

MINUTES OF THE July 15, 2026 MEETING OF THE
TECOLOTE CANYON CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TIME AND PLACE

This meeting of the Tecolote Canyon Citizen's Advisory Committee was held on July 15, 2026 at 6:30pm at the Tecolote Nature Center.

ATTENDANCE

Members Present

Darrel Madison

David Harpster

Niki Ahrens

Cynthia Contreras

Beatrice Darimont

Wilbur Smith

Absent

Suzy Ellison-Logan

Robert Mathers

Anitra Kaye

Lauriel Adsit

Marc Schaefer

Guests

None

City of San Diego Staff

Mary Zanutelli, Center Director, Parks and Recreation Department

CALL TO ORDER

Darrel Madison called the meeting to order at 6:44 pm

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF May 20, 2026

1. (MADISON), Do I have a **MOTION** to approve the minutes of the meeting of May 20, 2026 with corrections: (101/201 should be 201 Workshop Items: weed abatement around sewer pipeline area discussion. Committee is looking for creative solutions to address city shortfall on weed abatement, including volunteers getting licensed to spray herbicides.) (Date of minutes updated to May 20, 2026 instead of January 21, 2026.) (Harpster) Motioned. (Contreras) Seconded. (All) were in favor to approve the minutes with corrections.

CITY COUNCIL REPORTS

1. (Madison) suggested subscribing to city council reports, and he read to the group some of the information in the "Raul Roundabout" from Councilmember Raul Campillo.

CHAIR PERSON'S REPORT- DARREL MADISON

1. The Meet Up group now has 1016 members.
2. Suggested subscribing to Steve Rodriguez' newsletter as well as the Explore Clairemont newsletter.
3. Spoke about Park Talk SD, a bi-monthly, virtual public meeting hosted by the city's Parks & Recreation Department, which Madison attends. The city wants to get more citizens to be involved and engaged. Madison wants to talk to Andy Field directly outside of the meetings, and notes that their sons play basketball together.

STAFF REPORT- CENTER DIRECTOR MARY ZANOTELLI

1. There's a new restoration site (Site 13) located below Via Las Cumbres. It's one acre in size, and will be planted with Nuttall's scrub oaks grown by the San Diego Zoo from acorns sourced from Tecolote Canyon.
2. Rulon Clark from SDSU has a snake project at four different habitat sites within Tecolote Canyon. He is doing acoustic monitoring and trail camera monitoring for an indefinite time period. He will share with us what he finds.
3. Rulon Clark will also be the featured presenter, along with live snakes, at the Nature Center's next Nature Night's event. He will be speaking on rattlesnake behavior and ecology.
4. The Nature Center has acquired new display cases and staff is creating an outdoor nature playspace.
5. (Madison) asked if perhaps the amphitheater could be updated with shade sails and other things that would allow it to be used more often. (Darimont) suggested garden beds between the rows, like the Water Conservation Garden. Other ideas were discussed for the amphitheater, like hosting concerts, plays, movies in the park, or film screenings.

WILDLIFE REPORT

1. (Madison) lives on Mt. Ashmun Dr – had a mourning dove make a nest in his carport on a fake spider decoration
2. (Contreras) saw a bee fly twice in her neighborhood; they eat bees and wasps

3. (Darimont) got a close-up look at a common poorwill when she played its call back to it
4. (Ahrens) has a resident Coopers hawk bathing in her bird bath
5. (Zanotelli) told the story of a large gopher snake found on the baseball fields which was relocated near the nature center close to a ground squirrel burrow (thinking the snake could have baby squirrels for lunch); the next day, a visitor reported saving the gopher snake from an attack by the mother ground squirrel

ACTION ITEMS

101. Tecolote Canyon Trunk Sewer Replacement

1. (Madison) We need to see the completed restoration plan with specifics so that we can address potential problems ahead of time and ensure that the City accomplishes the job with care for Tecolote Canyon. We were too passive during the beginning of Phase 3 and it cost us. Biologist Brian reports that the company is doing everything they're allowed to do and he can't intervene. (Darimont) suggested showing before and after photos to councilmembers and the public to illustrate the impact; it may encourage the City to mitigate better and to make mitigation happen in Tecolote Canyon as opposed to elsewhere. (Ahrens) started a letter to the City and photos can be added to it. (Contreras) asked if TCCAC can request that the City pay for volunteers to get licensed to spray for weeds. (Darimont) made a motion to create a Tecolote Canyon mitigation subcommittee to gather information, get input, build alliances, and present at various conservation organizations. (Contreras) seconded. (All) voted yes. Ahrens, Contreras, and Darimont will be on the subcommittee. Kaye will be invited to join as well.

102. Golf Course Proposal

1. Discussion was had about the golf course area being a possible mitigation site for the trunk sewer project. (Madison) suggested all individuals make phone calls to get information. (Contreras) made a motion to table the topic until the next meeting. (Harpster) seconded. (All) agreed.

WORKSHOP ITEMS

201. Group Liaison Assignment Updates

1. (Darimont) is officially the representative reporting on Tecolote Canyon to the San Diego Bird Alliance Conservation Committee

INFORMATION ITEMS

301. Natural Resource Management Plan/ Master Plan Update for Tecolote Canyon Natural Park

1. (Madison) hasn't asked for any updates since Mark's last response, which was very thorough.

302. Friends of Tecolote Canyon Update/ fundraising events

1. (Contreras) signed up for a grant-writing workshop so that she can more effectively write grants for FOTC funding

2. (Madison) informed the group that the City's CPPS (Community Projects, Programs, and Services) and ACCF (Arts, Culture, and Community Festival) Funding Program applications are open and will close on August 7; suggested that FOTC applies for Canyon Connection or ESCAPE program funding

303. Open Discussion

1. (Madison) thanked Zanotelli for adding events to the Meet Up page.
2. (Zanotelli) mentioned that she has applied to the City for permission to open social media accounts for the Tri-Canyons and Nature Center.
3. Discussion ensued about public outreach – social media, rekindling the relationship with the Clairemont Town Council newsletter (it used to feature the Tri-Canyon newsletter in it), and the Meet Up group.

COMMUNICATIONS

1. (Darimont) suggested inviting Andrew Meyer, Director of Conservation for the San Diego Bird Alliance, to a future meeting, perhaps in September or November. (Madison) added that the event should be planned ahead and promoted to get a larger audience.
2. (Madison) asked if there is an update on the signs being made by WildCoast. (Zanotelli) said she would ask the rangers, who are in communication with David at WildCoast. [UPDATE: Ranger Austin Lane said that the signs are still in the process of being worked on. Although the grant money is gone, WildCoast has committed to continue to work with Tri-Canyons.]

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 8:56 pm.

NOTICE OF NEXT REGULAR MEETING: September 16, 2026 @ 6:30p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Zanotelli, Center Director, Tecolote Nature Center

Please Note: If there are questions regarding this agenda, please contact Staff Representative Park Ranger Steve Smith at 858-581-9961.

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