

MINUTES

City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE
June 4, 2020

Meeting Location:

Balboa Park Club
2150 Pan American Road
San Diego, CA 92101

Mailing Address:

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

ATTENDANCE:

Members Present

William Aaron
Sarah Dawe
Kenneth Davenport – Vice
Chair
Vicki Granowitz
Katherine Johnston – Chair
Luanne Kanzawa
Don Liddell
Dang Nguyen
Micah Parzen
Johanna S. Schiavoni (6:10)

Members Absent

Victoria Curran

Staff Present

Andrew Field
Mario Llanos
Susan Lowery-Mendoza

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Johnston called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 5, 2020

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED MS. KANZAWA/MR. AARON

A motion was made by Ms. Kanzawa and seconded by Mr. Aaron to approve the March 5, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. The motion carried (9-0-1) with Ms. Schiavoni abstaining.

REQUESTS FOR CONTINUANCES – None

NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Bullock commented that the cost of parking is bundled into the entrance cost at the Zoo which encourages visitors to drive, increasing CO2 levels. Some visitors do not want to drive to the Zoo. Daniele Laman thanked Parks and Recreation for starting to paint the oldest HPR cottages; thanked the City Council for moving the state grant forward for the newest cottages; expenses involving SDG& E and overnight campers in the newly poured basements, asked questions about status of their SUP, Council policies and December Nights.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chairperson Johnston reported that since the meeting in February, the Planning Department has not been able to come back to the committee to provide an analysis, but she has been in conversation with Planning and is hoping to bring them forward at the July meeting.

STAFF REPORT

City Council Third District – Molly Chase reported the following:

- Their office has been in response mode addressing the crisis and the budget. Cares Act funding is helping with the budget shortfall. She is interested in hearing the Committee's budget priorities.
- Focusing on homelessness, preventing homelessness and rental assistance program.
- Appreciate the park re-opening plan as many residents miss being in the park.

Parks and Recreation Director, Andrew Field reported the following:

- Mayor Faulconer announced the opening of the beaches and Balboa Park's Central Mesa will open on June 12.
- Movement in the County's staging of openings will dictate when the museums can open. Meetings are taking place with the Cultural Partnership, state and county representatives for guidance.
- Re-Opened the East and West Mesas of Balboa Park to the public earlier but waiting for guidance to re-open the Balboa Park Activity Center and Municipal Gym as well as athletic fields for consistency with current the Health Orders.

Balboa Park District Manager – Susan Lowery-Mendoza reported the following:

- It is good to see everyone again as it has been three months since we last met. A lot has happened during this time as every facet of our operation has had to be changed in some way, from closing and securing buildings; re-assigning custodial staff to increase sanitation and to special projects that we can only accomplish when the buildings are unoccupied such as renovating the floors and deep cleaning; re-deploying recreation staff to perform essential tasks in the park and at the Convention Center; and offering our entire dance program in virtual format.
- We are following the San Diego County Health Order as it relates to parks and have been able to re-open parks, parking lots, Morley Field Disc Golf and the Balboa Tennis Club. Staff is working with the other outdoor recreation Special Use Permittees in the park who are able to socially distance before, during and after the activity, to provide their safe reopening plan in preparation for re-opening.
- While many park events were cancelled due to COVID19 (our Egg Hunt at Morley Field, the Spring Food Trucks, US Air Force Band concert to name a few) and other fundraising events both internal and external to the park, our Civic Organist, Raul Prieto Ramirez has been able to successfully provide weekly concerts, now with Spanish subtitles, on U-Tube and we are looking into ways to offer other park concerts virtually as well that would have participated in the Twilight Concert series this summer.

Balboa Park Operations District Manager – Mario Llanos reported the following:

- While the Park has been closed staff has been busy with planting, irrigation and restoration projects. Staff renovated landscape in mall/esplanade; renovated landscape along El Prado; new lily installation, lily pond turf renovation; major starlight bowl clean up inside and out with new fencing and graffiti abatement; Zorro garden native plant installation; Botanical Building carnivorous display; mulching throughout the Park;
- Since the Park has been closed, we have not had our Rose Corps volunteers in the Park to maintain and fertilize the rose garden. Our supervisors and GMW's have stepped up to take on these tasks until we allow volunteers back in the Park.
- Thanks to our partners at the Conservancy and in collaboration with the FOBP we are collaborating in an Alcazar garden restoration that includes tree work, root pruning, flat work, painting or the archways.
- Florida canyon restoration continues by Park Rangers and our Horticulturist. This was a SANDAG grant for around \$64K. It was recently extended to continue to repair erosion, reveg, establish trails and remove non-natives. Horticulturist, Magen Shaw, Park Rangers and the P&R Grants team are working on two other applications for grants for more restoration work in Florida Canyon.
- The Palm Canyon Bridge renovation continues. Recently the FOBP repaired and added lighting on the bridge and made a generous donation for materials to finish repairing the main deck of the walkway. P&R staff is doing the work and are also purchasing the rest of the wood to finish the stairs going down to the trail in Palm Canyon. We hope to have this work completed in about a week.
- Park Rangers have been extremely busy since we have closed down the Park manning the entrances to the Parks and doing a lot of educating staff and park goers at every step of the way during this COVID crisis. They have also been busy painting curbs in the park and restriping parking lots. Ranger continue to work with SDPD, Environmental Services Department and contractors to conduct canyon clean ups. 12.5 tons of debris has been pulled out from the canyons in the last few months. Areas of focus have been Florida Canyon, the bridle Trail, Florida Canyon bike path along Florida, and along 26th street.
- Finally, I am sad to report we will be losing Senior Park Ranger, John Anderson. We are all happy he has promoted, but sad to be losing an important member of my great staff in the Park for the last 8 years. We wish him well in his new endeavor.

