

MINUTES

**City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board
BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE
September 7, 2023**

Meeting Location:

Balboa Park Administration Building
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
Makeda Cheatom
Chris Eddy
Brer Marsh
Dang Nguyen
Allison Soares
Kathy Vandenheuvel

Members Absent

William Aaron Jr
Molly Chase
Sarah Dawe
Micah Parzen

Staff Present

Christina Chadwick
Tyler Canales
Johnny Chou
Victor Johnson II
Roberto Bejar
Charlie Daniels

CALL TO ORDER

Christina Chadwick called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES June 1, 2023

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mr. Eddy / Mr. Marsh

A motion was made by Mr. Eddy. and seconded by Mr. Marsh to approve the June 1, 2023, meeting minutes. The motion carried (5-0-2).

REQUEST FOR CONTINUANCES

None

NON- AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

Web Forum: None

Public Comment:

Michael Warburton- Informed the Committee that Debbie Higdon is retiring from the School in the Park program. Thanked her for her years of dedication and service to the program.

Andrea Zinko – Reported multiple break-ins at the Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theatre in Balboa Park. Thanked the Balboa Park Ranger staff and the San Diego Police Department for apprehending the individual responsible for the break-ins. Puppet Theatre staff was recently informed that the individual has been prosecuted and will no longer be able to harass staff and burglarize the facility.

Daniele Lamien- Various lawn programs currently occurring at the International Cottages. The House of Ukraine lawn program has already occurred. The House of USA will host an event at the Hall of Nations on September 16, 2023. House of Germany will have an event on September 17, 2023. House of Korea will have some events occurring during the last week of September. Thanked City staff for assisting with the House of Hungary cancellation of their lawn program event due to inclement weather.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – None

STAFF REPORT

Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director - Will provide an update on park initiatives, projects, and happenings via email tomorrow and distributed through the park stakeholders list.

Malik Thornton, Council District 3 - City Council is on recess and will be in session next week. Would like community participation and input for the Budget Priority Memo. Zoo Plaza will be repaved by September 22, 2023.

Michael Bravo, 78th District, - Introduced himself to the committee. Asked community to reach out to their office to comment and support various state presented bills and proposals

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 - Reported on the success of the recent National Carousel Day event in July. Carousel has been restored and is fully functional and the operating hours will change to weekend hours. Thanked the Committee for their support. Announced that today is San Diego Gives Day and the thanked the various organizations that were part of that movement.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – No report.

Balboa Park Online Collaborative – No report.

Committee of 100, Ross Porter- Thanked the Committee for meeting live. Announced the working group that is working on the renewal of the lease for San Diego High School and San Diego City College. They are looking forward to presenting a report to help expand the cultural footprint of Balboa Park. The remodeling and improvement project of the Municipal Gymnasium is tentatively scheduled to start in January 2024. Looking forward to engaging with rules associated with expressive activity in Balboa Park.

Save Starlight – No report.

DISCUSSION AGENDA

Item 1: Approve Consent Items

Item 2: NAT Museum Exterior Gardens Signage Program, Charles Daniels, Project Officer II, City of San Diego

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Ms. Vandenheuvel / Mr. Eddie

A motion was made by Ms. Vandenheuvel and seconded by Mr. Eddie to move workshop item #2 to an action item (7-0-0).

WORKSHOP AGENDA

Item 2: NAT Museum Exterior Gardens Signage Program, Charles Daniels, Project Officer II, City of San Diego.

Informal Public Comment:

Elizabeth Babcock - Excited about this program and bring attention to parts of adversity for our visitors and would like to recommend including illustrations and other ways for people access information from the signs.

Robert Showley, Committee of 100 - asked the committee to take into consideration and caution that this doesn't become the new standard without thorough consideration.

Committee Comment:

Howard Blackson – Asked about the date of the sign manual being used, if this type of signage was considered, and if there will any updates to the sign manual.

Charlie Daniels, Project Officer II - The most recent version is being utilized (2019). No, it did not. Previous considerations have been made for donor acknowledgement signage.

