

# MINUTES

City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board  
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE  
March 4, 2021

**Meeting Location:**  
Online Meeting

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

## **ATTENDANCE:**

### **Members Present**

William Aaron  
Victoria Curran  
Sarah Dawe  
Vicki Granowitz  
Katherine Johnston - Chair  
Luanne Kanzawa  
Don Liddell  
Dang Nguyen  
Johanna S. Schiavoni

### **Members Absent**

Kenneth Davenport – Vice Chair  
Micah Parzen

### **Staff Present**

Andrew Field  
Christina Chadwick  
Charles Daniels  
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. 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 FEBRUARY 4, 2021**

**MOTION:      MOVED/SECONDED   MS. GRANOWITZ / MR. NGUYEN**

A motion was made by Ms. Granowitz and seconded by Mr. Nguyen to approve the February 4, 2021 meeting minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously (9-0-0).

**REQUESTS FOR CONTINUANCES** – None

## **NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT**

Daniele Laman – HPR International Cottages are looking forward to the completion of five new buildings within the next month. We would like to publicly thank Mayor Gloria's office (especially Steve Hill) for helping to expedite the last of the SDG&E issues. Hopefully the BP Comm. were able to view the latest photos Mario forwarded to you today. If anyone else would like to view them, please contact me at [dglaman@cox.net](mailto:dglaman@cox.net) and I will gladly share them with you. Good news at the Safety and Security meeting. Police presence in the park is back up to seven days per week, but the

hours have shifted to 1:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. The Rangers are still on duty from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and their direct line is (619) 235-1122. We are very appreciative of all their efforts to keep us safe in our beloved Balboa Park.

David Lundin – Your pro-active oversight is needed to defend our Park from potentially dangerous closed-door shenanigans affecting free public access and enjoyment of the beloved historic Botanical Building. We ask that the Conservancy commit to making two promises to the Public. First, the existing number of interior square footage of the Botanical Building currently devoted to plants will not be reduced. Second, the existing schedule of free public access hours to the interior of the Botanical Building will not be reduced. We are concerned that the beloved Botanical Building will be converted to a self-sustaining, income generating, wedding, special event and party venue to the exclusion of the public. A more detailed package has been sent to staff for distribution to each of you.

**CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT** - None

**STAFF REPORT** -

Codi Vierra – City Council Third District – No report

Assistant Deputy Director, Christina Chadwick – Ms. Chadwick reported the following:  
**Botanical Building Construction RFP Update** -- The Engineering and Capital Projects Department recently opened bid proposals submitted to the City by qualified bidders for the Botanical Building construction contract (Phase 1).

Following a thorough review, all proposals submitted were rejected. The City is now working as quickly as possible to reissue the bid solicitation to the qualified bidders previously identified through the Request for Qualifications process. While this isn't the outcome the City had hoped for, the project remains on track and timelines remain uninterrupted. The City remains committed to the project and aims to award the contract by Summer 2021 and complete the project by Summer 2023.

**Botanical Building Naming and Recognition Policy** -- The Naming and Recognition Policy for the Botanical Building, which is critically important to the success of Phase II of construction, will be presented to the City's Environment Committee in March and City Council in April. We do recognize that there is an interest in how the Botanical Building will operate following completion of construction. The Parks and Recreation Department and the Conservancy look forward to presenting the public outreach, programmatic work that has been done thus far and look forward to sharing the information and receiving feedback from the Committee as early as April.

**Jacaranda Bathrooms** – Parks and Recreation is considering closing this restroom from dusk to dawn in response to community concerns about questionable nighttime activity. If you have questions or concerns about this potential closure, contact Mario Llanos or Susan Lowery-Mendoza.

**Framework for the Future** -We are moving forward with two action items specific to the prioritization framework and mobility. A working group has been developed to work towards an RFP. The City's Mobility Department is assisting with next steps and will engage with the Committee as we move forward.

**West Mesa Public Restroom Construction**– Progress is being made on the construction of two new restrooms on the West Mesa at Nutmeg and Thorn Streets. The preexisting restrooms were demolished, and refabricated restrooms are being installed. The expected completion is Spring 2021.