BALBOA PARK NON-PROFIT PARTNER UPDATES

Balboa Park Conservancy – Chairperson Johnston read the report as there were technical difficulties.

- The Conservancy is excited about the June 12 opening of the Central Mesa and their re-opening plan
- Successfully completed the Cal Fire tree grant requirements with 650 trees planted and new irrigation installed
- The Botanical Building project is moving forward
- Celebrate the restoration of Alcazar Garden and identified all the organizations who assisted with the project.
- Stacy LoMedico is serving as a volunteer strategic advisor to the Board of Trustees and liaison to the City.

- With the departure of their CEO, the executive team is assessing their next steps with the leadership role. Their focus will be on fundraising, strengthening partnerships and high value park programs.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – Mr. Comiskey reported the following:

- One Park ♦ One Team is grounded in the idea that we can achieve more together as a unified voice. We are saddened by the reminder that our country is still struggling with racism and injustice and we promise to continue to learn and implement values of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility in everything we do.
- Thanks to Katherine Johnson for participating as a member of the Cultural Partnership's Balboa Park Reactivation Advisory Group. This group includes representatives from the Park, the Tourism Industry, City Parks and Rec and Commission for Arts and Culture, Mayor's Office and representatives from local, county and state elected representatives. The Cultural Partnership members are ready, with the County Required Safe Reopening Plans, operational procedures to drive safe physical distancing, increased sanitation processes and importantly they are each working towards target dates for reopening from the middle of June through July. This is a complex undertaking. At the meeting tomorrow, we will discuss the Reactivation Marketing Plan, Events in the Central Mesa, the timeline for opening Cultural Organizations with representatives from both the State and Counts and the development of a Balboa Park Reactivation, Recover and Resurgence fund.
- *Balboa Park* is a core tourism driver in the City of San Diego and has long been recognized as a destination for visitors and locals alike. The Cultural Organizations in Balboa Park drive over \$670M in economic impact every year. As a direct result of COVID-19, the Cultural Organizations in the Park must now spend far more and also restrict guest access. In addition, the Park itself will need to provide increased sanitation, visitor guidance and overall guest safety. These challenges are not short-term and require a significant twelve-month investment of at least \$15M to ensure our park can return as the vibrant heart of our community and a driver to help our economy recover. He asked for support of this effort.

Balboa Park Online Collaboration – Nik Honeysett reported the following:

- Endorses Mr. Comiskey's statement
- Has been busy since the beginning of the pandemic as institutions' employees moved to working remotely
- Some employees are onsite ensuring the network and connectivity are being maintained
- Continuing to track the Wi-Fi usage
- Uptick in consulting work inside and outside the park

Committee of 100 – Roger Showley reported the following:

- Pleased that the City had the opportunity to paint the Automotive Museum with the paint supplies purchased by the Committee of 100 totaling \$15,000.00. The color was determined to be correct from 1935. Installation of the tiles is being planned. A ribbon cutting will be planned if it is permissible.

Friends of Balboa Park – John Bolthouse

- Endorses Mr. Comiskey's comments
- Kudos to Andy Field for his leadership and will miss Senior Park Ranger John Anderson
- Getting the Carousel ready for opening by July 1 if allowable, a lot of work has been done during the closure period
- The Morton Bay Fig project is underway, which will be completed by the end of the summer

- Work on the 23 sconces in the Plaza de California and thanked Marie Wiggins, Area Manager for facilitating the work with the City.
- Pleased to fund new plantings around the fountain in the Plaza de Panama
- Pleased to play a small role in the renovation of Alcazar Garden with the Conservancy
- Exploring partnering with the Golden Hill community for protection of the Golden Hill Grotto

Save Starlight – Steve Stopper reported the following:

- Kudos to Parks and Recreation for removal of the graffiti on the building by boom lift
- Their board meeting was very well attended with many people involved who believe in the vision
- Excited about the Palisades project and look forward to supporting December Nights event in whatever form it takes.

ACTION ITEMS

Consent

101. None

Adoption

201. Parks Master Plan and General Plan Recreation Element Amendment. Presenters: Heidi Vonblum, Program Manager, Planning Department and Jonathan Avila, Park Designer, Planning Department.

Ms. Vonblum stated that the plan was presented to the Park and Recreation Board and was unanimously approved. Mr. Avila presented the Parks Master Plan and described how the parks master plan fits into the complete communities' plan which provides guidance citywide. He reviewed the existing park standards and introduced the new value-based park standards; a new way to plan a meaningful, successful and interconnected park system. The plan will be heard by the Planning Commission on June 11.

