MINUTES

City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE
October 1, 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	Members Absent	Staff Present
Allison Soares	Makeda Cheatom	Jon Richards
David Baron		Tyler Canales
Jake Banfield-Weir		Anthony Harrington
Howard Blackson		
Mandy Brown		
Matt Jawlik		
Patty Riddle		
Michael Robinson		
Michael Singleton		
Kathy Vandenheuvel		

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 September 3, 2026, MEETING

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mrs. Vandenheuvel/Mr. Baron

A motion was made by Mrs. Vandenheuvel and seconded by Mr. Baron to approve the September 3, 2026, meeting minutes. The motion carried (8-0-2. A. Soares and J. Banfield-Weir abstained).

4. NON- AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Web Form:

None

In-Person:

Christine Martinez – Introduce herself to Committee. Director of A Vibrant San Diego. Affiliated with Balboa Park Cultural Partnership. Advocates for Cultural Districts within San Diego.

Ashley Gardener – Spoke last month to the need for a lease for Starlight Bowl. Sorry to see the City will not be moving forward with Save Starlight in the paper first. Save Starlight will remain as an organization. Lots of lies in the Union Tribune article.

Sparks Mueller – Save Starlight tried to be good partners with the City. Unfortunate that they acted in good faith. Found out today the City has decided not to proceed with a lease. Would have been a courtesy that the City does not have all the faces in the case. Stepping back into a preservationist role. May no longer be polite. Interest in Starlight is not going away.

Danielle Laman – Heard about upcoming park events in the Safety and Security meeting. Alzheimer's Walk is on 10/17. Plaza De Panama will be activated on 10/18 and 10/24. Found out City is moving to Teams from Zoom. Can grant money be used to have a virtual option for Balboa Park Committee?

Mike Warburton – There is a drip coming into the area in the Casa De Balboa. Condensation line was dripping. BACC still does not have working HVAC. Have had issues with heat indoors. Temperature has been going over the state requirements. Is there a solution for the sewer issue at the building? Plumbers came out to inspect the roof drains.

5. **CHAIR'S REPORT**

Allison Soares – Thanked City staff for all the hard work.

6. STAFF REPORTS

Council District 3 – None

78th District – None

SDPD – None

Mayor's Office – None

San Diego County Supervisor District 4 – None

Jon Richards, Deputy Director, Parks & Recreation – A goal is to outfit the Santa Fe Room with new a/v equipment using dedicated funds for that type of equipment. City continues bi-weekly El Nino preparation meetings. Staff have created sandbags for the park. Trying to procure more sand and sandbags for the public. Golden Hall roof repairs were completed. Will be used as an emergency shelter if needed first instead of coming into the park. Working on fixing roof leaks at BPAC. Planning Department came to the last meeting for pre-kickoff for the Master Plan. If there are comments, please send them to the email address they provided. Up to the Committee if they would like to have a special meeting possibly in November. Paid parking will sunset on January 1st. Park Blvd paid parking will also sunset on the same day. 6th Avenue will continue to have paid parking. A press release and notice was sent to Save Starlight. The City's intent for the space is to send out an RFP for the upper concourse. Idea may be to get food in that area. Work at Hall of Nations is almost 99% complete. Was able to do a large amount of work in-house to save money. The Great Shakeout will take place on 10/15 at the Plaza De Panama form 10am-1pm with an earthquake simulator. Can sign up as an organization on the website. Thanks to The Nat for bringing this to the park. Thanks to the Committee of 100 for continued work in the Palisades Plaza.

