

# MINUTES

City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board  
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE  
April 7, 2022

**Meeting Location:**  
Online Meeting

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

**ATTENDANCE:**

**Members Present**

Molly Chase - Chair  
Katherine Johnston  
Howard Blackson  
Dang Nguyen  
Brer Marsh  
William Aaron Jr  
Makeda Cheatom  
Micah Parzen  
Sarah Dawe

**Members Absent**

Allison Soares  
Victoria Curran  
Chris Eddy

**Staff Present**

Codi Vierra  
Andy Field  
Christina Chadwick  
Victor Nava  
Johnny Chou

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Molly Chase called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. Johnny Chou 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 March 3, 2022**

**MOTION:      MOVED/SECONDED   MR. PARZEN / MS. DAWE**

A motion was made by Mr. Parzen and seconded by Ms. Dawe to approve the March 3, 2022 meeting minutes with the following amendments.

The motion carried (7-0).

**REQUEST FOR CONTINUANCES - None**

**NON- AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mary Coakley commented: I came to Balboa Park on Saturday, March 12 at 11:20a.m for fifteen minutes to pick up some data, since I knew parking would be difficult I asked a friend to drive me and we parked at the north end of the Organ Pavilion parking lot immediately behind the Organ Pavilion. I arrived back at the car at 11:35 and we spent the next one hour and fifteen minutes working our way from our location at the far north end of the parking lot to the exit on Pan American Way maybe a hundred feet there were at least three instances where it looked like fights would break out. We turned left and left again on President's Way only to see a steady stream of cars and huge buses coming into the park with nowhere to go at a time when gas is almost six dollars a gallon tempers are shorter than ever, summer visitors are going to descend upon the park and not to mention our climate crisis is real traffic control should be a priority it will ultimately save everyone money including park and rec and be a much needed gift to the environment and to the visitors to the park.

Daniele Laman HPR International Cottages Liaison reported: On Sunday House of Ukraine sent out a request for donations of rolls of quarters, they need to bring them to the refugees in Tijuana because they need them to use the public restrooms. Today there was also an added request for gas cards because of all the volunteers ferrying the refugees across the border and between appointments, so if anybody can donate either of those, House of Ukraine is open Monday through Fridays from 12:00pm to 4:00pm. Saturdays and Sundays we are all open. Lastly, our lawn programs coming up for this month, we are taking the easter weekend off for lawn programs. House of England is going to attempt to have a lawn program on Earth Fair Day and then House of Finland will be having theirs on the thirtieth of this month and House of Poland will have their May first traditional lawn program thank you.

Anar with Bike SD reported that a couple of weeks ago a bicyclist was hospitalized with brain injuries after being hit by a car on Florida and the 54-year-old man was another victim of a senseless and preventable hit and run. Too often are we making as a city bold infrastructure decisions reactively after the hit and runs the injuries and the casualties are counted this was true on Pershing also where the city continued to drag their feet up until another unfortunate victim Jonathan Sepulveda was killed while riding a scooter with his family Park Boulevard running through the park is an integral commuter route connecting uptown to downtown via the cultural institutions along Park Boulevard it passes by businesses cafes museums and educational institutions like San Diego High School this fast-moving four-lane parkway is a critical gap in our existing bikeway network those separated bike lanes exist on either end in uptown and downtown the long section within balboa park remains unprotected looking at existing ridership data today we know that bicyclists do travel along this corridor already we at Bike SD recommend that the Park Boulevard segment through Balboa Park be converted to a class four protected bikeway with protected bike lanes running on either side of the road, we realize that the greatest trade-off whenever making these discussions is the loss of on-street parking and I can totally sympathize with that though I believe there is a plenty of parking spaces throughout the park nevertheless we asked the balboa park committee to agenize and consider the inclusion of bike lanes with the upcoming resurfacing project which is planned for September of this year. This is a unique opportunity to get a safer facility for very little cost to the city and building this connection not only closes a critical gap between a segmented bike network it also supports climate action plans vision zero goals and parks for everyone initiatives thank you very much for your time.

