

NHCPG Minutes for Tuesday, November 4, 2025

Normal Heights Community Center/Zoom

4649 Hawley Avenue

Attendees:

X = in attendance

X	Paul Coogan (C)	X	Kenny Patrick	X	Emilie Colwell
X	Allan Harjala (VC)		Dan Soderberg	X	Sierra Orsinelli-Rivers
X	Julia Corbett (S)	X	Mark Lawler	X	Brian Adams
X	Frances Prichett (T)	X	Nancy Lawler		Madison Stevens
X	Sami Burrows		Kim Pham	X	Matthew Chaffee

*Denotes Virtual Attendance

Paul called the meeting to order at 6:04 and read the opening reflection. Then Paul gave a brief overview of the meeting procedure.

Community Attendees

Estimate: 4 zoom participants, 12 attendees in person.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

- Susan from NH Fire Safe Council: The Fire Safe Council will be hosting an event at 6:00pm on November 10 at Uno Mas
- Jim from Adams Community Rec Group: There have been proposed modifications to Ward Canyon Park by the City Parks Department. Recommends keeping a lookout for a meeting date regarding these changes. Also notes that Ward Canyon Park is looking much better since the mock building was removed
- Allan from NHCPG: The total number of short-term rental licenses in Normal Heights has declined slightly. There are now 120 properties with short term rental licenses in Normal Heights, which is roughly a 10% decline from last year.

Presentations

San Diego Canyonlands – Jeshua

San Diego Canyonlands is a nonprofit that supports community groups and local government on canyon restoration projects. They originated from an organization in South Park that worked to prevent paving over open space canyons and to protect the gnatcatcher under the Multiple Species Conservation Program. Today they work predominantly in the San Diego River Watershed and Chollas Creek Watershed. These watersheds lie within San Diego County, the most biodiverse county in the contiguous United States.

San Diego Canyonlands has a team of biologists and restoration biologists that work on the hyperlocal, urban ecosystems throughout San Diego. They also hire local youth for their projects, providing them with workforce training in conservation. The team utilizes native species and brush management practices to promote regional fire resilience, protect the watershed, and maintain biodiversity. For example, by reducing native plant coverage to 50% (rather than completely raising all plant-life) they effectively limit invasive species growth. These invasive species, such as mustard, often fuel fires and outcompete native plants. Native plants also usually have deeper root systems, which minimize erosion.

One of the projects they are most known for is the City Heights Canyon loop trail, which connects a series of canyons and parks in City Heights to create a trail that is roughly 4 miles. They're currently working on another canyon restoration in Mission Hills. These projects are conducted in partnership with the City of San Diego, who San Diego Canyonlands works with frequently, on city-owned land designated as open space.

The canyons in Normal Heights pose unique challenges to creating a trail system because several sections of the canyon are privately owned, rather than owned by the city. However, a canyon restoration project at the base of the canyon would be more feasible since it is on public land. Such a project would promote native species, involve local community groups, and limit fire risk. Such a project would require fundraising and partnership with a local community group.

Comments:

- Danielle: The Mid-City Community Plan Ideas Report doesn't mention any canyon trails in Normal Heights, but it does include some in Kensington

- Jeshua: San Diego Canyonlands can't get grant money to work on private property, which is the case for *some* of the canyon on the Normal Heights side
- There is a plan for a paved walking trail connecting Mission Valley and Normal Heights. The trail would include a bridge to cross San Diego River and Fenton Parkway.

Actions/Decisions

October Minutes approved

Sami 1st, Brian 2nd

Yes: Paul, Allan, Julia, Sami, Frances, Kenny, Mark, Nancy, Sierra, Brian, Matthew

Abstain: Emilie

Emilie will go to December CPC in place of Paul, since it conflicts with the NHCPG meeting

Sami 1st, Julia 2nd

This item was discussed and approved at the previous meeting.

Reports/Updates

Elected Representatives Reports & Updates

Fatima from the Mayor's office

There is a meeting regarding the continued use Auto License Plate Readers (ALPR) on 11/5 and 11/12 at 2pm. The Mayor supports the use of ALPRs as a public safety tool to solve crimes. They have aided in about one third of homicide investigations.

On 11/5 at 4pm the office will present on parking passes at Balboa Park in the Santa Fe room. Money from the planned parking meters will go towards community infrastructure like streetlights. Reach out to Fatima if you have recommended infrastructure improvements.

On the County's end the property line surveyors are correct and they recommend getting a private land surveyor.

- Paul: there is a documented difference between the property lines in the original maps and newer maps of Normal Heights. A community member has already hired a private land surveyor for this purpose, conducted research, and presented to the group on their findings

- Frances: was charged \$130 in additional property taxes for a large bin, even though she isn't using a large bin. She's been told she will be refunded next year by the city. She notes that it's unfair that she's being overcharged and is expected to wait an entire year to be refunded money she is owed. She also notes this is an issue for homeowners throughout Normal Heights.

Standing Committees

Community Planners' Committee – Paul

The city is making changes to the voting structure of its historic preservation committee. These changes give more power to the city and less to independent actors. The CPC is concerned about these changes and that they will weaken historic preservation in the city.

La Jolla is interested in becoming its own city.

Adams "Community Recreation Advisory Group" – Nancy

The Halloween events went really well. They still need more people for the advisory group meetings.

Normal Heights Smart Growth – Paul

The community garden is waiting on plumbing installation. A governing board is necessary for the community garden to become a 501(c)3 and move forward. The governing board is forming now so reach out if you are interested in joining.

Joint Mid-City Communities Plan Update Committee – Emilie

The draft of the Ideas Report is ready and available to view online.

Advisory Committees

Utility Undergrounding & Street Lighting MAD – Emilie

Block 3DD, the Northeast portion of Normal Heights, is first on the list to be undergrounded. They invited the city to present to the community on undergrounding in the neighborhood, but the city declined. However, the committee will continue to ask questions to the city on behalf of residents.

Adjournment

Paul called the meeting to adjournment at 8:07pm