7. BALBOA PARK NON-PROFIT PARTNER UPDATES

Forever Balboa Park – Jackie Higgins – Want to acknowledge the work that went into the Spark Awards. Shout out to all the winners. Excited about next year's awards. There will be a spooky park cleanup on 10/17 where participants are encouraged to wear costumes. The Visitor Center will be holding a scavenger hunt again. Plant It Forward will be on November 5. City Height Charter School will be participating. Have ongoing work in Palm Canyon doing inventory of the irrigation system. Navy crews have been out there every other week helping clean the area. Work has started on the redwood pergola for the Rose Garden. Woking on a project for Plaza De Panama as well.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – Peter Comiskey – Thanked Christine for coming to the meeting. Have been missing the ability to do more. A Vibrant San Diego will be able to do that. Interested in finding anyone who may want to be board members. Goal is to create an educated voter base. Encourage all to identify candidates supportive of Arts & Culture and support them. Will talk about the Welcome Back campaign in the coming weeks. There will be messaging about the coming removal of paid parking. That program will roll into the importance of Balboa Park. Will talk about events at every Balboa Park Committee meeting. The opportunity to run events with cultural institutions is huge.

Balboa Park Committee of 100 – Ross Porter – Will be providing a bronze installation to Municipal Gym soon. An ornament will be going around the marquee as well. There will be a lot of fascinating elements that will be a part of it. Look forward to further improvements in the Palisades. Look forward to the Centennial in 2035. Woking on a John Nolan pathway proposal.

Save Starlight – Steve Stopper – Have been at this for 10 years. Been a long journey. Major concern of where we are at. Intent was to reopen the entire bowl. Have concerns about the entire facility itself. Got the top part completed first but wanted to open the whole thing. There is hole in the roof. Just ask to still be able to come to the meetings.

Village Arts & Education Foundation – None

8. **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

Kathy Vandenheuvel – El Nino was mentioned. Know safe sleeping site at 20th and B is in the flood plain.

Jon Richards (Responded) – That area did have issues in the past. Does not have as much of an issue now. Will have supplies to divert the water as needed. We have 3 trailers with shelter supplies in yard to set up an emergency shelter if they need to be relocated.

Jake Banfield-Weir – Have seen conflicting information regarding restroom closures. Are Balboa Park bathrooms being closed?

Jon Richards (Responded) – Staff has been reduced for Balboa Park. Mayor's office has directed us to keep the positions on staff. Expect to have further direction after the holidays whether to keep the positions on staff and the restrooms open to the public.

Jake Banfield-Weir – If the positions are cut then the Mayor's offices should come and report about it.

Jon Richards (Responded) – I will bring any updates to the Committee.

Howard Blackson – Thanks to Chris Eddy and all the work he has done. Golden Hill Rec Center has sandbags available for the public.

Mike Singleton – A lot of energy can affect mature trees and can help cause failures. Can PTCA help prune some of the areas?

Jon Richards (Responded) – Can bring the recommendation to Transportation who now oversees the tree maintenance in the park system.

Patty Riddle – Thank you for the Golden Hall update. Talking about getting BPAC leaks fixed, BPAC could not be used last year due to leaks and floors getting wet. City has been sued for using Flock cameras. Was told that PD would assist with paid parking enforcement. All City residents had to put in information to be verified. All that information had to go to IPS. IPS will give that information to law enforcement. Still no advertisement for 3 hours of free parking in Inspiration Point.

Jon Richards (Responded) – I believe there is signage stating free parking for 3 hours and additional information on the parking meter kiosk.

9. REQUEST FOR ITEMS TO BE PLACED ON CONSENT AGENDA

None

10. CONSENT AGENDA

None

11. INFORMATION ITEMS

Item 1: Plaza de Panama Update
Presenter: Presenter: Jackie Higgins, Vice President, Forever Balboa Park

Public Comment:

None

Committee Comment:

Howard Blackson – Trees are kind of leaking into the pathway from West to East arcade. Maybe a shade structure goes along that pathway.

Jake Banfield-Weir – Recall their being issues with drainage in that area. Umbrellas will need to be anchored. Has the drainage been improved?

Jackie Higgins (Responded) – Trees will be in planters. This is phase one. Umbrellas will have footings.

Allison Soares – Have there been thoughts about putting in more trees?

Jackie Higgins (Responded) – Yes.

Jon Richards (Responded) – All these structures would be considered temporary and could be moved if needed.

Kathy Vandenheuvel – Will the resurfacing be asphalt with color coating? Have you thought about the maintenance of it? Concerned the green benches around the fountain take away from the architecture of the fountain.

