

# Meeting Minutes January 2026

Minutes for Tuesday, January 6, 2026

Normal Heights Community Center/Zoom

4649 Hawley Avenue

## Attendees:

X = in attendance

X	Paul Coogan (C)	X	Kenny Patrick	X	Emilie Dedeic
	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	X	Madison Stevens
X	Sami Burrows		Kim Pham	X	Matthew Chaffee

\*Denotes Virtual Attendance

Paul called the meeting to order at 6:06 and read the opening reflection. Then Paul gave a brief overview of the meeting procedure.

## Community Attendees

Estimate: 3 zoom participants, 6 attendees in person.

## Non-Agenda Public Comment

- Becky Rapp\*: HUD requires all public housing to be smoke-free, but this does not apply to publicly funded, privately operated affordable housing. As a public health educator, she emphasized the importance of smoke-free housing to vulnerable populations like the elderly, medically fragile, and children. She urges folks to support legislation that mandates all affordable housing in San Diego is smoke-free in the City's 2026 Legislative Platform.

## **Discussion on NHCPG Priorities**

### ***Priority 1: Pedestrian & Bicycle mobility, including related infrastructure***

Paul: Based on our discussion last month, it seems that pedestrian and bicycle mobility, including related infrastructure improvements, were the most commonly mentioned priorities in the group.

Brian: I believe that homeowners are responsible for sidewalk repairs to the sidewalk directly in front of their property. The problem is that those repairs are too expensive for many homeowners.

Paul: The city does some repairs, but generally bills homeowners.

Brian: Maybe we could **reduce repair costs to homeowners by getting neighbors together for a deal with a single contractor.**

Audience member: The sidewalk at Copley & 33rd is really bad, even hazardous, because of the root systems from trees in the homeowner's yard. It's not ADA accessible.

Paul: The city can send out a code inspector, but that seems kind of harsh considering the price of repairs.

Matthew: **There are a lot of companies that install temporary ramps, maybe that could be a solution to the sidewalk at Copley & 33rd?**

Julia: How is the City planning on preventing that kind of sidewalk damage from the trees they're planting around San Diego?

Paul: There's a list from the city of tree species (does not include palm trees) that have root systems that won't damage the sidewalks

Audience: In San Francisco they build tree wells with barriers into the sidewalks

Sami: Property management companies might be able to afford sidewalk repairs

Kenny: When my property was subdivided they were required to improve the surrounding area including the sidewalk

Sami: What can we do as the NHCPG?

Julia: NHCPG could **request that projects/developers pending permits are required to improve the sidewalk by the City**

Emilie: NHCPG could **raise awareness about the [Safe Sidewalks program](#)**

Sami: How do we get the 'unfunded needs list' funded?

Emilie: The City's draft budget is released April 15, public comment is in May, and final edits are made to the budget in June.

Paul: It sounds like **NHCPG should have a list by March to advocate for funding. Creates a subcommittee** with himself (Paul), Allan, and Matthew

### ***Priority 2: Development Projects in Normal Heights***

Paul: The next priority seemed to be keeping tabs on development projects in Normal Heights

Brian: I think we should figure out what the new owner of DeMilles' has planned

Paul: **Currently it is permitted to build up to 8 stories at the DeMilles' lot**, but usually developers will build up to 7 stories. **It will most likely be a mixed-use space, with commercial activity on the ground floor and residential above. It will probably include parking.** The apartment complex in North Park that didn't offer any parking to residents ended up having to cut a deal with the parking garage in town since they were unsuccessful in finding renters initially. **Also, there are 2 offers upwards of \$20 million on the old Rite Aid property.** But we won't know what's going on for at least 3 months.

Madison: **There's a 3-story project proposed for next to bica**, but they haven't submitted permits yet.

### ***Priority 3: Green Space and Tree Canopy***

Audience: Expresses their appreciation that the mock building has been torn down. Can we plant trees there?

Nancy: **The playground at Ward Canyon Park will be moved away from Adams Ave. and an artist will install artwork in its place.**

Emilie: The City had a program where they would give you a tree for free (under certain conditions) if you agree to water it, but they've canceled the program due to budget cuts.

Paul: **SDGE also has a free tree program, but they will only supply to organizations (like NHGPG) not individuals.**

Audience: Consider a mini-park by Cherokee near the Vons/RiteAid lot

Paul: Maybe **the NHCPG can create a Normal Heights community unfunded needs list on our website.**

Audience: Notes the City used to put an above-ground pool near the Normal Heights Rec Center in the summer. Asks the NHCPG to push for a library in Normal Heights and inquire about an above-ground pool.

Madison: **We could have a tree-planting signup at community events, where folks who want a tree sign up and the NHCPG helps provide them with one.**

Paul: Good idea. **We could also have folks sign up for sidewalk repairs.**

### **Actions/Decisions**

#### **December Minutes approved**

Brian 1st, Sami 2nd

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

Abstain: Madison, Sierra, Emilie

### **Normal Heights Fire Safe Council**

Susan: There will be an event on '[Wildfire Safety in Our Community](#)' at the Kroc Center with all Mid-City Fire Safe Councils on January 26 at 6pm. The event will include dinner for up to 200 people and an SDGE 'go-bag' giveaway with some essentials in-case of emergency. Please RSVP if you would like to attend.

### **Reports/Updates**

#### **Elected Officials**

##### ***Mayor Todd Gloria's office - Fatima***

1. Recommends preparing for upcoming storms
2. Contact the City regarding flooding through Get It Done or 911 for emergencies
3. Avoid parking under trees during a storm
4. Sex trafficking legislation (A.B. 379) has been proposed with the support of the mayor, San Diego Police Chief, and the San Diego District Attorney. The law makes it a crime for any person to loiter in place with the intention of purchasing commercial sex, and creates a Survivor Support Fund to help provide services and outreach to victims of sex trafficking and exploitation.
5. [The Neighborhood Homes For All of Us program](#) will support first-time homebuyers by creating opportunities to own mid-density housing (like cottages, duplexes, townhomes) in high-resource, transit-friendly neighborhoods. The program also intends to partner with community land trusts. Phase 1 of public engagement will inform what these neighborhood homes will look like, and will take place Winter 2025 - Summer 2026.

Paul: Can Normal Heights get its own planning area and community plan instead of being lumped in with the Mid-City Communities Plan?

Emilie: That's unlikely due to budgeting, but worth bringing up to the City and other planning areas in Mid-City

Audience: The Eastern Area has talked about splitting off into its own planning area in the past.

### **Standing Committees**

#### ***Community Planners' Committee - Paul***

The Ward Canyon cleanup was changed to February 7. The City will provide mulch, so the event will also include mulching at the community garden site.

#### ***Normal Heights for Smart Growth - Paul***

The main push right now is building out the community garden & setting up the 501(c)3 for the garden. There will be a mulching event at the community garden along with the Ward Canyon cleanup on February 7th. Water installation is now expected at the community garden in March. Next-steps include obtaining occupancy permits and water. Hopefully, planting will begin in the Spring.

### **Advisory Committees**

#### ***Utility Undergrounding & Street Lighting MAD - Emilie***

We should receive feedback from the City in the next month on the cost-estimate for acorn lights we requested. We are hoping to host our own meeting on utility undergrounding and street lighting, including a cost-estimate, since the City declined to present to the community. A similar project has already taken place in North Park, so the acorn lights in Normal Heights should look similar to those in North Park.

### **Adjournment**

Paul called the meeting to adjournment at about 7:35