

City of San Diego
Parks and Recreation Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 17, 2025

“TO PROVIDE HEALTHY, SUSTAINABLE, AND ENRICHING ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL”

Meeting Held by In Person and Teleconference:

This meeting was held at the Balboa Park Club Ballroom and remotely using the Zoom Webinar platform and was streamed online. The public was invited to join the meeting by phone or computer, as well as invited to submit “Public Comments” in writing via a webform. The form was made available on the Parks and Recreation website at <https://www.sandiego.gov/park-and-recreation/general-info/boards>.

NOTE: Both verbal and written communication were used by Board Members, City staff, and presenters during the meeting. City staff also used the screen-share function to allow viewers to view content shared by the speaker which included PowerPoint presentations and websites.

Before the meeting was called to order, City staff read instructions to the public regarding technical procedures for making live public comment during the webinar.

Members Present	Members Absent	City Staff Present
Marcella Bothwell (Chair) Rick Gulley (Vice Chair) Daniele Laman Dr. Judith Munoz Evelyn Smith Allison Soares Agatha Wein	Nick Anastasopoulos Dr. Andrea Dooley	Michelle Abella-Shon (Virtual) Jonathan Avila Ryan Barbrick Angela Beasley (Virtual) Benjamin Cartwright (Virtual) Nathan Causman Brice Ciabatti (Virtual) Karen Dennison (Virtual) Sarah Erazo Erika Ferreira Andy Field Alex Frost (Virtual) Marci Garcia Matthew Leyba-Gonzalez II Anna Lowe Salome Martinez Nicole McNeil (Virtual) Mayra Medel (Virtual) Kaitlyn Porter (Virtual)

		Sameera Rao Juan Razo Elvi Ricafort Zina Rummani (virtual) Risa Saiga (virtual) Juliette Sulieman (Virtual) Tom Tomlinson Tony Tosca Gabriela Verendia Heather Werner
--	--	--

CALL TO ORDER – The meeting was called to order by Chair Bothwell at 2:07 pm.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 20, 2025

MOTION/SECONDED:

Mr. Gulley/Dr. Munoz

A motion was made by Mr. Gulley to approve the minutes and seconded by Dr. Judith Munoz. The motion was approved 7-0-0 and passed unanimously with the following vote: Yea: Marcella Bothwell, Rick Gulley, Daniele Laman, Dr. Judith Munoz, Evelyn Smith, Allison Soares, and Agatha Wein. Recused: None. Abstained: None. Not Present: Nick Anastasopoulos and Dr. Andrea Dooley.

Public Comments: No public comments on the meeting minutes.

Board Comments: None

NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT:

Nathan White thanked Director Field, Jon Richards, and team with the work they do for all the improvements being made for the community of Morley Field at Balboa Park. He thanked the Parks and Recreation Department staff for being open to the recommended funding sources in facilitating lights at the fields with the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) donation. He is also open to the ideas to raise funding for building Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects and private partnership with non-profit organizations. He indicated that the baseball team really wants to build snack pavilion and more fields so more usable to their sports team.

Ian Craft with the Climbing for the Community is helping the Parks and Recreation Department's with the City Heights climbing club. He is working with Area Manager Raul Contreras and his team at the City Heights Recreation Center. The program is currently a once a month busing of some kids from City Heights neighborhood to the local climbing gym at Mesa Rim in Mission Valley. The program helps the kids in building confidence and inspire physical fitness. The program is purely run by donation and looking forward to continued collaboration with the Parks and Recreation Department. Chair Bothwell

recommended for him to reach out to Sand Diego Parks Foundation (SDPF) CEO Leona Sublett to assist with donation opportunities.

Jose Eduardo Collejo, with FC Balboa, a community soccer club, came to show support for the proposed Morley Field project championed by Nathan White. His club are in support of the current developments at Balboa Park and appreciate the City for the support.

