

MINUTES

**City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE
March 2, 2023**

Meeting Location: Online Meeting

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

ATTENDANCE:

Members Present

Molly Chase - Chair
Howard Blackson
Allison Soares
Brer Marsh
William Aaron Jr
Chris Eddy
Victoria Curran
Sarah Dawe
Makeda Cheatom
Dang Nguyen

Members Absent

Katherine Johnston
Micah Parzen

Staff Present

Codi Vierra
Emily Bonner
Christina Chadwick
Victor Nava
Johnny Chou
Victor Johnson II

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Molly Chase called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES February 7, 2023

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mr. Nguyen. / Ms. Soares

A motion was made by Mr. Nguyen. and seconded by Ms. Soares approve the February 7, 2023, meeting minutes. The motion carried unanimously (9-0). Unanimously

REQUEST FOR CONTINUANCES - None

NON- AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Web Forum:

John Percy-I am a resident of Bankers Hill. I cannot attend the 3/2 meeting of the Balboa Park Committee, but I am requesting they reconsider the plan they approved for additional parking on Balboa Drive. I believe there are better options available, that would provide the desired additional parking AND would provide a much safer and more enjoyable experience for recreational cyclists. A new hearing would allow such options to be considered. Thank you.

Alex Graff- I am writing to share my disappointment in the decision to add parking to Balboa Drive while maintaining the status quo of inadequate bicycle infrastructure for both southbound and northbound bicycle traffic. I am a resident of Middletown and often ride my bike and walk along Balboa Drive for leisure and exercise. However, every time I have done such rides, I am struck by the poor accessibility this route provides to non-car traffic. Southbound cycling must contend with distracted drivers looking for places to parallel park, and northbound cycling is relegated to dangerously sharing a footpath among pedestrians, dogs, and children. Furthermore, the decision to create a net gain of 100+ parking spaces runs in direct opposition to the city's goal to reach zero net emissions by 2035. At minimum, any redesign of Balboa

Drive should include separated bike paths for both southbound and northbound bicycle traffic. There is plenty of room for this without adding parking to an underutilized parking area. Balboa Park, and specifically the West mesa, is a true gem among the city's park space. Every effort should be taken to improve its function as a park, rather than as parking.

Jason- I am a resident of the East Village. I am writing to ask you to please reconsider the plan to add more parking spaces to Balboa Dr and instead add a multi-use pedestrian/bike path. I ride my bike through Balboa Park on a weekly basis. The addition of a multi-use pedestrian/bike path on Balboa Dr would greatly enhance the usability and activity of the West Mesa. Unfortunately, drivers already speed on Balboa Dr and even El Prado. Increasing the number of cars on Balboa Dr will only decrease the safety and recreational opportunities for people who are in the park outside of a car. A massive amount of park space has already been set aside for cars including 11 parking lots, the 163 and parts of the 5. I am asking you to make a small fraction of that space more welcoming to people outside of cars by freeing it up for recreational use.

Jack Dodson- I am a resident of Carlsbad and Balboa Park is one of my favorite parts in greater San Diego. I also love to bike and have long been interested in biking around Balboa Park. Sadly, the current multi-use path is not safe for many cyclists to share with dog walkers or small children (who play at the playgrounds) in a busy 8-foot wide path. Putting a bike facility on Balboa Drive instead of expanding the multi-use path would be far more cost-effective. Few motorists will park on Balboa Drive to access institutions, since the Inspiration Point parking lot, and the tram that runs to it, is closer (the tram does not service Balboa Drive). Additionally, parking averages only 30% occupancy rate on Balboa Drive, according to the city. Adding parking is unnecessary and does not align with Climate Action Plan goals. Instead, the area should be optimized for bike use, as many people who live nearby (and many who don't) will greatly appreciate the added freedom of not needing a car to enjoy one of San Diego's best places.

Vahan Hartooni- I'm a resident of University Heights.

The city was going to do to my neighborhood what it is about to do with Balboa Drive: to sacrifice the safety of cyclists for the smallest of parking gains on a side road. For us it was going to be changing the parking arrangement along Meade Ave because of the bike lanes along Park Blvd. Thankfully those plans were scrapped, but I'm disappointed to see similar plans being proposed for Balboa Drive. Adding even more parking on that road as a compromise for the bus and bike lanes along Park Blvd. To me, this signals the city isn't serious about meeting its Vision Zero and Climate Goals. If the city was serious, they would add a two way bike lane along Balboa Dr, they would expand the bike network, they would expand the bus lanes, and they would do more to provide viable mobility options besides cars. I request the city to reconsider their plans on Balboa Drive and put the safety of people first. Thank you.