Chris Eddy - In favor of any signage honoring Betty Peabody. Asked about the considerations for the height of the signage and expressed concerns about it.

Charlie Daniels, Project Officer II - Noted that larger signs become more visually intrusive, and that the committee has the ability to make recommendations with conditions and amendments to raise the height of the signage. The height was recommended by the Natural History Museum.

Kathy Vandenheuvel - Concurred with Elizabeth's comments. Prefers small signage to focus on plants but understands they may not be accessible to all. Asked if QR codes had been considered. Supportive of the proposal overall.

Brer Marsh - Liked the Natural History Museum signage program. In favor of a motion approving project along with consideration to add additional improvements.

Charlie Daniels, Project Officer II - The signage program was run by the Office of Sustainability, and they had no issues with the sign project as presented.

Chris Eddy - Motion: Accept the entire plan with the exception of the 12-inch signs to be at 2 feet and that the new signage components be incorporated in the current sign plan.

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED Mr. Eddy / Mr. Blackson

A motion was made by Mr. Eddy and seconded by Mr. Blackson to accept the program in its entirety with the exception of 1-foot-tall sign which we would be reviewed in more detail, and to see future studies of inclusion of these items in the permanent sign program (7-0-0).

Comment: Ms. Vandenheuvel - Feels that certain items have been brought to the committee as a workshop item and have been cherry picked to become an action item. The Committee should have more ability to weigh in and add items.

Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director – Understood concerns. Informed the Committee that if the last meeting had occurred, the Committee would have done the exact opposite of the process outlined.

Kathy Vandenheuvel- Thanked Christina and her staff for their professionalism.

Howard Blackson- Thanked the staff and lobbied for more participation and commitment to the Balboa Park Committee.

Brer Marsh - Thinks it's a mistake to institute a display and let the Natural History Museum follow its desires and make its decisions.

INFORMATION AGENDA

Item 3: Prioritization Framework Consultant Kick Off Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director, City of San Diego, Daniel Payne, Managing Principal, AEA Consulting, Laura Zucker, Senior Associate, AEA Consulting

Public Comment:

Elizabeth Babcock - Suggested the entirety of the park is considered. Recommend reaching out to all age groups and users of Balboa Park and not just the typical park patron.

Laura Zucker, AEA Consulting – Will come back with a design for a community engagement plan.

Roger Showley, Committee of 100 – Noted that everyone has different priorities

Laura Zucker, AEA Consulting – Noted their firms’ success creating a regional plan for arts education in Los Angeles County that encompassed 80+ school districts.

Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director - The goal is to create a criteria that allows for an unbiased look at what is a priority.

Daniele Lamén – Asked if this was the next step from a meeting held in the past.

Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director - This is a byproduct of that meeting a framework for the future was created. That meeting was primarily to collect broad feedback to identify key areas of focus (Mobility and Circulation, Safety and Security, Governance, Funding, and Prioritization of Park Project).

Daniel Payne, AEA Consulting - This study can be used moving forward in consideration of future projects.

Rene Smith - This has been an ongoing project for the past 6 years. Reiterated good things take time and is in support. Recommended that Daniel and Laura contact the committee that is working with San Diego High School to be a part of the community engagement project.

Gary Gonzalez, Community Relations Officer – Introduced himself and thanked the board for conducting a very professional meeting.

Committee Comment:

Howard Blackson – Appreciate the presentation is fantastic and educational. Thanked Daniel and Laura for the work that they have done and continue to do.

Kathy Vandenheuvel- Thanked Daniel and Laura for taking the time to listen to the members of committee and various institutions involving the study, and all the challenges they will face.

Daniel Payne, AEA Consulting – Wants to make sure that all Balboa Park patrons, stakeholders, and members of the surrounding community take full advantage of the community engagement plan to help better guide the direction of this study.

Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director – Ensured AEA will consider the whole park.

Chris Eddy - Thanked Daniel and Laura for driving to Sand Diego for the presentation.

Makeda Cheatom - Thanked Daniel and Laura for providing the presentation.

