

MINUTES

**City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Board
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE
January 8, 2026**

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
Howard Blackson
Mandy Brown
Chris Eddy
Patty Riddle
Michael Robinson
Michael Singleton
Kathy Vandenheuvel

Members Absent

Makeda Cheatom
Tim Shields

Staff Present

Jon Richards
Tyler Canales
Anthony Harrington

1. CALL TO ORDER

Allison Soares called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Tyler Canales called roll.

3. APPROVE MINUTES FROM November 6, 2025, MEETING

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

A motion was made by Ms. Vandenheuvel and seconded by Mr. Baron to approve the November 6, 2025, meeting minutes with the amendments to pages 6 and 10. The motion carried unanimously (8-0-0).

4. NON- AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Web Form:

Shanti Hofshi - I am a resident of the City of San Diego, and a long-time visitor and volunteer at several Balboa Park organizations. The new parking fees are already having a negative impact on the groups I am involved with. In particular, charging fees for parking up to 8 p.m. impacts many seniors and regular attendees of weekly activities, making it very difficult for those with a fixed income to be able to continue to attend those activities. There is free parking for 3 hours, but in a location that is far away from the actual activities. We should not expect our older residents to have to park so far away and then walk back at night with minimal security to a distant and dimly lit parking lot. Many of the participants are from outside the City proper and may not be able to afford a \$300 pass at one go or what could be \$50+ / month for nearby

parking if they participate in weekly activities, sometimes multiple times a week. It would make much more sense to at least have the parking enforcement stop at 6 p.m. when the bulk of museums are closed and not risk the safety and wellbeing of our seniors and other citizens of the City and county. I was just at the park for a dance group on the evening of January 7 and the parking lots are practically empty compared to what they normally are at that time. We already lost one of our dancers and a couple of our seniors are considering finding other activities that don't require paying hefty parking fees every time they participate. Another large group is considering moving out of the park entirely due to the fees. Keeping parking fees so late into the evening is not going to bring in money from tourists, it's just going to drive our residents away from the park, forcing them to either cease their recreational activities, or move them outside the park. Balboa Park is a jewel of our City, but these fees are already beginning to destroy institutions that have been a part of the park for decades. Please, at a minimum, consider reducing the enforcement hours to end at 6 p.m. and let the park belong to the people again.

In-Person:

Daniel Laman – Safety and Security meeting was held in the morning. SDPD reminded all who attended to call 911 if they see fires in the park. Renovation of the turf at the International Cottages should be happening soon. Requesting a timeline for the repairs at the Hall of Nations. The drain on the patio at the House of Norway should be checked. The installation dance will be on 1/29.

5. **CHAIR'S REPORT**

None.

6. **STAFF REPORTS**

Council District 3 – None

78th District – None

SDPD – None

Mayor's Office - None

Jon Richards, Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation – Implementation of paid parking began on January 5. A fact sheet is provided to everyone. Tram services have expanded to run 8am-8pm. December Nights was very successful. On January 1 the shelter at 16th and Newton flooded and all residents were relocated to Municipal Gymnasium. Alpha Project is running the shelter at Muni Gym and City staff is making the repairs to Newton to move them back in as quickly as possible. The Recital Hall is being used as storage for the Muni Gym residents. Thanked the 55 Parks & Rec employees that came to assist with the setup of the shelter. Organ Pavilion Comfort Station is waiting for materials. It will be shut down again to replace fixtures when they have been received. The men's restroom at Spanish Village will be done after the Organ Pavilion Comfort Station is complete. Check the Balboa Park webpage to review the 6-month calendar for upcoming events larger than 100 participants.

7. **BALBOA PARK NON-PROFIT PARTNER UPDATES**

Forever Balboa Park – None.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – None.

Committee of 100 – None.

Save Starlight – None.

Village Arts & Education Foundation – None.

8. **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

Patty Riddle – Balboa Park Activity Center was closed and used as a temporary shelter in 2024 when the shelter at 16th & Newton flooded. Would request funds be located to reinforce the shelter at Newton to ensure the flooding does not happen again.

Howard Blackson – City is beginning Masterplan process. Have asked Forever Balboa Park to host the plan rollout. Think they can take on public engagement lead.

Jon Richards (Responded) – Can’t speak for Forever Balboa Park. Can invite the Planning Department to next meeting to speak about it.

9. **REQUEST FOR ITEMS TO BE PLACED ON CONSENT AGENDA**

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mr. Baron/ Mr. Banfield-Weir

A motion was made by Mr. Baron and seconded by Mr. Banfield-Weir to move Item 2 to the Consent Agenda and approve per staff’s recommendation. The motion carried unanimously (9-0-0).