Bruce Dammann- As a 30 year resident of Bankers Hill, I am disappointed by the decision of the Balboa Park Committee to add more parking on the West Mesa when research doesn't support additional parking. Balboa Drive is the only area in Bankers Hill where seniors, such as me when I was in my 60's and 70's, could have a leisurely bicycle ride without cars zipping by. It is the only area in Bankers Hill that allows for that type of exercise which we need as we approach old age. As Bankers Hill gets more dense with housing, Balboa Drive will be more important for exercising, but turning Balboa Drive into a parking area will stop that. The approved proposal forces bicyclists to share a lane with cars which makes it very unsafe and something I would not recommend anybody to do, thus Bankers Hill loses a place for exercising. There still is an opportunity to revise the approved plan because the project is a resurfacing and paint project. Members of the Bankers Hill Community have some alternate plans, but were never able to present them at the meeting where the action item was considered."

Carl Gehrman- I'm a North Park resident who goes to and through Balboa Park frequently. I write to urge the committee to support a protected 2-way bike lane along Balboa Dr., instead of proceeding with the plan to add angled parking spaces and make that section less safe for people on bikes. A one-lane sharrow configuration creates conflict any time a driver wishes to go around a cyclist. That section of the park is frequently under-utilized in terms of parking, and Balboa Dr. offers the best option for a North-South bike lane through the western section of the park. The current multi-use path isn't wide enough for bikes,

scooters, and pedestrians, and I've had a couple close calls both as a bike rider and as a pedestrian while using that path. At a minimum, that path needs to be widened. A better and more cost-effective solution would be to place a protected 2-way bike lane where cyclists already prefer to ride, if the Strava heatmap is any indication - Balboa Dr. - instead of adding parking spaces to a section of the park that functions as much or more as a local amenity than as a museum destination.

Dorrie- I am writing in because I am concerned about the addition of parking spots to balboa drive. It makes no sense to add parking, especially when occupancy of the current parking is so low. Better bike facilities are needed instead. the city needs to show it is committed to making a better San Diego and reducing vehicle emissions and continuing to prioritize parking is the absolute wrong way to do that. Please reconsider.

Katie Crist- I ask that the Committee consider a two-way cycletrack on Balboa Drive to be consistent with the Balboa Park Master Plan and the City's Climate Action and Vision Zero plans. Whenever possible, we must implement strategies that are known to encourage non-vehicle trips, especially in a one of our city's greatest assets. We should not be adding parking when so much already exists and is not fully used. Instead let's create climate friendly and healthy ways for people to move within the park and have shuttles or other means necessary for those who have mobility limitations. Thank you

In-Person:

Nevo Magnesi- Not in favor of the previously proposed redesign of Balboa Drive. Ask the City to consider listening to the residents that neighbor Balboa Drive and consider safer pedestrian / bicycle friendly options.

Peter Cominsky- Not in favor of the proposal to install a tented shelter and open camping area at Inspiration Point. Would like the Committee and the City to discuss the various options in a transparent format and consider the safety of all of the residents and patrons of Balboa Park.

Manny Rodriguez- Not in favor of the previously proposed redesign of Balboa Drive. Proposed more transportation alternative options for visitors of Balboa Park

Daniel Laman-Thanked City staff for removal of the various trees in Balboa Park. Announce the various HPR Lawn Programs for House of Palestine, House of India, House of Iran, and House of Ireland. Informed the Committee of the upcoming Smart Street Lights proposal meeting.

Committee Member Comments:

Victor Curran- Thanked City Staff for the quick response to tree hazard removal. Announced that this is her last meeting and will be replaced by Kathy Bennet. Thanked all the Board Members and City Staff for a great experience.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chairperson Molly Chase- Thanked City Staff for setting up the room for the Committee meeting. Thanked Kathy for attending today's meeting and Victoria for diligent work on the Balboa Park Committee

STAFF REPORT

City Council Third District-Emily Bonner- Congratulated the members of the Balboa Park Committee (Howard Blackson, Brer Marsh, and Chris Eddy). Currently the City Council is conducting a hybrid style of meetings. The public is welcome to participate both in-person and online.

Public Safety-Tyler Hamby, Sergeant, San Diego Police Department- No Report

Parks and Recreation Department Operations- Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director- Thanked City Staff for setting up the room for the Committee meeting. Replaced the trees in the planter boxes on the Plaza de Panama. Replaced the urn style planters in the California Quad Wrangle with a new style. Please report any tree hazards or concerns to the Balboa Park Ground Maintenance staff to address. Progress is still ongoing with the RFP. March 10th -March 12th Balboa Park will have multiple events occurring relatively around the same time and the park will be significantly impacted by traffic. A more detailed announcement will come from my office.