REQUESTS FOR CONTINUANCE: None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- Area Committee – There is no representative for the Community Parks Committee yet, and the role of the committee is being transitioned into Park Talk SD.
- Balboa Park Committee – Ms. Soares reported that they had a great Balboa Park meeting on April 10th. It was a short meeting. However, they discussed the design review committee and special events. She is looking forward to their next meeting on May 1, 2025.
- Mission Bay Park Committee – Dr. Munoz confirmed that they had an interesting meeting. She wanted to clarify the Union-Tribune article that came out for the South Shores Development project. She shared that the committee is supportive of the South Shores development because they support the expansion of the wetland as well. However, the South Shores has possible toxicity due to the inactive landfill. She noted the group discussed how the SeaWorld settlement funds would be spent. The Committee did not support the \$600k to continue the general development plan for South Shores. The Committee is concerned about possible landfill toxicity and prefers that concern be addressed first. Chair Bothwell asked if the South Shores GDP project is moving forward? Director Field responded that the Department is reviewing the Committee's determination and will advise on the next steps in the future.
- Mission Trails Regional Park Citizens' Advisory Committee – Mr. Gulley had no report since there was no meeting last month.
- San Diego Parks Foundation (SDPF) – Chair Bothwell asked Leona Sublett, CEO of SDPF to provide report to the Board. Ms. Sublett thanked Chair Bothwell for normally providing the Board with SDPF's monthly report. Ms. Sublett provided the following updates:
 - In 2024 the foundation provided \$1.9 million in partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department to provide programs, services and project enhancements throughout the Parks and Recreation Department's recreation centers and parks. SDPF appreciates the partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department to make the programs, activities, events, and projects happen.
 - SDPF supported the therapeutic services basketball program by securing the wheelchairs. The program had 84 participants.
 - The Park Ambassador program grew with support from SDPF.

- SDPF received a donation to renovate the field at Montgomery Waller Community Park.

Chair Bothwell thanked Ms. Sublett for her public-private philanthropy opportunity and believes that this partnership can help address the budget challenges the City is facing. Chair Bothwell noted the huge difference SDPF makes to parks.

Ms. Sublett reiterated what Chair Bothwell mentioned and emphasized the importance of the nonprofit role, especially as federal funding challenges arise across the country for nonprofit organizations. She also thanked Chair Bothwell for the warm introduction. She also shared that they are working hard to partner with other volunteer organizations because it is thanks to the generosity of San Diego individual donations foundations incorporation so they are going to really help us continue this impact particularly during this budget of time which Director Field will address at his presentation.

CHAIR COMMENTS:

Chair Bothwell commented that with the City's \$258 million budgetary deficit, it is understood that the choices are going to be tough, but we must remember that parks are not a luxury. They are vital services and a public utility like water, electricity, and public safety. Parks promote physical and mental health, strengthen community ties, and provide safe spaces for all especially the underserved neighborhoods. Cutting funding to reduce park hours or programs would hit the park recreation center. This would impact ability to offer engaging evening activities for youth in high-risk areas. Recreational programs help to prevent crime, improve trust between program participants and law-enforcement staff, and give teens positive outlets and experiences. The proposed loss of programs would undermine public safety and leave vulnerable communities with fewer resources, eroding much of the progress that the Parks and Recreation Department and SDPF have accomplished. Chair Bothwell plans to attend an upcoming the City Council meeting asking them not to cut park and recreation center hours.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

Daniele Laman would like to invite everyone to come to the Fern Street Circus birthday bash the hours at the recreation center this weekend at Cesar Chavez Community Center on Saturday and Golden Hill Recreation Center on Sunday. Additional locations are available the following weekend. Second, she would like to invite everyone to the ethnic festival at the International Cottages at Balboa Park this coming up May 3, 2025. Also, she shared that a eucalyptus tree fell on House of Czech & Slovak Republics on March 6, 2025. She expressed her appreciation that staff has been very responsive and cleaned it up very quickly and are waiting on lead abatement. She also spoke with Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera from Council District 9 regarding how the process to have Citywide volunteers conduct cleanups and minor maintenance parts in Normal Heights be simplified.

Evelyn Smith commented that she is grateful for the improvements at Marie Widman and Emerald Hills parks. She is pleased with the renaming of Dr. Bertha O. Pendleton Neighborhood Park (formerly Clay Park), which was renamed in honor of Dr. Pendleton, who happens to be a dear friend of Ms. Smith. She was grateful that funding for these projects

came before the budget cuts. She also shared that she is beginning her third term with the Board, which will last until March 2027.

