

MINUTES

City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE
February 5, 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
Makeda Cheatom
Chris Eddy
Patty Riddle
Michael Robinson
Tim Shields
Michael Singleton
Kathy Vandenheugel

Members Absent

Staff Present

Jon Richards
Tyler Canales
Anthony Harrington

1. CALL TO ORDER

Allison Soares called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Tyler Canales called roll.

3. APPROVE MINUTES FROM January 8, 2026, MEETING

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

A motion was made by Mr. Baron and seconded by Ms. Vandenheugel to approve the January 8, 2026, meeting minutes. The motion carried (10-0-1).

4. NON- AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Web Form:

Jesse DeAngelis - For the past 27 years, every October, The San Diego Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities has proudly hosted Jobtoberfest, a Job Fair for individuals with disabilities- the largest of its kind in the state of California. Each year, Jobtoberfest attracts over one thousand individuals with disabilities from throughout San Diego County who are actively seeking employment opportunities. For the past decade, we have had the great fortune, thanks to the generosity of the City of San Diego, to host Jobtoberfest in Balboa Park, providing a familiar, accessible, and community-centered location for

attendees. Recently enacted parking fees at Balboa Park present a significant and concerning barrier to the individuals attending Jobtoberfest. Many attendees experience a combination of financial, physical, and transportation-related challenges. The added cost of parking, along with any reduced accessibility, would prohibit many job seekers from attending. This would directly and negatively impact their ability to connect with employers, access critical resources, and advance toward stable employment--a goal that is already more challenging for individuals with disabilities. Given the potential harm this presents to a vulnerable population, we respectfully request that the City waive parking fees for individuals attending this year's Jobtoberfest. We respectfully seek any insight or assistance the Balboa Park Committee can provide in securing this accommodation. Ensuring accessible, equitable participation in this event is vital to the continued success of hundreds of San Diego residents living with disabilities who rely on this fair as a key step in their employment journey. We appreciate your consideration and partnership in supporting our community. Below is a link to the Jobtoberfest website as well as a local news clip featuring the event.

[https://urldefense.com/v3/https://youtu.be/YeSYAvremsE;!!OBed2aHXvKmHymw!wF3FgQvzmSy3gKiJQs3lWIRet1lmqTBZrFq-YxinKsCJsUnnzKnDwOFFPqeg8dKo5pRE-T_9RxyKvjshy4FkQSgcgBw\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://youtu.be/YeSYAvremsE;!!OBed2aHXvKmHymw!wF3FgQvzmSy3gKiJQs3lWIRet1lmqTBZrFq-YxinKsCJsUnnzKnDwOFFPqeg8dKo5pRE-T_9RxyKvjshy4FkQSgcgBw$)
[https://urldefense.com/v3/https://sdjobtoberfest.org/;!!OBed2aHXvKmHymw!wF3FgQvzmSy3gKiJQs3lWIRet1lmqTBZrFq-YxinKsCJsUnnzKnDwOFFPqeg8dKo5pRE-T_9RxyKvjshy4FkJ2l2wiA\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://sdjobtoberfest.org/;!!OBed2aHXvKmHymw!wF3FgQvzmSy3gKiJQs3lWIRet1lmqTBZrFq-YxinKsCJsUnnzKnDwOFFPqeg8dKo5pRE-T_9RxyKvjshy4FkJ2l2wiA$)

Evelyn Riddick - Per today's SDU-T, you are meeting Wednesday to discuss Balboa Park parking fees. As a County resident in La Mesa, I strongly oppose your omission not to include County residents in your fee structure. I have lived here all my life; however, I am being treated as a non-resident! Please REPEAL this hastily enforced parking fee system! You all saw this budget shortfall coming. Limiting the use of our beloved Park is not the answer as seen by decreased revenue at museums, other venues and independent clubs' usage. I support a ballot measure to make Balboa Park parking FREE again if you don't repeal or at least adjust your current position.

In-Person:

Daniel Laman – No Safety and Security meeting this month. Turf renovation for International Lawn started late. Chinese New Year event is February 21st. Requesting a timeline for Hall of Nations repairs. Installation dinner went very well with 250 people in attendance. Requesting spreadsheet of volunteer parking passes. Request more white curbs at the International Cottages. Has the City Attorney reviewed the terms & conditions of the resident verification provider? Need more than 5 parking passes per House. Still requesting specific Balboa Park budget.

Michael Warburton – Attendance is way down at the Model Railroad Museum. Tend to have peaks on the weekends. Saw 200 people come through on the weekend which is down from 400 people last year. Hope many will show up to the City Council meeting on Monday. Have only 3 ADA spaces behind museum. That's not enough for the volunteers.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT

Thanked Jon and Emily and City staff for all the hard work they had to put in over the last year.