**Placemaking**– The Conservancy and the Department are working together to create a program for the park with public events, concerts, markets, food trucks and other activations in areas of the park this summer. Additional workshops will be presented to this committee.

**Park Lighting** – Mayor Gloria will light up the park in the teal color in honor of World Lymphedema Day this Saturday.

Balboa Park District Manager Susan Lowery-Mendoza- No report  
 Balboa Park District Manager Mario Llanos- No report

### **BALBOA PARK NON-PROFIT PARTNER UPDATES**

Balboa Park Conservancy – Jackie Higgins thanked Parks and Recreation staff for continued support for projects. The Botanical Building Phase I and II are making progress. The Conservancy continues to advance the following park projects; The Casa del Prado project, Alcazar Garden, Rose Garden, Casa del Rey Moro Garden. Additionally, they continue to monitor 600 new trees and Conservancy volunteers. They are convening the steering committee to develop the placemaking plans for later this summer and the Project for Public Spaces Report will be rolled out this spring along with all of the community input. The Visitor Center and kiosks remain open and heavily utilized.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – Peter Comiskey stated they are looking forward to rapidly re-opening within a couple of weeks. They are soliciting input on the One Voice Experience plan. He requested support in this budget season for arts and culture organizations.

Committee of 100 – Roger Showley stated that after six years, the first tiles are being attached on the Automotive Museum and the murals should be finished at the end of the month. Their next focus will be on the Municipal Gym.

There is a movement towards design review and the restrooms redesign could be considered. They are working with the American Institute of Graphic Artists on a world class poster contest to celebrate the re-opening of the Automotive Museum.

Friends of Balboa Park – John Bolthouse congratulated Katherine Johnson for being named the first Executive Director of the San Diego Parks Foundation. He provided an update on the Morton Bay Fig Tree project. A virtual ribbon cutting will take place on April 30 when the platform opens to the public officially. Lighting in the park is being looked at for areas of improvement.

Save Starlight – No Report

### **ACTION ITEMS**

Chairperson Johnston stated the reasoning of placing these items on the consent agenda, mostly due to COVID impacts. Four events are needing action by the Committee and Susan Lowery-Mendoza provided an overview of each.

#### **Consent**

101. March for Babies. Presenters: City Staff and Event Organizers

102. Third Annual Scoop San Diego Ice Cream Festival. Presenters: City Staff and Event Organizers

103. Newschool of Architecture and Design Graduation. Presenters: City Staff and Event Organizers

104. Art Alive, Open Air Floral Affair. Presenters: City Staff and Event Organizers

**Public Comment:**

Peter Comiskey commented on 101,102 and 103. He stated his support of these organizations during these challenging times, however, the Taste of December Nights event showed the challenges of using Lower-Inspiration Parking Lot for events due to impacts to Park Blvd. He requested that even if these events are approved, no further events that impact the parking be approved for the summer and until everything is reset in the park. The Scoop Event is particularly concerning given the timing and number of vehicles expected. Park organizations are just getting back to operation and it has been a difficult year.

**MOTION: MOVED/ MS. GRANOWITZ**

A motion was made by Ms. Granowitz for approval of the consent agenda with the caveat that any other events that affect parking are not placed on consent so that they can be fully discussed. If Parks and Recreation is receiving a lot of parking lot use requests, it can be brought forth as a policy discussion.

Discussion – Johanna Schiavoni requested that Item 102 be pulled from consent due to concerns about the length of the event.

**MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED MS. GRANOWITZ/MS. SCHIAVONI**

A motion was made by Ms. Granowitz to approve Items 101, 103 and 104. Item 102 was pulled from the consent agenda. Carried Unanimously (9-0-0).

Daniel Szpak representing Scoop San Diego provided information about the event, his work with the Office of Special Events staff and the Police Department. Ms. Granowitz requested additional information about the traffic impacts and the traffic plan. Ms. Schiavoni asked that staff be cognizant of events in the middle of the day on a weekend.