Chair Bothwell shared that there will be a walk your animals fundraising event at Liberty Station with the San Diego Humane Society (SDHS) on May 3, 2025. With the proposed budget reduction, SDHS could be facing a \$3.5 million cut so any kind of fundraising activity we can do for SDHS would be helpful. Dr. Munoz shared that she has a team too.

DIRECTORS REPORT: Director Field provided the Board with the following updates:

Director Field started his update by sharing some gratitude and thanks to Department staff. He was out of office due to medical reasons for an extended period, and there were two board meetings that he missed in January and February. He expressed his appreciation and gratitude to his staff for doing a magnificent job of carrying the department along during his time away and making him feel like he didn't need to be worried at all and was grateful and gratified by all that they have done to help with carrying the department along especially with the headwind that is the budget.

Director Field also shared that Leona Sublett has been an amazing partner in leading the SDPF. He also shared that several board members are present at the meeting, including Marcella our Board chair but also Michel Anderson and Vicki Granowitz. The SDPF Board has been fantastic and are great supporters of the Department. He appreciates the advocacy and just wanted to let them know that the Department notices and appreciates it. Director Field looks forward to going into another summer together.

Board Appointments:

Several board members that have been reappointed. This occurred with a City Council item on April 15 earlier this week so extending congratulations to our recently reappointed board members, including not just Ms. Smith, but also Ms. Soares, Ms. Wein, and Dr. Dooley. They will be with the Board until March 2027.

Director Field shared that he received written notice from both Martin Armstrong and from Shaina Gross that they are both resigning from the park board. This means that the Board now has two vacancies. He encouraged anybody interested in applying for the Board. This can be done by going to the [sandiego.gov](https://www.sandiego.gov) webpage and typing in "Boards and Commissions." This webpage has a portal that takes you to the application form for anyone who is interested so that the vacancies can be filled as quickly as possible.

Budget Update:

On April 15, 2025, Mayor Gloria released the Draft Fiscal Year 2026 Budget, which included draft budgetary reductions to the Parks and Recreation Department. This will be discussed further during today's information agenda.

The proposed draft Fiscal Year 2026 budget has been released. It is available for review at: https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/pb_full.pdf or <https://www.sandiego.gov/finance/draft>. Numerous reductions are listed for Parks and Recreation Department; those begin on page 387 of Volume 2 or on page 645/1350 of the document in the link provided above.

The City Council will hear a presentation by the Mayor on Monday, April 21st at 2 pm at City Hall 12th floor (202 C Street downtown). The agenda is posted here: <https://sandiego.hylandcloud.com/211agendaonlinecouncil>.

The City Council will hear the Parks and Recreation Department budget, along with the Neighborhood Services Branch including Library Department, on Tuesday May 6th at 2 pm at City Hall 12th floor (202 C Street downtown). The full calendar of budget hearings is posted here: <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2025-04/fy26-brc-hearing-calendar.pdf>.

On Wednesday May 14th, the Mayor will release the May Revision to the Draft Budget, Fiscal Year 2025 Third Quarter Budget Monitoring Report; and Fiscal Year 2025 CIP Year-End Budget Monitoring Report.

The City Council's Budget Review Committee will discuss recommended budgetary modifications at its meeting of Friday June 6th at 9 am.

Parks in the News:

- **Balboa Park** is a hot spot for enforcement of San Diego's camping ban. Voice of San Diego: <https://voiceofsandiego.org/2025/03/28/balboa-park-is-ground-zero-for-homeless-camping-ban/>. The article states that "Balboa Park stakeholders credit the camping ban for reducing the number of homeless camps in the park though they emphasize that they still regularly deal with challenges with unsheltered residents. Meanwhile, homeless San Diegans and service providers trying to help them say the crackdown in Balboa Park and elsewhere in the city has led unsheltered people to disperse to try to avoid police and stymied efforts to move them off the street."
- **Belmont Park:** Due to building deterioration caused in part by salt air and maritime influences, the Mission Beach Lifeguard Station is a safety risk, and emergency repairs are needed. SDNews.com: <https://sdnews.com/mission-beach-lifeguard-station-a-safety-risk-emergency-repairs-needed/>.
 - A structural evaluation by an architectural firm in May 2024 concluded that the lifeguard tower needs "immediate hazard mitigation" to alleviate the threat it currently presents to the "health, safety, and welfare of the general public."
 - The tower was built in 1982 and is in "extremely poor condition and is beyond its useful service life." It has cracking and spalling from coastal conditions impacting the structure
 - The Mission Bay Improvement Fund, which can fund deferred maintenance at Belmont Park as it is part of the Mission Bay Improvement Zone, is contributing \$1 million for the needed repairs and may help fund future efforts to address eventual replacement of the structure.
- **Gompers Park** has a new dog off-leash area that opened to the public on March 15th. The Department partnered with San Diego Humane Society to host the event and offered giveaways such as dog tags, treats, and information about services offered by San Diego Humane Society. San Diego Voice and Viewpoint: <https://sdvoice.info/community-celebrates-new-off-leash-dog-park-at-gompers-park/>.

- **John F. Kennedy Park** reopened its playground and restrooms on March 25th. This is the first major upgrade of the park since it first opened in 1971. There was no official grand opening ceremony, but Mayor Gloria visited the park to enjoy the park with children from nearby schools. Fox 5 San Diego: <https://fox5sandiego.com/news/local-news/san-diego/john-f-kennedy-park-in-san-diego-completes-its-5m-facelift/>.
- **Memorial Senior Center** in Logan Heights reopened to the public. Open five days a week from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., the center is designed to foster connection and provide a space for seniors to engage in social and creative activities. Lunch is also provided during the week, while supplies last, as part of a partnership with Serving Seniors. This new Logan Heights center is one of several operated by the Department under its AgeWell Services program, which supports seniors throughout San Diego. Other centers include the Balboa Park Senior Lounge, Cathy Hopper Friendship Center, and Park de la Cruz Community Center. Fox 5 San Diego: <https://fox5sandiego.com/news/local-news/new-senior-center-opens-in-logan-heights-offering-activities-and-support/>.
- **Mission Bay Park De Anza Cove** has a recently repaved parking lot that is covered in Cool Seal, which is a light-colored pavement that is designed to reflect sunlight rather than absorbing sunlight. The goal is to test this product to see if it helps reduce the urban heat island effect. It is planned to test this technology at the Sunset Point Lot in Mission Bay Park as well. The project took 13 months to construct, from February 2024 to March 11, 2025, when it reopened. In addition to the parking lot, the project also included accessibility improvements to the walkways, a new crosswalk, irrigation systems upgrade, and tree planting (39 trees). NBC 7 San Diego: <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/investigations/mission-bays-new-parking-lot-isnt-so-hot/3798677/>.
- **Mt. Hope Cemetery** experienced a fire of suspicious origin overnight on March 26th. Several grave sites sustained damage, including headstones and vases. Cemetery staff have already begun cleanup and repair efforts. ABC 10 News: <https://www.10news.com/homepage-showcase/second-fire-in-a-month-strikes-mt-hope-cemetery>.
- **Torrey Pines City Park** (near the Gliderport): City forces removed about five tons of debris from encampments along cliffs at Torrey Pines. NBC 7 San Diego: <https://www.nbcsandiego.com/videos/helicopters-remove-tons-of-trash-from-torrey-pines-cliffs-homeless-encampments/3789594/>.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

Dr. Munoz asked if there could be additional information on volunteer opportunities brought to the Board and nonprofit organizations. Director Field indicated that a new volunteer coordinator was recently hired and could provide an update once she is able to familiarize herself with her new role.

REQUEST FOR CONTINUANCE: None

CONSENT ITEMS: None

DISCUSSION ITEMS: None

INFORMATION ITEMS:

201. Community Wildfire Awareness

Director Field expressed thanks and gratitude to Fire Marshal Tony Tosca and his team. They have been great partners and have helped to identify areas of concern when it comes to fire fuel in our park system and making sure the Department is doing its part to keep residents safe. The Department appreciates the partnership and is gratified for their work to have a robust brush management program led by Erika Ferreira and the Open Space Division.

