



COMMUNITY FOREST ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, April 8, 2026

In-Person Meeting, 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Location: Valencia Park/Malcolm X Branch Library
5148 Market St
San Diego, CA 92114

Chair: Morgan Justice Black

Board Members: Leon Cassel, Chris Tiffany, Ami Young, Jim Smith, Wes Janssen, Terrell Rackley, Branden Wolner

Staff Liaison: Brian Widener, Olivia Mabee

Item 1: Call to Order

- Meeting called to order at 10:06 a.m.

Item 2: Roll Call

Board Member	Seat	Attendance
Leon Cassel	Horticulturalist	Present
Chris Tiffany	Landscape Architect	Present
Ami Young	Artist	Present
Jim Smith	District 1	Present
Morgan Justice Black	District 2	Present
VACANT	District 3	X
Wes Janssen	District 4	Present
VACANT	District 5	X
EXPIRED	District 6	X
VACANT	District 7	X
EXPIRED	District 8	X
Terrell Rackley	District 9	Present
Branden Wolner	Non-Profit	Present

Item 3: Announcements and Updates

- Morgan Justice Black announced the resignation of Dr. Michael Ackerman, creating a Council District 7 board vacancy, and highlighted the upcoming Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Zone Zero Regulatory Advisory Committee Meeting taking place Thursday, April 23, 2026, from 1–7 p.m. at

the Calabasas Community Center; more information is available at www.bof.fire.ca.gov.

- Brian Widener, City Forester, shared upcoming budget dates and noted that while some changes to Urban Forestry are expected, there are no foreseen impacts to maintenance or existing contracts; he also introduced potential CFAB member guests and announced new Urban Forestry intern Devin Lisson.

Item 4: Action Items

- A. March 11, 2026 meeting minutes were approved unanimously, with a correction to ensure all motions are recorded verbatim.
- B. The Board unanimously approved Morgan Justice Black's nomination of Leon Cassel as secretary, and Leon accepted the role.
- C. The Zone Zero advisory letter to Council passed unanimously; discussion included noting that increased housing density can reduce tree presence and that the Fire Department should be copied if the letter is sent to Council.
- D. The Board unanimously supported staff recommendations on Conserve A Tree applications - 1889 Sheridan Ave not recommended for protection, and 1897 Lyndon St and 2265 Ft. Stockton Dr recommended for protection.
 - Public Comment
 - Janet O'Dea – Hopes the Conserve a Tree program can continue to protect trees and continue outreach.

Item 5: City Staff Reports

- A. Brian Widener, City Forester, gave an overview of tree protection, including how maintenance work is divided between contracts and City crews, ongoing efforts to clarify ambiguous City codes, and notes on how some tree species tolerate construction better; public comments raised concerns about increasing tree losses, adjusting the urban tree canopy fee, improving parking-lot tree standards, and ensuring accurate calculations.
 - Public Comment
 - Zoe Woodhouse – Tree losses are amounting, raising urban tree canopy fee could contribute more street tree planting from developers. Brings attention to parking lot trees.
 - Janet O'Dea – Questions the calculations – requests board to make a consideration to follow up more on this.
- B. Olivia Mabee, community engagement specialist, shared final Arbor Day details, including event timing, tree planting with Millennial Tech Middle School students and volunteers, student art contest buttons to debut at the event, partner tabling groups, and planned neighborhood notifications for road closures and no-parking zones.
- C. Amy Nonaka, project officer II, shared Ready, Set, Grow San Diego updates, including the 4/9 young tree care webinar with Tree San Diego, FY26 progress of 2,613 trees planted as of 3/31, a total of 4,861 project trees planted, and survivability rates of 97% at six months and 94% at one year. John Ide, program coordinator, reported that Trees for Communities one year

inspections show a 91% survivability rate for 1,075 trees inspected so far out of more than 2,800 planted, and noted that a recent tree stewardship inventory with Tree San Diego in Emerald Hills successfully documented all trees in the park.

- Discussion among the board covered declining tree health along Market Street and nearby corridors, the need to confirm responsibility for the 61st–63rd Street plantings, concerns about root barrier use, and calls for greater attention to these trees to ensure the community has adequate shade.
- D. Erich Kast, parks arborist, reported that forestry is a year behind on routine work after a fallen tree in Balboa Park exhausted the remaining contract budget, and noted that ongoing ADA upgrades in many parks require some tree removals while commending the Transportation Department for partnering on volunteer park inventory efforts.

Item 6: Discussion Items

- A. Morgan Justice-Black shared that there is strong interest from candidates in districts with vacancies and clarified that the B&C office manages only mayoral appointments. Morgan noted that if board members speak with council offices at Arbor Day, they should mention the open D6 seat.
- B. Morgan updated the group that the workplan will be presented at a future meeting due to limited board capacity.
- C. Morgan stated that the board intends to take a more proactive approach to budget advocacy while continuing to rely on the City to articulate its priorities.
- Public Comment
 - Zoe Woodhouse – Shared that work is underway on the Get It Done project and noted plans to use the data to support budget advocacy.

Item 7: Proposed Agenda Items for Future Meetings

- None.

Item 8: Non-Agenda Public Comment

- Wes Janssen – Announced the grand opening of the Paradise Hills Native Garden on April 18 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Item 9: Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 11:28 am.