**MOTION MOVED/SECONDED (MS. GRANOWITZ/MR. LIDDELL)**

A motion was made by Ms. Granowitz and seconded by Mr. Liddell to approve the staff recommendation for item 102, contingent on review of the traffic mitigation plan at the April meeting. Motion carried (9-0-0).

**Adoption**

201. Cactus Garden Naming Proposal. Presenters: Christine M. Abrell, Philanthropy Coordinator, Balboa Park Conservancy and Nancy Carol Carter, Historian.

Ms. Chadwick introduced the item and stated that we are seeking a recommendation from the Committee to rename the Old Cactus Garden to the Kate O. Sessions Cactus Garden. Jackie Higgins introduced the team working on the project and thanked the donors. Christine Abrell presented five reasons why the Conservancy is proposing the name change and has received support by several park organizations. Kate O. Session is called the “Mother of Balboa Park” and described her role in introducing cacti and succulents to Balboa Park as she oversaw the garden’s creation. Nancy Carol Carter presented the plan for the 1935 garden and the history of the Kate O. Sessions Aloe and Agave Garden which was eliminated by construction of a parking lot 50 years ago. Adoption of the

distinctive name, Kate O. Sessions Cactus Garden name will reduce visitor confusion with the Desert Garden and an awareness of her horticultural contributions to Balboa Park.

**Committee Comments:**

- Excited to hear this proposal, discovered garden recently. More signage about the garden would be appreciated.
- Thank you for the presentation.

**Public Comment:**

- John Bolthouse stated the based on the extensive research conducted by the Balboa Park Conservancy, acclaimed park historian and Master Gardener Nancy Carol Carter, and the San Diego History Center, Friends of Balboa Park fully supports the proposal for the Cactus Garden in Balboa Park to be formally named in honor of Kate O. Sessions (1857-1940), as put forward by the Balboa Park Conservancy. We encourage the Committee to endorse this proposal.
- Amy Hayes with Save Our Heritage Organisation is in support of the proposal and appreciates the funding and efforts for the project
- Charles Daniels stated that the renaming proposal received five letters of support.

**MOTION      MOVED/SECONDED (MS. GRANOWITZ/MS. DAWE)**

A motion was made by Ms. Granowitz and seconded by Ms. Dawe to approve the staff recommendation to rename the garden. Motion Carried (9,0,0).

**Special Events**

301. None

**WORKSHOP ITEMS**

401. Balboa Park Comfort Station Workshop: Organ Pavilion and Palisades Comfort Stations.  
Presenter: Charles Daniels, Park Designer, Parks and Recreation, City of San Diego

Mr. Daniels stated that he will be presenting options for re-design of two restrooms, as part of a larger plan; the Organ Pavilion and Palisades restrooms. He described the project's scope and considerations. The Palisades restroom was built for the 1935 Exhibition and he presented the current plan and a concept to convert the men's restroom component to a gender-neutral restroom facility and the women's restroom component be converted to a Visitor Center/Ranger Station. He presented the original floor plan for the Organ Pavilion restrooms and described options 1 – 4 C which would meet the project goals.

**Public Comments:**

- Roger Showley noted security concerns for the Palisades restroom. The old building is not worth keeping and food services should be added. This is the type of project that would be forwarded to a design review committee.
- René Smith asked if staff consider this workshop as meeting the requirements of Council Policy 600-33? What are staff's commitments to receiving public input? He brought up 4.3 million allocated for these restroom renovations warranting extended conversation and public input, and the Precise Plan which calls for a visitor center/sack bar at this site. (Staff is available to address concerns in this public workshop and gain feedback.)

- Daniele Laman asked who the creative person was that suggested a Ranger Station in the area? A snack bar and toilets might not go together, and the space is quite small. Save Starlight is planning food service on the other side of the Plaza. Safety and security of gender-neutral restrooms can be increased if you can see into the space, but not the stalls.

