

MINUTES

City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE
September 3, 2020

Meeting Location:

Online Meeting

Mailing Address:

Balboa Park Administration
Building
2125 Park Boulevard
San Diego, CA 92101-4792

ATTENDANCE:

Members Present

Victoria Curran
Kenneth Davenport – Vice
Chair
Sarah Dawe
Vicki Granowitz
Katherine Johnston – Chair
Luanne Kanzawa
Don Liddell
Dang Nguyen (arrived 6:20
pm)
Micah Parzen
Johanna S. Schiavoni

Members Absent

William Aaron

Staff Present

Christina Chadwick
Andrew Field
Mario Llanos
Susan Lowery-Mendoza

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Johnston called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and read the statement listed on the agenda that this Committee meeting will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the California Executive Order 29-20 which suspends certain requirements of the Ralph M. Brown Act.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 6, 2020

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED MR. LIDDELL/ MS. GRANOWITZ

A motion was made by Ms. Granowitz and seconded by Mr. Liddell to approve the August 6, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. The motion carried (6-0-3) with Ms. Curran, Ms. Dawe, and Mr. Davenport abstaining.

REQUESTS FOR CONTINUANCES – None

NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT -

David Cohn/The Prado at Balboa Park/Cohn Restaurant Group: Our Family operates The Prado at Balboa Park and the Tea Pavilion at The Japanese Friendship Garden. COVID-19 has been devastating for restaurants throughout San Diego County, but especially, restaurants in Balboa Park.

Understanding the importance of supporting the Park, we have continued to pay our rent even though our 2020 sales are down MORE THAN 70%. While the Balboa Park Museums and Institutions remain closed, we are all trying to create relevant attractions to re-activate the Plaza de Panama and the Park in general. Attached is information that was proposed before the Balboa Park Centennial Celebration regarding the installation of a temporary Observation Wheel in the Plaza de Panama. Also attached is a photo of a similar installation from the Panama-California Exposition in 1915-1916. This Observation Wheel could be erected quickly and would follow all COVID-19 safety protocol. It would also provide the opportunity to serve food and beverages to passengers. We are respectfully asking that this item be placed on the October Balboa Park Committee agenda for approval as a temporary installation. We strongly believe that San Diegans as well as visitors are looking for a unique attraction as well as a safe detraction from COVID-19.

Daniele Laman: I would like to begin by publicly thanking former Head Ranger John Anderson, for his vision and leadership in arranging for an outside vendor to take the load off the HPR volunteers and BP GMWs in cleaning up what the homeless are still leaving behind. Next, I would like to give input regarding the workshop item, in case my absolutely minimal technical skills fail again, as they have numerous times lately, trying to Zoom. Safety & security should be the priority and especially expanded after dark, no one will come back to a park that does not feel safe. No matter how many wonderful programs offered or beautiful things to see, everyone from children to the elderly need to feel and BE SAFE. Second priority should be deferred maintenance. All the 1915 & 1935 buildings should be at the top of the list. For example, each of the 1935 HPR cottages have only 33 amps & the original plumbing, while the 1915 Hall of Nations still needs a \$2 million foundation. Thanks to city staff for the workshop.

Peter Comiskey, Balboa Park Cultural Partnership, One Park - One Team advancing Balboa Park cultural organizations through collaboration and advocacy: Two elements this evening. First - we encourage everyone visiting Balboa Park to adhere to the important requirements for your personal protection and the protection of others. These can be found by clicking on the updates bar on BalboaPark.org and are more important than ever if we want the eight museums that are open or reopening this month to be able to continue to operate. Second - As one of the goals of the Cultural Partnership is advocacy, we would like to bring your attention to the comprehensive issue based advocacy work we are doing in outlining issues of Balboa Park funding and the support of Arts and Culture with candidates for the open Council positions. Public forums have been recorded for districts 3 and 9 and the district 1 forum will be run next week. Districts 5 and 7 are yet to be scheduled. Visit artsandculturesd.org to watch the candidates discuss how they would fund Balboa Park infrastructure needs and a number of other questions.