Deputy Director Erika Ferreira made the introduction for Fire Marshal Tosca and his team. Fire Marshal Tosca, Marci Garcia, and Matthew Leyva-Gonzales presented the informational report.

Public Comments:

Louis Rodolico, with University City Fire Safe Council, stated the fire safe council has a proposal to purchase a quantity of 16-inch stainless steel screening because people can't afford to buy large quantities of stainless-steel screening. The 16-inch screens offered by local vendors is the best size recommended. The recommended 8-inch screens could allow some insects to get through, so he is recommending 16-inch screens. These would keep flying termites out and could help your house safer for fire protection. Mr. Rodolico asked Fire Marshal Tosca for his opinion on the screens. Fire Marshal Tosca responded that he is not opposed to it.

Diane Ahern with the University City thanked Fire Marshal Tosca and all the Fire-Rescue Department's staff and the code enforcement staff from Fire-Rescue Department. She announced that April 22, 2025, is Earth Day and is also the day that Fire Chief Robert Logan will be in University City speaking to their community association about fire safety. She invited all to attend this event. The event will be broadcasting live to Facebook on the University City news website, which is www.universitycitynews.org. She also praised the great presentation of Fire Marshal Tosca and the Fire-Rescue Department.

Board Comments:

Chair Bothwell asked if a video clip of the presentation can be provided to the planning group. Fire Marshal Tosca responded yes.

Ms. Wein asked who is responsible to trim brush on residential property located along a canyon, including property line down to the canyon. Ms. Garcia responded that the property owner is responsible only for their property. If the canyon is owned by a private owner, Fire-Rescue Department staff would visit the site, assess the condition, and determine if any violations exist. In the case of violation, Fire-Rescue Department would tell the property owner to conduct brush management as necessary to ensure public safety.

Ms. Laman asked what can be done about a private property owner who does not live in canyons and then has a brush fire on their property. She was referring to the monitoring of the Halloween fire off Montezuma Road and Fairmount Avenue on October 31, 2024. She asked whether any retroactive action could be taken in that instance. Fire Marshal Tosca responded if brush management not being mitigated, so you must look again where did it

occur, City or private land. If the fire occurs on private property, then the property owner is responsible of the needed brush management.

Ms. Laman next asked if the City going to update the maps for hazard zones based on current City maps or the recently issued State of California maps? Fire Marshal Tosca responded that they are working with the Office of the City Attorney to review the State maps and see how they align with the existing City maps. His team is looking to keep the same way for brush management. He also suggested that members of the public could visit the Fire-Rescue Department website at www.sandiego.gov/fire and provide feedback.

202. College Area Community Plan Update-Recreation Element

Principal Planner Jonathan Avila and Senior Planner Nathan Causman presented the College Area Community Plan Update-Recreation Element.

Public Comments:

Sue Richardson is a member of the College Area Community Planning Board and the Colina Del Sol Community Recreation Group which includes College Area. She recognizes the value of this Board input to the community plans. She pointed out that the College Area has a park deficiency. She noted a correction is needed on page 35 of the report. Despite its name, College Area consists of more than just college-age youth and young adults. Demographics are diverse and multi-cultural. College Area has a park deficiency of 91%. No playgrounds are located in any city park other than two joint use areas shared with schools. No recreation centers and pools are present in the community. She also commented that the need for the community to work together with Parks and Recreation Department and City Planning Department to correct the deficiencies before the next draft comes out.

Board Comments:

Ms. Laman recommended the lime-green color for canyons and open space be distinguished between private property and City open space. She noted that many canyons are private properties and that none of the canyons are City-owned. There is interest to have a change in planning area boundaries as Kensington-Talmadge Community Planning Area would like to shift its boundaries to possibly incorporate a portion of College Area.

Chair Bothwell thanked the planning staff for coming to present the plans before they vote, and she agreed with the issues that Ms. Richardson pointed out especially related to the limited amount of available park space. She requested for the staff to take it back since this upzoning is destroying the neighborhood. Mr. Avila responded yes.