Michael Welsh commented: Following up on a letter that I wrote maybe three weeks and I've not received any kind of response. It was a letter of concern about the mentally ill and the homeless in the park and my question is to know what you all are doing as a committee with the other stakeholders in the park to take care of the problem that we have with the mentally ill and homeless camps and other problems related to this population.

Brer Marsh thanked Mary for her public comment, he has had a really similar experience. Thanked Anar for his public comment. Anar is a volunteer for Bike SD and he covered a lot of thing that he wanted to say. Thought a lot about the person who was hit in the park because ultimately every cyclist who was injured or killed, I feel personally because of someone I knew who passed away on a bicycle being hit by a car. I think we're past the point where these can be called accidents after Laura Shannon and Johnny Sepulveda were hit in the park, there's no way that anyone can say that they were just misfortune these are these are the results of choices that we make policy choices and infrastructure choices most of which are dangerous conditions we inherited a long time ago but some of them aren't and some of them have the opportunity in the near future to be addressed even if only in an interim way while better improvements come down the pipe I posted in the chat a link with more information that was put together by Bike SD and I encourage everyone to have a look at it and there you can see a form letter that you may share or send to the to the mayor's office and I thank everyone for listening.

Howard Blackson supported Brer's comments.

**CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT** – Chairperson Molly Chase – No report.

**STAFF REPORT** –

City Council Third District – Codi Vierra wanted to remind everyone that we do have our upcoming community conversation with Council Member Whitburn, it will be virtual and one focus will be on issues pertaining to Balboa Park on Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00am. If anyone is not yet receiving our District Newsletter, please sign up or you can view it online.

Assistant Deputy Director – Christina Chadwick reported.

Comic-Con Roof Replacement – Parks and Recreation and Engineering and Capital Projects are making plans for a roof replacement at the Comic-Con Museum (Federal Building). The scope of work is the removal of the existing roof and installation of a new roof for the main building and two smaller roof areas. Additional information provided to stakeholders as the project moves forward.

Grape Street Dog Park – A turf renovation at 28th Street Dog Park started in March. The middle of the park will be closed from March 21, 2022 to July 21, 2022. Signage is posted at all main entrances as of Thursday, March 10th to alert visitors of this change. The park outside of the orange fence will remain open to public. Councilmember Whitburn joined P&R staff recently to learn about the project. Thank you, Councilmember, for your support!

Botanical Building Restoration – Phase I of the restoration project continues to move forward as planned. Periodic project updates will be provided to stakeholders via the Balboa Park Committee.

Organ Pavilion Parking Lot Redesign – Parks and Recreation are working on a new parking lot design to maximize parking and improve circulation within this area of the park. Details will be shared with the Balboa Park Committee at a future date.

District Manager – Johnny Chou reported.

Annual Spring Egg Hunt will be held on April 9 from 9:00 – 11:00 am at Morley Field.

District Manager – Victor Nava reported.

Balboa Park maintenance staff recently installed sod at the Lily Pond and at the north end of the cottages. You will see the areas delineated by construction fencing or stakes and rope.

Alcazar Garden – vegetation was removed from the planter beds with the help of the Garden Stewards and we are projected to replant the beds at the end of the month

City-wide staff repaired a concrete ramp at the Air and Space Museum and a sidewalk section at the lower inspiration point parking lot.

A Park Ranger Aide was hired this month.

**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 – Jackie Higgins reported.

Dr. Elizabeth Babcock joined us on April 4th as the first President and CEO of Forever Balboa Park. Please join me in welcoming her when you see her around the Park.

Work begins on the 26th St. Trail restoration and habitat improvement project which connects Golden Hill to Florida Canyon on April 11th, 2022. This is a nearly \$400,000.000 grant from the State California Conservation Corp. which will greatly improve a well utilized trail in Balboa Park.

The Forever Balboa Park Board will vote on April 28th to make the final decision to move forward with the winning bids for structural restoration and fire suppression system for the historic carousel which is celebrating its 100th anniversary in Balboa Park this year.

