

MINUTES

**City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE
June 1, 2023**

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

Howard Blackson
Allison Soares
Brer Marsh
William Aaron Jr
Chris Eddy
Kathy Vandenheuvell

Members Absent

Sarah Dawe
Micah Parzen
Makeda Cheatom
Dang Nguyen

Staff Present

Christina Chadwick
Tyler Canales
Johnny Chou
Rania Amen
Collins Solomon III

CALL TO ORDER

Christina Chadwick called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES March 2, 2023

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

A motion was made by Mr. Aaron Jr. and seconded by Ms. Soares to approve the March 2, 2023, meeting minutes. The motion carried (5-0-1). Ms. Vandenheuvell abstained.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES March 21, 2023

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mr. Eddy / Mr. Aaron Jr.

A motion was made by Mr. Eddy and seconded by Mr. Aaron Jr. to approve the March 21, 2023, meeting minutes. The motion carried (5-0-1). Ms. Vandenheuvell abstained.

REQUEST FOR CONTINUANCES - None

NON- AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

In-Person:

Daniele Laman- Announced the various upcoming HPR Lawn Programs for June and July for House of Philippines, House of Mexico, House of Puerto Rico, House of Denmark, House of Sweden, House of USA, House of France, House of Peru, and House of Columbia.

Tershia d'Elgon – Not in favor of Safe Sleeping Sites at 20th & B and Balboa Park. Concerned that the item was not brought to the committee and no public outreach was done to the Golden Hill Community.

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

None

ACTION ITEMS

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

Item 1. Approve Consent Items

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

A motion was made by Ms. Soares and seconded by Mr. Blackson to move Item 2 (Esri User Conference Closing) and Item 3 (National Carousel Day) to consent. The motion carried unanimously (6-0). Unanimously

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mr. Aaron Jr. / Mr. Marsh

A motion was made by Mr. Aaron Jr. and seconded by Mr. Marsh to approve the Consent Items. The motion carried unanimously (6-0). Unanimously

INFORMATION ITEMS

Item 4. Park Blvd Redesign Recap: Rania Amen, Director and Collins Solomon III, Assistant Deputy Director, Engineering and Capital Projects Department

Public Comment:

In Person:

Vahan Hartooni – In support of the new bus lanes that were put in on Park Blvd, but advocates for them to be extended down the entirety of Park Blvd to make the transit system more equitable and successful.

Matt Stewart – The bus lane has been a benefit. Noted issues of the design at the Northern and Southern most point. Advocating for bus and bike lanes throughout the City.

Manny Rodriguez – Thanked the committee for voting in favor of the project. Will continue to advocate to make the bus lane as efficient as possible.

Zachary Defazio – In support of the Park Blvd redesign. Hoping that the transit network will continue to be expanded. Thankful for the staff at EC&P for their work.

Nevo Magnezi – Sees the difference the redesign has made. Grateful for the increased safety it has given. Would like to see more ADA improvements made.

Bill Keller – Noted that there has been a large loss of parking spots. Has seen an increase in traffic that has spilled into the nearby neighborhood that has caused frustration in the community.

Paul Jamason – In support of the Park Blvd redesign. Has been an improvement in bike safety. Requested to remove the parking spots in front of the World Beats Center. Need better signage to direct people to park in that parking lot.

Webform:

Dennis Desmond (SDMTS) - Dear Balboa Park Committee Boardmembers:

Please accept this letter as our comment on Agenda Item #4 at your June 1, 2023 Board Meeting. The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) is appreciative of the efforts of the City of San Diego and stakeholders to provide bus priority along Park Boulevard in Balboa Park. The newly completed bus lanes are already being used by 330 bus trips a day on MTS Routes 7 and 215, which together carry over 10,000 daily riders. These routes bring visitors and employees to Park institutions, creating economic access and recreational opportunities for San Diegans to work and play without using an automobile.

While the new bus lanes have gaps where a few on-street parking spaces have been preserved, City leadership has assured MTS that the implementation will be closely monitored for future adjustments that may be necessary to maintain efficient and reliable transit service in the corridor. We look forward to working with the City to identify potential changes that could maximize the effectiveness of the bus lanes and further prioritize mass transit to make it the best and easiest way to access Balboa Park.

The State of California reports that 38% of greenhouse gas emissions are created from the transportation sector (<https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/ghg-inventory-data>). One of the simplest solutions to the urgent climate change crisis is to encourage alternatives to automobile use, including improving the quality and reliability of our existing transit system. Priority projects like the Park Boulevard bus lanes are critical to ensuring that those who use transit, by necessity or by choice, are not penalized for doing so by delays from auto congestion.

On behalf of the 58 million passengers who boarded MTS buses and Trolleys last year, we will continue to support and advocate for improved transit priority and circulation throughout the 11 local jurisdictions that we serve. We thank the City for the Park Boulevard project and the step forward for addressing climate change and advancing transportation equity.

Committee Comment:

Brer Marsh – Inquired as to whether there were any trolley tracks or historic items found during the project.

Collins Solomon III (Responded) – No trolley tracks, but an old military crossing was found.

Brer Marsh – Inquired as to what soft costs and how the money for the project broke down.

Collins Solomon III/Rania Amen (Responded) – Will put Mr. Marsh in contact with Project Manager regarding the funding.

Brer Marsh – Inquired about signaling and upgrades.

Rania Amen (Responded) – Signaling will continue to be evaluated through cost benefit analysis.

Brer Marsh – Had an article to share regarding another City and their efforts to make pedestrian/bike access safer.

Rania Amen (Responded) – Can have traffic engineers look further into it.

Brer Marsh – Inquired about Park Blvd section south of Presidents Way and whose responsibility it is.

Rania Amen (Responded) – It’s still within City of San Diego right of way. Discussions with Caltrans about expanding bike access is ongoing.

Brer Marsh – Inquired as to whether there will be any further redesigns based on the work that was done.

Rania Amen (Responded) – The Mobility Department is taking the lead on any further review of the entire area.

Item 5. Park Blvd School District Redesign: Michael Stepner, Professor

Public Comment:

Vahan Hartooni – Very forward-looking proposal. Excited for the pedestrian connection to the park. Pruess school would be a good example to look at.

Committee Comment:

Howard Blackson – Asked how the committee can be involved.

Michael Stepner (Responded) – Will bring further updates to the committee.

Item 6. Palisades Rehabilitation Update: Ross Porter, President, Committee of 100 and Robert Theile, Architect

Public Comment: None

Committee Comment: None

STAFF REPORT

Parks and Recreation Department Operations- Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director- Thanked those who attended the State of Balboa Park. A vendor has been selected for the Balboa Park Framework and the work will begin in the Summer. Introduced Tyler Canales as the new District Manager for Balboa Park Grounds Maintenance. Balboa Park Committee meeting for July was pushed to July 27 to accommodate the 4th of July holiday. The committee will be dark in August. Twilight Concerts begin July 21st.

ADJOURNMENT -7:37 pm

Notice of Next Balboa Park Meeting: July 27, 2023
6:00 P.M.
In-Person

Respectfully submitted,

Tyler Canales
District Manager