David Lundin, president, Balboa Park Heritage, Our priorities are:

1. Create a permanent dedicated funding source for the Park, ideally by a 2-3.5% increase in the Hotel Guest Tax;
2. Work to make existing parking resources more efficient via a more robust shuttle system, and reconfiguring Balboa Drive parking from wasteful parallel spaces to high yield diagonal spaces;
3. Discourage the construction of any additional permanent structures in the Park;
4. Work in a focused and coordinated way to encourage private and public support for actually funding and completion of the restoration of the Botanical Building and associated gardens;
5. Recover the Dedicated Park Lands currently occupied by the San Diego Unified School District, and enforce the terms of the existing Lease expiring in 2024;

6. Enhance the availability of natural and improved open spaces in the Park for both passive enjoyment and active recreation;
7. As an express declaration of policy, encouraging access and accessibility, prohibit Paid Parking in Balboa Park thru a Charter Amendment; and
8. Complete the remaining phases of a full restoration of the 1935 beauty and accessibility of the Palisades area.

CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

Ms. Johnston noted the format of the meeting which will not include staff or partner updates, action items, information or committee items so that the focus can be on the workshop item which is a follow up item from last February’s meeting. She noted two ways in which the members and public can participate in the meeting. The first is the “Webform” function the City has been using during the COVID -19 format for public meeting. The second way to participate during the workshop this evening is through a real time automated polling app.

STAFF REPORT - None

BALBOA PARK NON-PROFIT PARTNER UPDATES - None

ACTION ITEMS

Consent

101. None

Adoption

201. None

Special Events

301. None

WORKSHOP ITEMS

401. Balboa Park Strategic Priorities and Framework for Future Investment Workshop Presenters: Andy Field, Parks and Recreation Director; Heidi Vonblum, Environmental Policy Program Manager, Planning Department, City of San Diego; Danell Scarborough, Facilitator, City of San Diego

Mr. Andrew Field, Director of Parks and Recreation thanked all for attending this meeting to focus on the future of Balboa Park. He provided a Power Point presentation and introduced the team involved; provided an overview of February’s Committee meeting and what has transpired since which has changed staff’s focus towards health and safety and reviewed the process and refinements to collect data. He introduced Danell Scarborough, facilitator.

Ms. Scarbough presented a word cloud visual of the themes collected last February and noted that the most mentioned theme from the input gathered was deferred maintenance and infrastructure. From the data received, six core themes emerged of which further detail will be gathered tonight. Instructions for participating in the interactive polling process were provided

in addition to an option of sending polling responses to her email. Interactive polls were taken, and the results can be found here:

<https://secure.meetingsift.com/index.php?r=event/report&rs=7A05B261C4BFD70A527AC111770A652C22056A10F421AB8EFC1885594D33A1FF1B5FC>

Mr. Field thanked all for their input and hopes to continue to use this method to continue to gather important information about our park from those community members who aren't able to participate in the meetings. A scope of work for strategy and implementation; technical review process and additional data gathering will be the next steps occurring in the coming months. We plan to present this information at the January 2021 meeting.

Chairperson Johnson thanked staff and asked for the public comments to be read with a two-minute limit.

Public Comments:

Alan & Raquel Bennet: This proposal is to honor the 1868 promise of the city council for "...a gift to the citizens of San Diego of a reserved wilderness...", which is historic because this was four years before the creation of Yellowstone National Park. It is for three hundred (300) acres of the originally planned fourteen hundred and forty (1,440) acres about 21% of that gift, but will assure the central "emerald" of San Diego's "crown jewel" will be the prosper center stone of San Diego County's "Emerald Necklace" linking up our natural areas along our coastline and canyons.