10. **CONSENT AGENDA**

Item 2: Makers Arcade Spring Fair

11. **INFORMATION ITEMS**

Item 1: Balboa Park Paid Parking

Presenter: Mayor’s Office

Public Comment:

Pat Goodman – House of Scotland has been part of the International Cottages for 77 years. The pipe band has been part of the House of Scotland for 62 years. They offer people to play with them on Monday from 6-9pm at the Hall of Nations. The people who play automatically become members of the House. They are not financially able to pay for parking. Hoping a consideration can be made for them.

Terence Dutton – Looked at the terms and conditions required for purchase of a parking pass. Is ok with giving identifying information to the City, but this information is being given to a private vendor. They are not beholden to California law. Terms and conditions says information can be disclosed to any law enforcement agency upon request. Afraid of what that would mean if it was a minority.

Amber Merrill – The parking website needs to be more user friendly. What counts as a resident is not clear. Zoo parking hours are not posted. Zoo has paid ADA parking as well. She offers free classes to the community. Does not have participants who are going to want to pay for parking.

Jerome Paquette – Appreciates what Balboa Park has done with the transient population. Cares for and participates in the senior and lawn programs. Most senior dancers come at 7pm. Worried they are not going to come since they will not be able to pay.

Jeannie Scott – Has been scheduler for the House of Norway for 10 years. Seniors have problem coming and going. Have 4 people a day who volunteer at the House. Adds up to 2,000 hours per year. Giving each house 5 parking passes is not enough. If each cottage had a text they could plug into the machine it would be easier.

Loretta Lively – Each House has been given 5 volunteer passes. Have been told to leave the passes at the Houses and to run in and out each time. Need a loading zone in the area. There are a lot of organizations under each House. They are not going to be able to come in. Car clubs will not come if they need to pay for parking.

Daniele Laman – Gave a list of volunteers last Fall. Minimum membership of each House is 25. What other groups have gotten only 5 passes? Where is the spreadsheet of passes? Can bike racks be increase? Wants to know about the orange spots.

Peter Comiskey – Heard from Parks and Rec and Mayor that they remain interesting and willing to make changes as necessary. Complain to the Mayor and Councilmembers as they are the ones who made the policy. Staff team has been dealing with this well. Want to know details on how all this will be reported. Know that this can only change through policy.

Committee Comment:

Kathy Vandenheuvel – First time hearing there is a significant amount of volunteers not getting passes. Interpreted that those providing services for no money would receive parking passes. Would like to know who reviews passes and will there be an ability to give more passes.

Allison Soares – City resident is someone who resides in the City of San Diego not the County.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Partnering with the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership to implement volunteer/employee pass program.

Allison Soares – Is there a chart of how many passes everyone is getting at the organizations?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Working with BPCP on that.

Jon Richards (Responded) – Can work with BPCP to get a count. Each House will receive passes they can share amongst themselves.

Allison Soares – Believe the text idea may be a good idea.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Could be misused and want to make sure that it is not used all over.

Allison Soares – So want to make sure that the passes are valuable and used properly.

Jon Richards (Responded) – Understand that staff had to create something that did not exist. It was added to the budget which pushed this implementation. We have had to create something to make it work operationally.

Emily Piatanesi – Remember what the timeline has been for this. April/May 2025 Mayor announced his budget with an implementation start date of January 2026. Council stated they needed the money sooner and pushed for a Sept/Oct 2025 start date. The timeline shift made everything more rushed. City Council then changed time to January to make several accommodations.

David Baron – Is there a way to talk to ADA to be able to use placards in any spot if all ADA spots are used?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – On street law says you can park on street with placard. Park roads can be parked on for free with a placard. Have to be in the designated ADA stalls in the parking lots.

Chris Eddy – Can number of blues spaces be increased?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Can look into this.

Chris Eddy – It hasn't been an issue in the past with being able to park anywhere.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Can look at the lots, but allowing those with ADA placards to park on the roads increased the number of spots in the park.

Jake Banfield-Weir – Is it possible to get a copy of the Balboa Park Budget?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Yes. All funding is from the General Fund.

Mike Singleton – Seemed like the parking revenue is the main source of funding for Balboa Park. Are we at risk of not having enough budget approved?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Yes. Mayor presented Council with a proposal with assumed revenue. Due to all of Council's changes that proposed revenue went down. There could be cuts at Balboa Park as it's still funded by the General Fund.

Mike Singleton – Seems like there's been mixed messaging. Seems more like a replacement funding source. It was an unrealistic expectation on Council's part.

Patty Riddle – Was under the understanding that revenue was assumed and only to be spent within the park. Have State laws that prevent the City from sending data to law enforcement agencies. If I want to get a City discount or parking pass I have to agree to vendor's terms & conditions and give them identifying data. They say IPS can turn over all data to any law enforcement agency without a warrant. Also says IPS can change terms & conditions at any time. Has City Attorney read and approved the terms & conditions?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Will reach out to City Attorney and ask.