Matt Jawlik – Is there a timeline for this?

Jackie Higgins (Responded) – January 2027

Howard Blackson – The benches are meant to be looking away from the fountain.

Jackie Higgins (Responded) – We are considering many configurations.

Mike Singleton – Great balance of temporary solutions and the color. Is the gray color warm of cold? Scale in center does not take away from the architecture.

Jackie Higgins (Responded) – It is a warm gray.

Item 2: America 250 Celebration Update
Presenters: Kelly Ford, Special Events Coordinator, Forever Balboa Park

Public Comment:
None

Committee Comment:
Allison Soares – Presentation is perfect. You addressed all concerns that were previously raised.

Howar Blackson – This is a financing moment. Ok with advertising of activation as it celebrates the park. These things are helpful.

David Baron – Think this will be a great event.

Kathy Vandenheuvel – Really appreciate you listening to the recommendations.

Mandy Brown – May be good to make a connection with the House of USA.

Mike Singleton – Thanks for listening to us. It shows a good balance now. Would suggest adding the park was developed in 1865 and the 1935 Expo.

Jon Richards – How are you marketing and how can the Committee help? How can we get the stakeholders outside of the park? Open it up to all citizens.

Kelly Ford (Responded) – Southwest is working with their PR firm and ours as well. Can get something sent out to the Committee.

Jon Richards – There may be a opportunity to get in onto the kiosks Downtown.

12. ACTION ITEMS

Item 3: Miche 5K San Diego

Presenters: Fernando Nieto, Miche 5K

Public Comment:

Peter Comiskey – Would remind that Gillian Rizza is the Partnership contact for impact. This does have an impact on Central Mesa. Would suggest Laurel and everything in the Central Mesa be cleared by 9:30am.

Committee Comment:

Allison Soares – How many attendees? Event should be done by 9:30am? We love donations. Always concerned about clean up and want to know that this will be handled.

Fernando Nieto (Responded) – Expect about 6,000 attendees. Most runners should be done in about 45 minutes. Do have a 30-yard roll off. We hire a sanitation company and have 25 staff for cleanup.

Howard Blackson – Could you alter the route to not affect the Central Mesa? Just go in the opposite direction.

Fernando Nieto (Responded) – As long as we meet the 3.1-mile requirement.

Jon Richards – Take the new route to the Permit Center so they are aware.

Kathy Vandenheuvel – Appreciate the groups that put in the effort that no trash is being left behind.

Mike Singleton – Are you going past Upas St.?

Fernando Nieto (Responded) – Just up to Upas. Will have water stations at mile 1 and mile 2.

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

A motion was made by Mr. Baron and seconded by Mr. Blackson to approve the Miche 5K San Diego with the event being out of the Central Mesa by 9:30am. The motion carried unanimously (10-0-0).

13. WORKSHOP ITEMS

Item 4: Balboa Park Master Plan
Presenter: Howard Blackson, Balboa Park Committee Member

Public Comment:

None

Committee Comment:

Howard Blackson – Hope to setup a special Committee meeting on November 19th.

Kathy Vandenheuvel – Is this meeting about the Master Plan?

Howard Blackson – There is a bit of an issue with how Planning is going. Think we can help. Workshops will be coming up. Best Practice is to do the due diligence first. Should use the AEA framework and bring 10 facility and 10 landscape issues up. Want to send all past studies and

projects to the Planning Department. This will help come up with a framework for the plan. Want to get engagement first and then be able to give feedback.

Allison Soares – We can hold a special meeting on November 19th from 4-7pm.

Jon Richards – Have to check on availability to see where it can be held. I will report back at our next Balboa Park Committee meeting.

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mrs. Vandenheuvel/Mrs. Riddle

A motion was made by Mrs. Vandenheuvel and seconded by Mrs. Riddle to have a special Balboa Park Committee meeting on November 19th at 4 pm. The motion carried unanimously (10-0-0).

14. <u>ADJOURNMENT</u> – 5:55 pm

Notice of Next Balboa Park Meeting: November 5, 2026
4:00 P.M.
In-Person

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Canales
District Manager