Public Comments:

- Consider the City departments responsible for implementation of the plan and regional parks' need for design review
- The use of PCI should be replaced or used with upmost caution. Balboa Park's PCI is green; however, the amenities are not appropriately maintained.
- The plan is long time in coming. It is a timely issue with the importance of parks during the pandemic. Parks are critical for communities and nature is taking on more value. Applaud replacement of population-based standards.
- Lofty goal – looks good in print but concerned that it gets placed on the shelf. Projects need design review.

Committee Comments:

- Great document and dynamic planning for access to parks. Commend staff for providing a creative way to modify city park standards.
- Development impact fees will be shared across the City and more projects can be completed, an exciting proposal.

- Commend staff for analyzing the job. New parks cannot be built in our urban environments without taking out housing. It may be possible to pay for unforeseen sewer and water infrastructure. How is reporting going to be done?

MOTION MOVED/SECONDED (MS. SCHIAVONI/MS. DAWE)

A motion was made by Ms. Schiavoni and seconded by Ms. Dawe to support the proposal. The motion carried (9-0-1) with Ms. Granowitz abstaining.

202. Balboa Park Committee Fiscal Year Budget Priorities, Presenter: Katherine Johnston, Balboa Park Committee Chair.

Chairperson Johnston asked for this item to be placed on the agenda to facilitate a budget recommendation is desired.

Public comment:

Mr. Comiskey noted that Balboa Park is a core tourism driver with 670 million in economic impact from the cultural attractions. The park hosts many memorable events for San Diego residents. Due to COVID 19, park institutions have to change exhibits, increase sanitation and hire more staff to maintain distancing protocols while welcoming less visitors for safety. These challenges are not short term an investment of \$12 – 15 million is needed for a Balboa Park reactivation, recovery and resurgence fund.

Committee Comments:

- There are many needs in the park, but the Board should pick one item to advocate for
- The Park needs a park manager for coordination, liaison work to fill that critical link
- In support of reinstatement of manager position and expressed support of the institutions
- Surprised to see cuts to maintenance staff when more positions are needed with new sanitation guidelines
- Security in the park is still a concern
- The Chair can write a letter in support of the recommendation and members can also provide testimony during the meeting

MOTION MOVED/SECONDED (MS. GRANOWITZ/MR. PARZEN)

A motion was made by Ms. Granowitz and seconded by Mr. Parzen to advocate for the restoration of the Program Manager position and to consideration of additional resources for the cultural partners in the park. Motion carried unanimously (10-0-0).

Special Events

301. None

WORKSHOP ITEMS

401. None

INFORMATION ITEMS

501. Status of the Parks and Recreation Department's Fiscal Year 2021 Proposed Budget,
Presenter: Andrew Field, Director, Parks and Recreation Department

Mr. Field provided a presentation of the fiscal year 2021 May revised proposed budget that will be heard at City Council on Monday at 11:00 a.m. Department highlights were reviewed, and he thanked all Balboa Park stakeholders for their support. Impacts of COVID19 were discussed. The proposed budget has a reduction of the equivalent of 20.76 full time positions. He identified those positions impacting Balboa Park which include the Program Manager, two Assistant Recreation Center Directors, and proportional losses of custodial and grounds maintenance staff.

Committee Comments:

- Thanks for doing a wonderful job with limited resources at this time
- How will the Committee receive follow-up information regarding any position restorations or impacts? Response – Mr. Field noted that after budget finalization, the budget can be sent out to members. He also encouraged members to participate in the meeting.

502. Rescheduling of Events in Balboa Park. Presenter: Susan Lowery- Mendoza, District Manager

Ms. Lowery-Mendoza stated that as a result of the COVID 19 virus, many special events have had to cancel or postpone their events that were scheduled in City of San Diego Parks. She presented a procedure being implemented park wide to address rescheduling of previously approved events. Only three organizations have requested postponement: San Diego Earth Fair to September 13; Rock'n'roll Marathon to October 10- 11; and Reader Tacotopia to November 7. These dates were vetted for conflicts and shared with community groups and are pending the county Health Order and Guidelines.

Public Comment:

- The Reader Tacotopia event proceeds help to keep staff employed and benefits the Greater Golden Hill Community Development Corp.

Committee Comment:

- Concerned that the institutions will be subject to a new normal that will involve queuing outside requirements for public safety. Institutions won't be able to safely admit guests during events and will have to close with more revenue will be lost.
- Concerned about the public health perspective – events could lead to a “hot spot” and the park could have a set-back in visitor ship
- Recommend postponing all events until the park and institutions are functioning under these new conditions. It is premature to plan for events.

SUB-COMMMTTEE REPORTS

601. Land-Use and Policy – No report

602. West Mesa Subcommittee – No report

Balboa Park Committee

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS' REPORTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: Thursday, July 2, 2020
6:00 P.M.
Balboa Park Club
2150 Pan American Road West
San Diego, CA 92101

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowery-Mendoza
District Manager