We congratulate the City on all the exciting progress on Phase 1 of the Botanical Building and Gardens Restoration project and continue to collaborate with the City on Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Botanical Building and Gardens Project.

Next week is National Volunteer Appreciation week. Forever Balboa Park celebrates our over 360 long-term volunteers with our Annual Volunteer Appreciation dinner at the Balboa Park Club on April 7th, 2022. Thank you to all the Balboa Park Volunteers who contributed over \$648,000.00 worth of service hours to Balboa Park in 2021 alone. Our volunteers continue to support Parks & Recreation in various ways.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – Peter Comiskey reported.

First - a reminder that The Cultural Partnership is working to develop a community-driven experience plan for the common spaces of the cultural district. The group of companies to deliver this plan have been selected and we should have all contracting complete by next month. We very much look forward to sharing progress with you. Second, I would be remiss if I didn't remind you that we are in budget season. This is unbelievably important for Balboa Park as well as the arts and culture organizations within it. Please take every opportunity to join with these advocacy efforts.

Our areas of core focus for this year are: Funding for the Commission for Arts and Culture. Each year we must fight for essential funding for baseline operations for the city's core Arts and Culture programs - developed and delivered by over 100 non-profit partners including all of the cultural organizations in the park. We are advocating for the devastating cuts to Arts and Culture be reversed and the funding return to the pre-pandemic level of \$14.3M. To help with these efforts, and for a quick bit of fun, I would ask everyone on this call to participate in a very quick interactive experience. We would love to know in one word how arts and culture makes you feel. Please share with us.

With the passing of the Street Vending ordinance, the park will have a disproportionately high education and enforcement requirement. This will fall on to Park Rangers. We will need an increased presence for park rangers, with a dedicated function for vending management, for at least the next twelve months. Safety and Security: Recent issues in the park, highlighted by the elevated arson activities, show that an additional and meaningful security presence is highly necessary for the Central Mesa for every night - 7 days per week. Finally - services for those who are unsheltered. We all seek an empathic approach to assisting the unsheltered individuals in the Park. The numbers of unsheltered people in the park is growing and must be addressed with dedicated support, such as a homeless outreach team, dedicated to the work needed in the Central Mesa.

Balboa Park Online Collaborative – No report.

Committee of 100 – No report.

Save Starlight – No report.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **Consent**

**101. San Diego Track Club-57th Tom Bache III Balboa 4 Mile Cross Country Race.**

Presenter: Charlie Gamble, Event Coordinator

**102. Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk.** Presenter: Linda Dejauregui, American Cancer Society, Development Manager.

**103. Rock'n'Roll 5K and Route Change.** Presenter: Meryl Leventon, Race Director

**MOTION:      MOVED/SECONDED   MR. BLACKSON / MR. NGUYEN**

A motion was made by Mr. Blackson and seconded by Mr. Nguyen to approve consent items 101. San Diego Track Club-57th Tom Bache III Balboa 4 Mile Cross Country Race. 102. Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk. 103. Rock'n'Roll 5K and Route Change. The motion carried unanimously (9-0)

**Adoption**

**201. None**

**Special Events**

**301. None**

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

**401. Proposed Creation of Design Review Assistance Subcommittee for Balboa Park**  
Presenter: Andy Fields, Director, Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation Department

Public Comment: Mary Monk

- Mary Monk thanked Andy for his presentation really exciting to hear that design review is coming back to Balboa Park. Why isn't it coming back to all the parks because the restrooms at Scripps Park for example, should have never had the issues it does had there been a design review committee.