Peter Comiskey Balboa Park Cultural Partnership: Congratulations for the exciting progress that has been achieved since the public meeting. As I trust the feedback today will be the first of a series of citywide and perhaps even county-wide surveys, I will address a couple of comments that may be able to be integrated into future surveys or for the data to be better analyzed. Specifically, per the presentation that was provided with the agenda, I would suggest that on Slide 10 it may be beneficial to rank maintenance into two questions - one for ongoing operations (like trash, landscaping and painting) and another for capital reinvestment in infrastructure. I also very much appreciate the positioning of grouping parking/access and mobility in previous slides, though I note that this is abbreviated just to parking on slide 10. This question would likely be answered differently by those living further from the park.

For slide 12, it is important to know how far a respondent lives from the park in evaluating these answers. I encourage you again to implement this city-wide. Finally, I would suggest that a further dive on the issue of Governance is and will be an extremely important issue for our community and park moving forward.

Kevin Swanson: Balboa Park has multiple needs, all of which require funding. The large amount of funds for delayed upkeep is significant and requires significant action on the part of the City Administration. The next Mayor needs to make a personal commitment toward making positive steps forward to acquire the necessary funds. Short term actions that might not require significant funds include partnering with autonomous electric vehicle manufactures to set up an internal shuttle system serving all of the Park that eliminates private vehicles and creates pedestrian zones in the Central Mesa (demonstration project), re-stripping the West Mesa roadways to increase parking, making 6th Avenue one way from the parking lot access streets and turning the existing north bound lane into a shuttle only lane, with parking on the outside of that lane, and installing lot count and display meters on existing parking lots that alert

drivers on the number of available spaces. Additional consideration should be taken on how to partner with and recognize organizations and individuals that contribute private funding toward specific projects, and whether or not THE CITY should be hiring an independent organization with the responsibility for raising funds instead of relying on nonprofits.

John Bolthouse, Friends of Balboa Park: Extends its sincere appreciation to the City of San Diego, particularly our partners at the Parks & Recreation Department, for working to keep this re-visioning for Balboa Park's future at the forefront of our minds, in spite of the global pandemic that could have offered an easy excuse to put this conversation off indefinitely. As the COVID-mandated closure of the park and the ongoing limited access to its cultural institutions has shown, there is a deep and broad affection for Balboa Park. Our community's longing for the cultural, recreational, natural, historical, and spiritual oasis that the park offers should cast no doubt on why this community conversation on the park's future is being facilitated, and why we can't let the opportunity to speak openly and honestly about what a true rebirth of Balboa Park will require. Friends of Balboa Park applauds the public for engaging in this important effort and stands ready to work with anyone at any time to see that this needed re-birth of Balboa Park truly becomes a reality.

Charles Kaminski: The link to the polling does not work

Committee Comments:

Vicky Granowitz has concerns about reaching diverse populations who use the park, who may have English as a second language, don't have access to the meetings; and to learn of children's needs for recreation opportunities. These groups of people may foresee a different future of the park.

Mr. Parzen thanked staff and Danell for their efforts and would also like to see further community outreach to diverse populations to let them know that the park is for everyone. The governance questions left out the need for one voice which has emerged and also the role that the County could provide. It is a time to seize the opportunity to figure out a way to emerge from all of this as a better version of ourselves in Balboa Park.

Victoria Curran thanked Andy and Danell and would like to see more outreach to the people who use the park such as those in Golden Hill.

Chairperson Johnston stated that John Bolthouse's comments resonated with her that is could have been easy to push the issue off due to the pandemic, and commended staff who are dedicated to advance the process. New voices in from the community can emerge during this renaissance period for parks. She spoke to January's timeline that will probably be the first opportunity to revisit the data and would like to focus then on some of the short-term recommendations.

INFORMATION ITEMS

501. None

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

601. Land-Use and Policy – No report

602. West Mesa Subcommittee – No report

COMMITTEE MEMBERS' REPORTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: Thursday, October 1, 2020
6:00 P.M.
Online Meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowery-Mendoza
District Manager