

MINUTES

**City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE
October 2, 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
David Baron
Jake Banfield-Weir
Mandy Brown
Patty Riddle
Michael Robinson
Tim Shields
Michael Singleton
Kathy Vandenheuvel

Members Absent

Howard Blackson
Makeda Cheatom
Chris Eddy

Staff Present

Jon Richards
Tyler Canales
Anthony Harrington

CALL TO ORDER

Allison Soares called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES September 4, 2025

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mr. Baron/ Ms. Vandenheuvel

A motion was made by Mr. Baron and seconded by Ms. Vandenheuvel to approve the September 4, 2025, meeting minutes. The motion carried unanimously (9-0-0).

NON- AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Web Form:

Dr. Graham & Stephanie Kent - Our family, like many others in San Diego, has eagerly looked forward to visiting Balboa Park and the San Diego City Zoo. After finally managing to free up some time, we are met with the news of new parking meters charging \$2.50 per hour with a restrictive 4-hour limit. This doesn't just add an extra \$10 to our outing costs, but if we wish to stay longer, we are forced to move our car and seek parking elsewhere, a cumbersome task if you're familiar with the area. It worries me deeply how this decision will impact lower-income families who may abandon such cultural and educational outings altogether due to financial constraints. Balboa Park, renowned for its museums, shops, restaurants, and unique International Cottages, is a treasure trove that deserves to be accessible to everyone. Patrons typically spend more than four hours engrossed in its vast offerings, and these new parking regulations bluntly disregard this cherished reality. Moreover, the park and zoo's growing reputation thrive on the dedication of countless volunteers whose accessibility will now be hampered by these fees, reducing morale and risking the influx of essential volunteer support, especially in spaces like the International

Village. The implementation of these meters feels like a misjudgment, contributing to disenfranchisement rather than welcoming the whole community. By limiting access due to unnecessary costs, San Diego risks losing a part of its cultural heart. The decision-makers must reconsider methods that both maintain the park's accessibility and gather any required funding. We urge city officials to look for alternative funding or solutions, such as permitting extended parking hours on a sliding scale or providing free parking during off-peak seasons. Perhaps a reevaluation of the necessity of such meters in such vibrant public spaces is overdue. Let's ensure that Balboa Park and the San Diego Zoo remain welcoming places for all and not install parking meters. I feel strongly that the parking meters should not be installed.

Claudia Kightlinger - Paid parking enforcement should not end at 8pm daily. It should be subject to shorter hours during the winter (end at 4pm) and end at 6pm during the summer.

In-Person:

Clifford Weiver – Wanted to inquire about December Nights parking. Ace Parking is supposed to provide the City with a written report of December Nights within 30 days of the event. Is anyone on the Committee charged with reviewing receipts? Does the Committee have oversight on December Nights?

Jackie Gallen – Member of the German Shepherd Club. The club uses the Zoo Parking lot after hours. Concerned about how parking fees will affect them.

Michael Warburton – Wanted to thank the Committee for their support against paid parking at the last meeting and the members that went to City Council. Thanked Peter Comiskey as well.

Daniele Laman – The 90th Anniversary of HPR was very good. The Cottages will be involved with the upcoming International Film Festival. Inquired about the possibility of have the Committee meetings be a hybrid online and in person.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

None.

STAFF REPORT

Council District 3 – None

78th District – None

SDPD – None

Mayor's Office - None

Jon Richards, Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation – Thanked everyone who commented at the Council meeting. Was warming to see how everyone uses the park. SANDAG grant for the Master Plan Update will be awarded in a couple weeks. A webpage for the Master Plan will go live shortly after that. Beginning on 10/16 urn receptacles will be replaced with the Central Mesa. Repairs to the House of Czech are almost completed. Organ Pavilion and Spanish Village restroom renovations have begun. Utilize the Get It Done App for park maintenance issues as it helps keeps stats of incidents. Looking to update signage with the park in preparation for paid parking implementation. Upcoming events: The Haunted Trail 9/26-11/7, Festival of Lights 10/18, Trunk or Treat at the Automotive Museum 10/25, More Than Pink Walk 11/2, The Grinch at The Old Globe 11/5-12/31.

BALBOA PARK NON-PROFIT PARTNER UPDATES

Forever Balboa Park – Katy McDonald – Working on Phase II and anticipate a March completion. Will have a ribbon cutting ceremony for construction of the historic pergola. Trees For Health has been merged with Forever Balboa Park. And a new website is up with QR codes that identify the plants. Last Committee meeting was frustrating but thankful for the delay in paid parking implementation. Went to New York and visited several non-profits who work with park districts to observe their operations.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – None

Committee of 100 – Ross Porter – Municipal Gymnasium work is underway. Should be done by December Nights. Presented the working group report at the Council meeting on 9/10. Report is online for people to see. Hopes Balboa Park Committee will implement Design Review.

Save Starlight – Vincent Puma/Steve Stopper – Police Storefront has been successful. Have had less and less intrusions. Lights in parking lot are not working. In talks with Sycuan about sponsorship. Will be an open house on 10/15 from 10am-3pm. Monica Montgomery will be coming.