Brer Marsh - Hoped that consideration is made for trees and other objects that don't have a voice.

Kathy Vandenneuvel - Please don't forget non-English-speaking community members when conducting your community engagement plan.

Assistant Deputy Director, Christina Chadwick-It was emphasized during the recent walkthrough that a broad range of community input across all districts would be an important part of the community engagement plan. We would also like to ensure that they are spending their time as efficiently and practically to ensure that the needs of Balboa Park are determined.

Kathy Vandenneuvel- I was in no way trying to be critical of staff during the meeting. I wanted to support Howards point of having the mayor appoint more members of the committee.

Assistant Deputy Director, Christina Chadwick-No offense was taken. We always strive to meet the boards expectations.

Assistant Deputy Director, Christina Chadwick-Thank you Officer Gonzalez and the Balboa Park Ranger staff for attending todays meeting.

Item 4: Ranger Program / Expressive Activity Informational Update Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director, City of San Diego

Informal Public Comment:

Unknown Male - Asked if Balboa Park Rangers will follow the expressive activity presentation and for clarification on the exact locations shown in the expressive activity presentation

Kathryn Douglass- How many citations have been administered and if they are administrative citations or fines?

Roberto Bejar, Senior Park Ranger - 180 Administrative Citations for both Coastal and Balboa Park.

William Dorsett- Warned the City of San Diego that this situation would occur. He foresees multiple litigation issues resulting from the enforcement of the expressive activity.

Public Comment:

Daniel Nelson - A participant of the Buskers program for several years. Has always used amplification in the park but none of the Balboa Park Rangers enforced the park amplification rule until recently. Feels this is unconstitutional.

Cat - The areas designated in the expressive activity presentation are not ADA due to the various surfacing conditions. Expressed concern for "Ranger Danger." Feels Rangers are not consistently enforcing the rules and don't wear body cameras to record their interactions. Is constantly concerned for not only my safety but the safety of others.

Chet Harrison - Started busking the park in the 80's. Has issues with the subjectivity of the verbiage of the statute and the associated decibel levels. Feels decibel level verbiage should be amended.

Committee Comment:

Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director - Noted there are multiple ways to continue this discussion via email along with attending the upcoming Park and Recreation Board meeting on Thursday September 21, 2023, at 2:00 pm.

Chris Eddy- Concerned about the decibel level and amplification associated with this presentation, and the distance between the designated locations. Wanted to know how the public accesses this information.

Roberto Bejar, Senior Park Ranger - The prior entertainer occupancy was 10 people. There is no way to control the medaling of various acoustic sounds. Hopefully the participants would alternate locations to not conflict with one another. There are no spots specifically designated for specific types of performances. The spots are on a first come first serve basis.

Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director - Anyone can participate in expressive activity in any one of these 26 designated locations between 10:00 am-7:00 pm.

Chris Eddy - How the public accesses this information.

Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director – A formal hand out will be distributed by Balboa Park Rangers and online Following the upcoming Parks and Recreation Board meeting and public engagement.

Howard Blackson - In favor of music and ways to compromise to not be a nuisance.

Makeda Cheatom- Expressed importance of having music in the park.

Howard Blackson - Feel that Muni codes for Streets should be applicable to Balboa Park as well.

Kathy Vandeneuvel - Feels a balance can be reached. Wanted to know if item will come back for action.

Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director - Item is not slated to return to the committee again. All comments and feedback on this issue will be considered before finalization.

Kathy Vandeneuvel - Feels item should come back for official recommendation from Committee.

Brer Marsh- Would love to see more occurrence of free speech in the park.

Chris Eddy - Suggested incorporating a designated decibel level be associated with it.

Roberto Bejar, Senior Park Ranger - Park Ranger staff does utilize decibel readers. The current decibel level is 65 decibels at 10ft.

Brer Marsh- Suggested that the various locations be classified for amplification activities and non-application activities.

ADJOURNMENT

Notice of Next Balboa Park Meeting: October 5, 2023
6:00 P.M.
In-Person

Respectfully submitted,

Victor Johnson II
Area Manager