BALBOA PARK NON-PROFIT PARTNER UPDATES (Time allotted to each speaker is determined by the Chair; however, comments are limited to no more than three (3) minutes)

Forever Balboa Park– Elizabeth Babcock- Annual Impact Award is out and published acknowledging the various volunteers, city staff, and park staff. Announced the Spark Awards program and nominations.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – Peter Comiskey- Thanked City Staff for a “job well done” in addressing the recent tree hazards. The Balboa Park Cultural Partnership will soon be asking the Balboa Park Committee to provide final review of the Experience Plan. Was happy to welcome to California Arts Council to the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership. Would be willing to provide a proposal for parking in Balboa Park.

Committee of 100 – Ross Porter-None

Save Starlight – Steve Stopper- Had a meeting with City Staff to discuss a tentative lease and sup agreement.

ACTION ITEMS

Consent (These items are adopted without discussion; they can be moved to adoption by any committee member)

101. None

Adoption (Each adoption item requires individual action; they can be moved to adoption by any committee member)

201. None

Special Events (Special Events that require road or plaza closures or will potentially impact park and / or institution operation, brought to the Committee for a formal recommendation. They can be moved to consent by action of the committee.)

Special Events

301. Rock’n’Roll 5K, Presenter: Max Little, Operations Manager, requesting to host the 5k event on Saturday, June 3, 2023. The race will have a start time of 7:00 a.m. at Presidents Way and Park Blvd. and end time of 8:30 a.m. on Balboa Drive, south of Olive Street. The parking lots will reopen by 7:45 a.m. and the Cabrillo Bridge will reopen by 8:00 a.m.

Staff Recommendation: To approve the request for the event date.

MOTION: **MOVED/SECONDED Mr. Blackson. / Mr. Aaron Jr.**

A motion was made by Mr. Blackson. and seconded by Mr. Aaron Jr. approve the event date of Saturday June 3, 2023. The motion carried unanimously (9-0). Unanimously

302. Making Strides Against Breast Cancer. Presenter: Linda Dejauregui, American Cancer Society, Development Manager Requesting to permanently change the site location from 6th Ave. & Laurel to Park Boulevard and Presidents Way Lawn and change the route of their walk to start o Presidents Way toward Pan American Rd. West, turn right headed north towards Plaza de Panama, crossing over Cabrillo Bridge, turn left onto southbound 6th Ave, turn left onto A Street, turn left onto southbound Park Blvd., ending at Park Blvd. and Presidents Way Lawn.

Staff Recommendation: To approve the request for the location change for 2023 and return to BPC for permanent route change next year once we review the impact from 2023 route.

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mr. Aaron Jr. / Ms. Soares

A motion was made by Mr. Aaron Jr. and seconded by Ms. Soares approve the location change for 2023 and review the impact of the change next year. The motion carried unanimously (9-0). Unanimously

WORKSHOP ITEMS (No action taken; subject discussed by the committee and staff.)

401. None

INFORMATION ITEMS

501. Public Safety and Ranger Update: Roberto Bejar, Sr. Park Ranger

Public Comment:

Peter Comiskey- Thanked the Balboa Park Ranger staff and would recommend an increase I both Park Ranger staff and Police Department (PD)staff in Balboa Park.

Committee Comment:

William Aaron Jr.-Thanked the Balboa Park Ranger staff for the hard job that they due.

Allison Soares- Reiterated that Balboa Park Ranger staff are monitoring the duty line and PD radio frequency and will respond accordingly once contacted.

Chris Eddy- Inquired about the Balboa Park Ranger Duties work hours.

Roberto Bejar (Responded)- Rangers are present in the park in general from sun-up to sun-down, 7 days a week. Sometimes even later depending on what events are occurring in Balboa Park that day. The Balboa Park Rangers are also recruiting.

502. Brown Act Training: Nicole Pedone, Deputy City Attorney, City of San Diego

Public Comment:

Committee Comment:

Chris Eddy- Asked for clarification about the process of meeting transmission failure and the types of scenarios that may occur.

Nicole Pedone (Responded)- Regardless of how the interruption occurred the public must always be able to view the meeting. Once the public is no longer able to view the meeting. The meeting must stop.

Howard Blackson- Asked if a quorum was established at the beginning of the meeting and later in the meeting a quorum is lost. Can an action item be voted on?

Nicole Pedone (Responded)- Will follow-up on that question but is very confident that without the quorum no items can be voted on.

Victoria Curran- Inquired about advertising committee meeting information on various other social websites and forums.

Nicole Pedone (Responded)- As long as business is not being conducted and be cautious about the types of various social media forms and websites. Discussion of Committee business outside of the proper forum should avoided.

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS – None

COMMITTEE MEMBERS REPORTS – None

ADJOURNMENT -7:45 pm

Notice of Next Balboa Park Meeting:

April 6, 2023
6:00 P.M.
In-Person

Respectfully submitted,

Victor Johnson II
Area Manager