Committee Comment: Mr. Blackson, Ms. Johnston, Mr. Marsh, Mr. Parzen and Ms. Chase

- Mr. Blackson thanked Andy for the presentation. The design review might add time and money to a project after the time and money that we've wasted to get to this point to bring design review it makes me a little mad. This is a better way of doing it I look forward to it. I support it and I appreciate everything that your group and the committee has done to get to this point thank you very much.
- Ms. Johnston echoed Mr. Blackson's comments. It's important to have a group of professionals who understand the design aspects that the park master plan was trying to achieve to provide some oversight. Wanted to express support to everyone working on this to come to a solution that works for everyone. The concept provides value to projects within the Park.
- Mr. Marsh thanked Andy for the presentation. Really excited about the development and all the work everyone has put into it. It's essential to have peer review when preparing projects. Realizes that some may find it burdensome but the benefits are beyond the initial time cost, even if is a few months and its actually made up later in the process by avoiding very expensive errors or pitfalls the active design team might have missed. No project is perfect, no set of drawings is perfect and having professionals look at your work is invaluable. It's as simple as budgeting that extra time up front when you're putting together your schedule and it's usually is not very significant. Having participated in design review at the community level, there is a big difference between professional review and public review. In terms of the things people bring to the table, the values that they put into their comments and the way they look at projects there's really no experience for someone who has had design training. There are people passionate about design and have good ideas and make

good comments but the insight that comes from experience can't really be replaced. I would very strongly support a set of qualifications you listed a number of things which all sounded fantastic and I'm sure there are plenty more categories that could go into that and I also support what you said about if not someone who is professionally qualified someone who could perhaps demonstrate a relevant experience, obviously there are categories outside of the professional sphere, like artists or musicians or dancers who also could provide a very valuable input to design of the built environment of the park. I would encourage that there be special opportunities for people who have unconventional professions. I'm very interested to see what other people have to say on this, I think that having design integrated into the development and into the park governance is critical. Not familiar with City's design review, do you see design review fulfilling any of the technical safety checks?

- Mr. Parzen thanked Andy for the presentation. Question whether the committee that worked on the proposal had a sense of how many people it would recommend being on the design subcommittee, so that we could get a large enough perspectives relative to the many areas of expertise and qualifications you mentioned. My understanding is that we basically have two options by virtue of the code. One, we designate a subset of the existing Balboa Park committee in this space or we expand the Balboa Park committee. The number of people needed to kind of get a broad enough perspective is critical. I'm wondering who makes that determination, is it this committee that decides which path we go? You saw this as a beta test process and would like to know how the ideas that folks had whether the beta test was successful in the process for determining whether it was something that should live on beyond a kind of prototyping period.
- Ms. Chase commented that this is need in the park but there's a way to have a design committee that actually will help not only with the public process and review of some major projects and how it relates to the design and the impact. How do we get to this realization if the goal is a better design review process for projects in the park which also includes the public input? Knowing the appointment process it may take too long or take them longer than we need it to and so maybe and there is kind of makes more sense to have it be members of this committee that we know already have design expertise.

### **INFORMATION ITEMS**

**501. IBA Budget Explainer Presentation** Presenter: Baku Patel and Charles Modica, Fiscal & Policy Analysts, Office of Independent Budget Analyst, City of San Diego

Public Comment: Rene Smith

- Rene Smith, leader of the Local Hillcrest IBA cheering club that started several years ago. Looks forward to your report. Two questions, one is on public engagement, are the meeting public? No. Second question, your enterprise asset management system, as I recall does not currently include Parks and Recreation Department. Correct? Yes.

Committee Comment: Ms. Johnston and Mr. Marsh

- Ms. Johnston, it's important to look at the capital budget it's a very small percentage compared to the rest of the city's capital budget and there's significant needs. I think there's advocacy to be done and I think that this body has a voice in doing that advocacy. I'd be supportive of anything that they wanted to do in terms of advocating for the capital budget.
- Mr. Marsh, interested in what opportunities there are to appeal or ask for revision of the budget amounts that are allocated to Parks. Will the budget contain historical data

on previous year's allocations? When you analyze budget needs do you consider revenue generation of different facilities?

**SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS** – None

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS REPORTS** – None

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Notice of Next Balboa Park Meeting:**      May 5, 2022  
6:00 P.M.  
Virtual Meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Victor Nava  
District Manager