6. STAFF REPORTS

Council District 3 – Ryan Darsey – Councilmember Whitburn has heard from the community about the impacts of paid parking. Has reiterated his position being against it. It is discouraging visits. He continues to call for a full repeal. He joined the Standing For What Is Sacred march. He continues to defend access for transgender youth. He continues to prioritize public safety. He continues to support efforts to tackle the homeless crisis. He remains committed to policies that continue to make things accessible for all.

78th District – None

SDPD – None

Mayor's Office - None

Jon Richards, Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation – City Council has until tomorrow to docket paid parking for the Monday Council meeting. The shelter at Municipal Gym has closed. 290 clients were returned to the shelter at Newton. Municipal Gym has a tentative reopening date of 2/17. Thanks to Tyler and Anthony and all their staff for helping to get the facility back up and running. Have a quote for the needed abatement at the Hall of Nations. Working on funding sources for it. Introduced Area Manager Aly Perez who has taken over for Victor Johnson. Starting 2/9 the Lily Pond will be drained and cleaned. Will be utilizing the portable pool program's pool to house the koi temporarily.

7. BALBOA PARK NON-PROFIT PARTNER UPDATES

Forever Balboa Park – Katy McDonald - Share the appreciation for Jon, Andy, Anthony, Tyler and all the Parks and Recreation staff that have been working hard. Phase 2 is nearing completion with the new pergola, benches and 9 gardens. Planning to have a ribbon cutting ceremony on April 10th. Beginning to think about what the next capital project may be. Plaza De Panama has come up as one of them. Want to raise the value to come to the park. Planted around 40 new trees. Excited to hear about the Master Plan process. Plan has to take advantage of previous plans, but it should be visionary as well. Received final construction drawings for the Rose Garden Pergola redesign. The plans will be submitted to DSD next week.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – Peter Comiskey – There is currently not a council majority to repeal paid parking in the park. Advocacy efforts have to be maintained. Need to recognize why this is happening and how to fix it. A new legal opinion states Country residents cannot be treated differently than City residents. Continue to visit SaveBalboaPark.org. Will see Council agenda tomorrow. Be there if you can be. Gillian Rizza is new coordinator with event groups. Will coordinate future meetings with event organizers and stakeholders.

Committee of 100 – Kevin Carpenter – Reissued letter regarding paid parking again this week. Hope members will show up to the Council meeting on Monday. Want to know what the net versus the gross revenue made from paid parking. Finished shop drawings for the historic markers for Palisades area. Still on track to get Municipal Gym project done by Spring. Continuing to work on advocacy and design assistance. Have other project on the way as well.

Save Starlight – Vincent Puma – Thanked Parks and Recreation staff. Twilight concerts will be affected by paid parking. Police storefront has been very helpful. Said he would work on Park Blvd last year. Saw that the bus lane is gone on Park Blvd. Working with the Kumeyaay to be a part of the park. Will be having an event at Balboa Park Club on April 26th to honor Pete DeLuke.

Village Arts & Education Foundation – Natasha Papousek – Thanked staff for all they do. Foot traffic is down 60%. Have 14 applicants for jurying this year. Offering many various art classes. Going to have safety training with all the artists in a couple of weeks. Planning more artist demonstrations in the Summer. Canyon Crest High School Seniors will be displaying their work in May. Completed policies and procedures for VAEF and will be submitting them very soon

8. **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

Howard Blackson – Times of San Diego has started a Youtube channel and has an interview with Councilmember Elo-Rivera.

Jake Banfield-Weir – Use to be the treasurer of the San Diego Botanical Society. The cost of putting on the plant shows no longer recoup their money. A lot of groups are pulling out of the park. There should be a lot of urgency to make sure the ecosystem of the park is not lost.

Kathy Vandenheuevel – Frustrating that the County does not provide funding support for Balboa Park. Want to encourage people to reach out to their County Supervisors to see what they can do. Think it's important the County supports the park as well.

Patty Riddle – Recreation programs have continued at Municipal Gym and Balboa Park Activity Center. Badminton tournament will be at BPAC February 20-22. The programs that used Muni Gym had to go elsewhere due to shelter. Please Muni Gym is reopening and thankful for all the hard work to get the shelter patrons moved back to Newton. Hope money will be found to ensure Newton Shelter does not collapse again. Concerned still about keeping residents' personal data private. Would be okay if it was just the City had the data. Have to provide personal data to IPS but waive the right of personal information.

Michael Singleton – One unintended consequence of paid parking on 6th Ave has been an increase in speeding due to a lower number of cars being parked there.

Makeda Cheatom – Currently celebrating Black History Month. Love to all the nations. Sambo class has cancelled due to paid parking. Was the oldest program at the World Beat Center. Show up to Council on Monday.