203. Come Play Outside 2024 Update

Program Manager Salome Martinez introduced Supervising Recreation Specialist Juan Razo to provide the Come Play Outside (CPO) report. Before Mr. Razo started his presentation, he expressed his appreciation to SDPF for the success of this program and thanked them for all they do. He then provided the CPO report to the Board.

Public Comments: None

Board Comments:

Ms. Laman commented that the presentation for the program is amazing, and she thanked SDPF for their help in executing the CPO program. She asked about any restrictions on camps for community parks and open space. Mr. Razo responded that the programs in CPO are for Communities of Concern (COC). The CPO program could offer the day camp programs for those locations within COCs.

Chair Bothwell complimented the presentation and appreciated the compendium of information demonstrating the success of the CPO program.

204. City of San Diego Public Electric Vehicle Charging Program

Program Manager Anna Lowe and Deputy Director Heather Werner presented the City of San Diego Public Electronic Vehicle (EV) Charging Program.

Public Comments:

Robin Kaufman, chair of Rancho Bernardo (RB) Community Recreation Group and the RB Community Council, shared that there are three charging stations at the park for the last three years and had not been working. They also reported these through the Get It Done. They finally got a response in March and going to look at the three stations. Ms. Lowe responded that they would start working on these before the year end and will notify all folks when these are fixed.

Board Comments:

Dr. Munoz asked if the pricing is competitive, who controls the pricing, and whether there is variable pricing. Ms. Werner responded that the vendor gets to establish pricing with City approval. Most City chargers will be Level 2 chargers. The flat rate for Level 2 is 50 cents like the ones at the San Diego Zoo. Larger chargers (Level 3 such as Tesla chargers) that have rapid recharge rates will likely have time of use rates that may result in pricing variability. The City team is looking for input on whether to seek flat or variable rates for charging.

Ms. Wein asked if the pricing charges are designed to help those without charging options at home or if they are intended to offer a perk to those with electric cars. Ms. Werner responded that they are planning to cover both uses.

205. Fiscal Year 2026 Draft Budget

Director Field presented the P&R Fiscal Year 2026 Draft Budget.

Public Comments:

Leona Sublett, the CEO of SDPF, stated that she is opposed to these reductions, including those impacting service levels, especially Assistant Recreation Centers and reduced hours at recreation centers. These cuts would be devastating to communities of concern, especially since these cuts would impact the Come Play Outside program. She appreciates that Director Field and the Department's leadership team have a difficult situation.

Vicki Granowitz, Vice Chair of the SDPF, noted many staff entering the Parks and Recreation Department are former program participants themselves and join the City to become recreation aides and promote upward to recreation center directors. Assistant Recreation Center Directors are critical to maintain the career pathway and trajectory for staff to grow and serve the City in a wide variety of career roles.

Michel Anderson, board member from SDPF noted that these cuts would prevent the Come Play Outside program from continuing. The impact of these program cannot be overstated and have served thousands of San Diegans.

Robin Kaufman from Rancho Bernardo Community Recreation Group noted this is an opportunity for the volunteers to really help the Department to serve the communities.

Board Comments:

Dr. Munoz asked if the budget was put together because of the increase of the trash fees (Measure B) on the assumption with that passing of Measure B. Director Field believe that this is in the draft budget. Dr. Munoz commented that if the people vote no on implementing Measure B, then that would impact the budget deficit more. Director Field agreed that this is another variable to be considered.

Ms. Laman commented that waiving of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) fees could have helped addressed the City's current deficit. She also asked about the plan for parking fees at Balboa Park and Mission Bay Park. She noticed that the draft budget does not show a plan for parking fees at Mission Bay. Director Field responded that some workshops are happening for the Balboa Park and the Balboa Park Committee is working on this plan. He also added that the layout for Mission Bay Park will follow Balboa Park but might not be ready before the end of Fiscal Year 2026 as paid parking in the coastal zone requires California Coastal Commission consideration.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Copies of the reports, attachments, PowerPoint presentations, and audio-video recordings can be found on the Parks and Recreation Department website at <http://www.sandiego.gov/parkandrecboard/reports>.

Next Calendared Meeting: May 15, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.

Submitted by,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andy Field".

Andy Field
Director
Parks and Recreation Department