**Committee Comments:**

- Thanks for the presentation. Any accommodations for families? (baby changing tables available and an accessible stall).
- Think that Rene's question warrants additional workshops for input for this project. Staff can come back if changes to the plans are requested.
- Chairperson Johnston noted options for the creation of an ad-hoc committee or conducting a special meeting as suggested by Ms. Chadwick.
- Ms. Schiavoni suggested an additional workshop to allow breathing room and additional thought.

**INFORMATION ITEMS**

501. Ranger Kim Duclou Retirement. Presenters: City Staff and Park Stakeholders  
Andy Field, Parks and Recreation Director noted that we are celebrating Ranger Kim Duclou's service and commitment to Balboa Park and community since 1995. The Friends of Balboa Park and the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership have recognized Ranger Kim for his work. It is an honor to work with Kim as he demonstrates a heart of service. A round of applause was given and a plaque was presented.

Steve Hill, on behalf of Mayor Todd Gloria stated that Ranger Kim is an icon, has received extraordinary accolades for being an outstanding ambassador of the park. He is one of the most knowledgeable of everything about Balboa Park and is willing to share it with the visitors and broader community as he has led over 2000 tours including those for the Mayor. He presented a proclamation that March 4, 2021 is Ranger Kim Duclou Day in the City of San Diego.

Jackie Higgins, Balboa Park Conservancy thanked Ranger Kim for his unparalleled dedication for Balboa Park, he is a living legend and his love for the park is infectious. He is the ultimate park advocate. She presented a lifetime membership to the Balboa Park Conservancy, special recognition in an upcoming project and will be presenting him a Botanical Building print signed in gratitude.

Peter Comiskey, Balboa Park Cultural Partnership stated that he would often hear of positive things Ranger Kim has done. He thanked Kim for the tours given to unknown areas of the park. The Balboa Park Cultural Partnership presented Ranger Kim with a VIP pass to the museums, which enables 10 families to experience the park as well.

Roger Showley noted that the Committee of 100 gave Ranger Kim a Gertrude Gilbert Award and asked him to speak several times. He knows every inch of the park and encouraged him to stay involved in the park.

John Bolthouse of Friends of Balboa Park stated the Ranger Kim is Balboa Park. He is passionate about the park and the park is better for his ambassadorship these many years. Thank you and congratulations for a job so well done. Ranger Kim will be listed on the honor roll of the Balboa Park Carousel.

**Committee Comments:**

- Thank you for all you have done, loved your tours and hope you stay involved
- Congratulations, always helpful and patient, always made you laugh and brought everyone together
- Thank you on behalf of the Spreckels Organ Society for all he has done
- Thanks, on behalf of the public, and for sharing the history and good stewardship of the park

502. Friends of Balboa Park: Mobility, Parking and Circulation Presentation. Presenters: Jack Carpenter, Working Group Co-Chair and René Smith, Working Group Co-Chair

Mr. Carpenter introduced René Smith, Roger Showley and John Bolthouse who have been part of this task force. This project was identified in the Framework for the Future and should move forward with the Mobility Department as the lead. They have done one year of discovery and analysis and reviewed past studies. A decision tree was presented with low, mid and high hanging fruit. He stated that the park needs to be ready to accommodate additional vehicles as park visitors will be driving to San Diego instead of using alternate means of transportation. Low hanging fruit includes; Re-stripping Balboa Drive, changing no parking hours, introducing smart meters, adding vehicular pickup and drop off locations, improving park lighting and safety, improved visitor parking information with sensors/website. Medium hanging fruit includes discouraging parking use by non-park visitors, expanding intra-park shuttle routes, accessibility, better community access, and employee and volunteer parking. Long term solutions include pedestrian bridges and parking garages.

**Committee Comments:**

- Some suggestions have been made in the past. Regarding the Navy's use of Inspiration Lot which has been occurring for years, how would you approach it? (This is a political decision, the Navy lot on City land has little use, personnel choose to not to drive through the gates.)
- Thank you for volunteering and your presentation

**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 8:30 p.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: Thursday, April 1, 2021  
 6:00 P.M.  
 Online Meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowery-Mendoza  
 District Manager