



COMMUNITY FOREST ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, June 10, 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 10:05 a.m.

Item 2: Roll Call

Board Member	Seat	Attendance
Leon Cassel	Horticulturist	Present
Chris Tiffany	Landscape Architect	Present
Ami Young	Artist	Present
Jim Smith	District 1	Absent
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	Nonprofit	Present

Item 3: Announcements and Updates

- Brian Widener, City Forester, shared updates about significant changes with the City budget. While two Urban Forestry positions will be eliminated (Urban Forestry Program Coordinator and Tree Maintenance Crew Leader), tree maintenance funding remains unchanged in the FY27 budget. Widener

announced a new board member recruitment flyer for CFAB that can be shared with council offices and the community.

- Morgan Justice Black, Chair, thanked John Ide, Urban Forestry Program Coordinator, for his valuable service to the City and the Urban Forestry Program.

Item 4: Action Items

- a. April 8, 2026 meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

Item 5: Information Items

- a. Wes Janssen, District 4 representative, gave a presentation on highly xeric trees, defining xeric as requiring minimal moisture, and discussed what qualifies as a native tree and plant.
 - Following the presentation, board members had discussion about the street tree selection guide, and asked what percentage of trees are xeric, and what are native.
 - Chris Tiffany, Landscape Architect, commended Janssen for his efforts in Paradise Hills Native Garden.
 - Justice Black suggested a CFAB field trip to Paradise Hills Native Garden.

Item 6: City Staff Reports

- a. Widener provided an update on the Transportation and Parks and Recreation Forestry unification beginning July 1, noting a transitional period as the unification begins. He clarified that the unification does not include Maintenance Assessment District trees or Open Space trees, and that it will streamline funding, work efficiency, and code and policy processes.
- b. Near-term challenges include differing position titles, storage space for equipment transitioning from Parks & Recreation, maintaining irrigation, and prioritizing work between street trees and park trees. Widener also discussed brush management.
 - Discussion from the board regarding position structure and hierarchy, in addition to funding for Parks & Recreation's transition to Transportation.
- c. Widener noted a presentation given to Resiliency Advisory Board on May 28, 2026, and reported positive feedback.
 - He noted interest from the Resiliency Advisory Board in having a member attend a future CFAB meeting to provide updates.
- d. Widener announced that the City applied for the Urban Green Grant last week; this grant will focus on installing 600 new tree wells and planting an additional 300 trees in existing vacant planting locations, and will also include 3-year watering and maintenance for all newly planted trees.
- e. Erich Kast, Parks & Recreation Arborist, noted the transition to the Transportation Department and had no further updates.

Item 7: Discussion

- a. Justice Black noted that the City Council unanimously passed the budget at the council meeting on June 9, 2026.
- b. Tiffany reminded the board that the State of California passed Zone Zero legislation and has since softened its stance on trees in the current draft guidelines, though specific maintenance requirements remain. He noted that the City of San Diego has adopted its own policy with stricter guidelines than the state's and suggested the board advocate for aligning City guidelines with the state's.
- c. Justice Black gave update on membership, noting process delays when a district candidate is not identified, or if an identified candidate is not reviewed by the council office. District 6 has forwarded Michael Focken's candidacy to the Mayor's office for appointment. There are no identified candidates for District 1. District 4 has an applicant identified but no further update at this time.

Item 8: Action Items

- a. Justice Black noted the letter was approved by the board on April 8, 2026 meeting, and is now requesting the board to approve Justice Black and Tiffany to make modifications to the original letter based on new state guidance. Vote passed unanimously.
- b. Justice Black tabled the official vote on the work plan, noting the vote will take place at the next meeting. Justice Black and Tiffany met to discuss focus for the work plan on more measurable impact. The three priorities will include budget advocacy, code and policy, and community outreach. Justice Black expressed a goal to create subcommittees as the board grows

Item 9: Proposed Agenda Items for Future Meetings

- Justice Black noted an earlier board member comment suggesting an invitation be extended to the Resiliency Advisory Board and/or its staff liaison to attend a future meeting and integrate shared priorities.
- Ami Young, Artist, suggested a 15-minute presentation from a local nonprofit to spotlight their work in the community.

Item 10: Non-Agenda Public Comment

- None.

Item 11: Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.