Patty Riddle – Would want to ensure that all resident's data is safe. Would ask City to pause this program until it can ensure the data is safe. When is enforcement happening?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Should be about a 1-month grace period.

Jon Richards (Responded) – Implementation started on January 5. At any point after that a person can be given a ticket.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Understand the concerns about people needing to adjust.

Patty Riddle – People are already angry. Some have already been ticketed and some have not. Who is doing the enforcement?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Parking Enforcement is doing enforcement.

Katy Vandenheuvel – Once permit is shown online, does that mean you can park in the park and not get a ticket?

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Yes. That information is sent instantaneously. Can take up to 2 days to verify you are a resident. You will be verified for 3 years.

Kathy Vandenheuvel – People need to be aware there is a \$5 charge if you need to change your information.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Charge is to deter misuse.

Chris Eddy – See it as a semantical issue of General Fund versus Balboa Park line item. Preferred to have seen that whatever money goes into the General Fund but Balboa Park does not have to make cuts. If program is not success cuts should not be made to Balboa Park.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – It is supplementing money in FY26. Mayor cautioned Council about risk of deficit with the constant changes that were being made.

Jon Richards (Responded) – Creating a Fund would have been the mechanism to prevent Balboa Park from making cuts if Balboa Park's budget was made in full by parking revenue.

Howard Blackson – The City has many funding sources.

Jon Richards (Responded) – Whatever money is generated would go into that fund. If there were to be a deficit, then Balboa Park would not need cuts.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – As long as Balboa Park is reliant on the General Fund it would always be up for cuts.

Howard Blackson – That is just operating cuts. There are a variety of funding sources.

Kathy Vandenheuvel – If this is making it a hardship to visit the park, then why is this being prioritized? You have nearby residents that use this park as their community park. Really concerned about access. Thought this was so tourists would pay their fair share. Population did not realize what was going to happen to the park.

Patty Riddle – People need a place to go to get information.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – City website has all that information.

Patty Riddle – People want someone they can call.

Emily Piatanesi (Responded) – Call the Mayor's Office 619-236-6330. There is staff that will respond.

Patty Riddle – Suggest one number that is broadcast everywhere. We want it to work.

Howard Blackson – Peter was right to tell people to talk to the Mayor. The lowering of the annual pass to \$100 came from Balboa Park Committee. Real issue is we don't have any money to fix anything. Balboa Park is not a Community Plan and does not have access to other funding sources.

Mike Singleton – Citywide Parks Masterplan said edge areas should be considered a community park. Uptown has money sitting but nowhere to use it.

Kathy Vandenheuvel – There is a difference in a Maintenance Fund and Capital Fund and how they can be used.

12. ACTION ITEMS

Item 3: Friendship Time at Balboa Park

Presenter: Bobby Harris, Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

Public Comment:

Peter Comiskey – Recommended to the board that there are 2 Old Globe Shows that night and don't of impact to Panama 66. Would ask that #9 on the event application be followed through with.

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

A motion was made by Mr. Blackson and seconded by Mr. Singleton to approve the Friendship Time at Balboa Park event with the event organizer ensuring they properly notify the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership. The motion carried (8-0-1).

Item 4: San Diego Wave Jersey Launch Event

Presenter: Justyne Freud, San Diego Wave

Public Comment:

Peter Comiskey – Recommended to the board that there are 2 Old Globe Shows that night and don't know of impact to Panama 66. Would ask that #9 on the event application be followed through with.

Committee Comment:

Howard Blackson – Activating the Plaza is very much a need. Is there going to be a cheering section. Direct the crowd to yell to the east.

Justyne Freud (Responded) – There will be players at the event.

Allison Soares – Reaching out to Peter Comiskey is a great starting point to complete item 9 on the application.

Jon Richards (Responded) – It is typical these conversations happen with these groups.

Kathy Vandenheuvel – Noted that the donation item was checked off on the application.

Justyne Freud (Responded) – Working with Jon on that aspect. Idea is to provide a donation and maybe have a matching donation based at the point of sale.

Patty Riddle – Asked for clarification on alcohol in Balboa Park.

Jon Richards (Responded) – When there is a Special Event there are requirements associated with alcohol during the event. Those requirements must be met for the event to occur.

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Ms. Vandenheuvell/ Mr. Blackson

A motion was made by Ms. Vandenheuvell and seconded by Mr. Blackson to approve San Diego Wave Jersey Launch Event with the assurance that the event coordinate with all the organizations within the area. The motion carried unanimously (9-0-0).

13. WORKSHOP ITEMS

None

14. ADJOURNMENT – 6:02 pm

Notice of Next Balboa Park Meeting:

February 5, 2026
4:00 P.M.
In-Person

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Canales
District Manager