Village Arts & Education Foundation – None

COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENT

Jake Banfield-Weir – Is there any data to see attendance in the park. Would want to see if paid parking has impacts beyond what may have been thought about.

Jon Richards (Responded) – No way to track currently but will be able to after paid parking.

Allison Soares – Inquired about the Ace Parking December Nights report.

Jon Richards (Responded) – That would be with Office of Special Events as it is their event.

Patty Riddle – Impressed by the San Diego High School students who spoke at the City Council meeting. Thanked Conrad and Jon for all the work they had put into the parking plan. Thanked Anthony, Victor, Luis, Audrey and the staff at BPAC and Muni for the work they have put into bringing in new programming. BPAC and Muni will be the only rec centers where people will have to pay for parking.

Mike Singleton – Inquired if any ad hoc or subcommittees are going to be created.

CONSENT ITEMS

None

INFORMATION ITEMS

Item 1: Balboa Park Paid Parking

Presenter: Emily Piatanesi, Office of the Mayor

Public Comment:

Clifford Weiver – Money from paid parking in the Central Mesa can be moved to the East Mesa. There is some concern that there could be paid parking at Morley Field. Would hope the Committee would oppose any proposal for paid parking on the East Mesa.

Dana Witt – Represents the San Diego Obedience Club. Wanted the Committee to be aware that they utilize the Zoo parking lot after hours. Have been there for 75 years. Will be affected by new parking fees.

David Walters – Represents the Redwood Bridge Club which includes residents and non-residents. A survey was taken and a cost of \$150 per year for a parking permit would maximize participation. West Mesa is largely a neighborhood recreation area. Construction workers are taking all the parking. Want to ensure that parking permits are for park users.

Daniele Laman – HPR's volunteers' number at approximately 1,100. Are all EV spots going to be in the Level 1 parking lots? How will security be expanded for volunteers. Will parking data be safe unlike the smart streetlights.

Committee Comment:

David Baron – How does kiosk work in level 3 lots for the 3 free hours?

Jon Richards (Responded) – Patron would enter their license plate into the kiosk when they arrive. After 3 hours they would need to pay by using the app or kiosk.

Kathy Vandenheuvel – Golden Hill Community has no other park land beyond Balboa Park. Concerned paid parking will affect neighboring areas. Hopes the City can make funding available for low income or military families for the cost of the passes.

Mandy Brown – Will parking rates be applicable for all vehicles?

Jon Richards (Responded) – Yes.

Mike Singleton – What's happening at the Zoo parking lots?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Rates for that parking lot are at the Zoo's discretion.

Mike Singleton – Thought it was a public parking lot.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – The parking lot is part of the Zoo's lease area, but the City is working closely with them.

Mike Singleton – West Mesa seems like most would park on Balboa Drive as opposed to 6th Avenue since it would be cheaper.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Which is why the staff recommendation was to keep the rates the same on both.

Mike Singleton – Are there overnight parking concerns?

Jon Richards (Responded) – The park closes at 10pm per the Municipal Code. The gates are also locked at night.

Mike Singleton – Has there been discussions with changing the lanes on Park Blvd?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Working closely with Caltrans on that.

Patty Riddle – Mayor could play hardball with the Zoo. Mayor has the ability to withhold funding from them. Confused on the metered parking. At \$2.50 per hour with a \$10 maximum would someone be able to stay all day.

Jon Richards (Responded) – Yes.

Patty Riddle – Will volunteers be able to park for free and who is considered a volunteer.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Yes. A volunteer is someone who provides a benefit to the park.

Patty Riddle – Should be a working group to clarify what a volunteer is.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Have to be careful as to not violate the “gift of public funds.”

Jon Richards (Responded) – There is clarification in the resolution that was passed on what a volunteer is.

Patty Riddle – Will there be more trams?

Jon Richards (Responded) – There are a couple of components. The current tram hours are 9am-8pm during Spring/Summer months and 9am-6pm during Fall/Winter. Want to expand those hours to 8am-8pm year-round. Looking at an on-demand service as well, specifically for park-based organizations staff and volunteers. Will aim to start when paid parking does.

Patty Riddle – Who will decide annual/quarterly pass fees.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Mayor and staff will propose the fee, and Council will vote on it.

Allison Soares – Will this be coming back to the Committee?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Yes.

Kathy Vandenheuvel – Would appreciate any update on discussions with San Diego High School and Special Event fees. Consider having a reduced fee for educational special events. Would the on-demand tram service expand to Golden Hill Rec Center?

Jon Richards (Responded) – Not planned for now.

Patty Riddle – Will there be 4 levels for the annual pass?

Jon Richards (Responded) – Rates would be for an annual or quarterly pass.

Kathy Vandenheuvel – Do any of the rates cover San Diego High School?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Still in conversation with them.

Item 2: Public Electrical Vehicle Charging Program Update - Tabled

Presenter: Anna Lowe, Program Manager, General Services,
Heather Werner, Deputy Director, General Services

DISCUSSION

None

WORKSHOP ITEMS

None

ADJOURNMENT – 5:09 pm

Notice of Next Balboa Park Meeting:

November 6, 2025
4:00 P.M.
In-Person

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Canales
District Manager