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

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

A motion was made by Mr. Baron and seconded by Mr. Banfield-Weir to move Item 3 to the Consent Agenda and approve per staff's recommendation. The motion carried unanimously (12-0-0).

10. **CONSENT AGENDA**

Item 3: VAEF Artist Jury Results

11. **INFORMATION ITEMS**

**Item 1: Forever Balboa Park Garden Party
Presenter: Kelly Ford, Forever Balboa Park**

Public Comment:

None

Committee Comment:

Tim Shields – The Old Globe has 2 events that evening. They are indoors so not that big of a factor. Concerned that there might be trucks on Old Globe Way and others may not be able to get through that way.

Kathy Vandenneuvel – Event is taking up a large area. How much time is taken away from public access and what is the minimum price to go?

Jackie Higgins (Responded) – Always working with the City on these events. Botanical Building will be open and accessible 10am-4pm as usual. Individual ticket is \$250.

Chris Eddy – This is a fundraiser. What other methods are going to be used to fundraise other than just buying tickets?

Kelly Ford (Responded) – Looking into sponsorships to be in the space and there would be a silent auction style offering as well.

Howard Blackson – Make sure there is an opportunity for noise attenuation for the Old Globe.

Item 2: Balboa Park Master Plan Update

Presenter: Sameera, City of San Diego Planning Department

Public Comment:

Michael Warburton – Excited see how you'll deal with conflict. Going to be some challenges. City has proven community engagement is performative. Want to see active engagement. Want to see the why something is tried too. Have been a lot of changes since the previous one was done.

Daniele Laman – Went through the whole process of prioritization. How does the prioritization fit into this?

Howard Blackson (Responded) – It is part of the implementation.

Jon Richards (Responded) – Funding would also need to be identified.

Committee Comment:

Howard Blackson – Good Luck. How did you determine the guiding principles?

Sameera (Responded) – Have been doing a lot of reading and have been gathering a lot of input as well. This is all draft and am willing to fine tune.

Howard Blackson – Guiding principles work with the vision statement. Please come often and talk about things upfront. Would like to help as much as possible and work with Forever Balboa Park.

Allison Soares – Please come. When you come, we will show support.

David Baron – Will you be engaging with stakeholders and community?

Sameera (Responded) – Yes. Working with Forever Balboa Park. Will bring the engagement plan back.

Michael Robinson – Have no knowledge of the original master plan. Will the new one be driven by political or grass roots efforts?

Sameera (Responded) – Plan is to come up with engagement plan to make sure everyone in the community is represented.

Jon Richards (Responded) – It’s important for the Committee to help once the plan is brought forward.

Kathy Vandenneuvel – Thank you for coming. Any change to a copy of the slides? Want to encourage to present early to the Planning Groups. What percentage will be done in house versus outside consultants?

Sameera (Responded) – 40% in house and 60% consultant.

Kathy Vandenneuvel – Do you have access to raw outreach put together by prioritization consultant.

Howard Blackson – We will be able to provide that information.

Kathy Vandenneuvel – Should we be forming a subcommittee?

Allison Soares – We cannot form subcommittees.

Michael Singleton – These are tricky especially with Balboa Park as it is a different type of park in different parks. Existing conditions report is important. So much stuff is done before and ignored. Why do people love some parts of the park and some are underutilized. City has changed from quantitative to qualitative. Should really be looking at the edge area of the park. Important to be flexible working with public. Stick with new standard policies on outreach.

Sameera (Responded) – Do have a process to go to Community Planning Groups.

12. ACTION ITEMS

Item 4: San Diego Wave Launch Event

Presenter: Tyler Emerick, San Diego Wave

Public Comment:

None

Committee Comment:

Allison Soares – Looking forward to the event. Talk to BPCP to ensure there is a conversation being done with stakeholders. What are you going to do to ensure that it will be cleaner then when you got here?

Tyler Emerick (Responded) – Will have staff of 50-100 to help clean. Will take before pictures and make sure it looks the same after the event.

Allison Soares – Have you thought about a donation to the park?

Tyler Emerick (Responded) – A portion of the jersey sales will go to Forever Balboa Park.

Kathy Vandenneuvel – Item 12 on the special event form says no.

Chris Eddy – Why is there an unsure box next to the Old Globe item?

Allison Soares – We need to update our form and need to ensure we communicate better.

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

A motion was made by Mr. Blackson and seconded by Mr. Baron to approve San Diego Wave Launch Event. The motion carried unanimously (12-0-0).

13. WORKSHOP ITEMS

None

14. ADJOURNMENT – 6:06 pm

Notice of Next Balboa Park Meeting:

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

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Canales
District Manager