplying lists of residents who rely on life-sustaining medical equipment. He also highlighted the growth of San Diego's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. CERT is particularly strong in Scripps Ranch and has been deployed in wildfire situations to help residents stay informed. Fire Safe Councils have expanded significantly, growing from 3 to 23 across San Diego, often forming after local emergencies such as the Montezuma Fire. Assistant Chief Eddy also mentioned the Ready, Set, Go program, which provides practical preparedness guidance to residents. For non-ambulatory individuals, options include either evacuation or sheltering in place with dedicated fire resources assigned.

Several community concerns and questions were raised. William Peetoom asked how first responders identify residents with medical needs such as respirators. Currently, there is no universal database, and information usually comes from 9-1-1 calls, word of mouth, or from SDG&E. Individuals can register for SDG&E's Medical Baseline Program to prevent power shutoffs, receive priority for restoration, and benefit from lower rates.

Bob Prath referenced San Francisco's Neighborhood Emergency Response Team (NERT) program, where residents voluntarily register with the fire department to be checked on, as a potential model for San Diego. He also asked about police procedures for forced entry during emergencies. Captain Morris stated that entry is only made in cases of urgent, life-threatening situations and always in collaboration with other first responders. Assistant Chief Eddy added that SDFD responds to roughly 600 medical aid calls daily, with call volume increasing 8–11% annually, requiring adjustments to staffing and service contracts.

Mary Scott Knolls asked how older adults could share their concerns with law enforcement. Both Captain Morris and Assistant Chief Eddy encouraged participants to bring forward their priorities and needs, emphasizing that preparedness ultimately depends on planning at both the household and community level.

Item 3: Non-Agenda Public Comment

None.

Item 4: Approval of the July 16 Meeting Minutes

Gwenmarie Hilleary introduced the item. Marissa Feliciano made a motion to approve the minutes. Antoinette Alioto seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 5: Approval of the August 4 Meeting Minutes

Gwenmarie Hilleary introduced the item and requested a correction on the number of older adults in San Diego noted in Item 3. Marissa Feliciano made a motion to approve the corrected minutes. Antoinette Alioto seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 6: Election of Vice Chair

Gwenmarie Hilleary announced that Juan Sotelo has resigned from the Board, creating a vacancy for Vice President. William Peetoom expressed interest in the position. A motion was made by Michelle Matter, seconded by Jacqueline Jackson, and the appointment was approved unanimously.

Item 7: Grocery Store Ordinance Update

JB Robinson reported that effective July 1, the Grocery Pricing Transparency Ordinance was amended to provide retailers more flexibility in addressing the digital gap. Beginning October 1, the ordinance will not be proactively enforced but will instead rely on complaints, with retailers given 15 days to make corrections. Private citizens cannot sue for non-compliance. Retailers operating on a membership model, such as Costco, are not required to comply, nor are institutions selling grocery items without a physical location, such as Amazon Fresh. Bob Prath added that the County Supervisors have taken an interest in the issue in the name of fairness, and he commended the City Council for addressing it despite economic threats from grocers, noting that similar efforts have failed in other states.

JB Robinson noted that while proposed budget cuts to park hours and library operations were scaled back, the San Diego City Council recently passed a plan to implement paid parking at Balboa Park, a change that could have a significant impact on older adults. Mary Scott Knolls raised concerns about the broader impact of parking fees, particularly on minority residents and older adults, especially those who participate in community groups at Balboa Park.

Bob Prath provided an update on Councilmember LaCava's efforts to preserve affordable housing. He explained that while large numbers of housing units are being converted to market-rate pricing, there is limited capacity to build new affordable units. To address this, the Housing Commission launched a \$5 million preservation fund enabling the Commission to purchase properties and preserve affordability. He emphasized the importance of this issue for older adults. Marissa Feliciano added that while this effort is a step in the right direction, it is not sufficient to fully preserve affordability, but it remains an issue worth monitoring.

Item 8: City Council District Meeting Updates

Gwenmarie Hilleary reported that three meetings with City Council offices have taken place, with a fourth scheduled for September 18 in District 6. Two of the meetings were held in person and one was conducted online. The meetings were intended to introduce the Senior Affairs Advisory Board to Councilmembers and their staff, learn about their interactions with the senior community, and identify areas where staff may need support. Marissa Feliciano noted that Council offices expressed interest in helping to amplify issues affecting older adults, while Antoinette and William shared that the meetings were well received. Antoinette emphasized the importance of meeting with different Council Districts, recognizing that each is unique in its demographics, geography, and community needs.

Item 9: Officer Reports

Bob Prath shared highlights from a recent town hall on San Diego's grocery store ordinance, which goes into effect on October 1. The ordinance requires grocery stores in the City of San Diego to provide alternatives to digital coupons to ensure all shoppers, including older adults and those without smartphones, have equal access to store discounts. Bob participated in a panel alongside Councilmembers Marni von Wilpert and Sean Elo-Rivera and noted that the ordinance serves as a potential model for other cities. Bob described the event as strong and solution-focused, and he was introduced as a member of the Senior Affairs Advisory Board, an acknowledgment that highlights the board's ongoing engagement in policy discussions affecting older adults.

Item 5: Adjournment

William Peetoom made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rosemary White Pope seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.