

MINUTES

City of San Diego Park and Recreation Board BALBOA PARK COMMITTEE December 3, 2020

Meeting Location:
Online Meeting

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

ATTENDANCE:

Members Present

Kenneth Davenport – Vice
Chair
Sarah Dawe
Vicki Granowitz
Katherine Johnston – Chair
Luanne Kanzawa
Don Liddell
Dang Nguyen
Micah Parzen
Johanna S. Schiavoni

Members Absent

William Aaron
Victoria Curran

Staff Present

Christina Chadwick
Andrew Field
Mario Llanos
Susan Lowery-Mendoza

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Johnston called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. and 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 OF NOVEMBER 5, 2020

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED MS. KANZAWA / MS. DAWE

A motion was made by Ms. Kanzawa and seconded by Ms. Dawe to approve the November 5, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. The motion carried (9-0-0).

REQUESTS FOR CONTINUANCES – None

NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT

David Wageman – The San Diego Lawn Bowling fence proposal has been submitted to staff and they are hoping to get on the January meeting agenda.

Danielle Lamman – First, thank you for allowing submittal of public comments the day of the meeting. Second, the date of the next meeting at the bottom of tonight's agenda has a typo. Third, the new HPR cottages and SDG&E have made significant progress this past month. All issues

including the newly assigned addresses & meters have been resolved and a pre-con meeting has taken place. This un-anticipated part of the project will commence soon and hopefully be completed by February. Interiors & outside site work continues with only a few overnight breaches in security. Lastly, curfews vs. closures were again discussed at the BP Safety & Security meeting today. There is an uptick in vandalism and persistent graffiti. There is an uptick in vandalism and persistent graffiti.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chairperson Johnson stated that the next meeting will be held on January 20, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. She adjourned the January 7, 2021 meeting so that current administration can weigh in on the strategic visioning which will present options for consideration.

STAFF REPORT

Assistant Deputy Director Christina Chadwick reported the following:

- Plaza de Panama Pipeline Project – Concrete work along El Prado will be starting soon. Scope is to replace all paving between Village Place and the Plaza de Panama. Work will take one month. We are in the process of working with the Cultural Partnership and stakeholders to see if performing this phase of the work could be done during the day. This is the preference of staff from both Parks and Recreation and Engineering and Capital Projects. We will provide additional updates on this as the plan is developed to ensure everyone has time to plan accordingly for any impacts.
- Bud Kearns Aquatic Complex Improvements – This project has encountered some unexpected challenges including electrical, redesign and weather challenges. While the project is behind schedule, these challenges have been resolved. The expected completion date for this project is July 2021.
- West Mesa Comfort Station Replacements – The Engineering Department has coordinated with SDG&E to manage its current electrical needs. The prefabricated structures are ready and in storage and demolition permits are now needed from DSD.
- The project is on hold until DSD has issued the permits, which is contingent upon several items including a thorough historical review. These items are nearing completion and E&CP anticipates being able to move forward very soon.
- Framework for the Future Update – As you all know, the Parks and Recreation Department and the Balboa Park Committee have asked for the public's help identifying strategic priorities for future investment. The goal for this initiative is to inform future decision-making and provide better alignment between available resources and what residents want to experience when they visit. At the request of the Balboa Park Committee, our department distributed a survey to encourage additional engagement from youth groups, underserved communities and any other resident who wanted to provide their input. We received an overwhelming response with just under 1,600 survey results from zip codes across the City over the past three weeks. The information collected will be used to understand resident priorities and will help define the Action Items responsive to these priorities. Action Items will be presented for consideration in January 2021. We look forward to continuing the discussion in the first part of the new year.
- Botanical Building – The project is on track and moving forward as outlined. The RFP has been issued to the three qualifying bidders, with the goal of completing Phase 1 by Spring/Summer of 2023. Following the advertisement, three Design-Build teams have until Dec. 15 to submit their proposals followed by an interview and selection process. The total estimated time to select and award the contract will be seven months.

- As you know, the Conservancy and Parks and Recreation gave a presentation at the November meeting about the Naming Opportunities component of this project spearheaded by the Conservancy. Tonight, we will conduct the second Workshop on this item to continue this important discussion. We appreciate your consideration for this incredibly important initiative and look forward to providing you additional information. Please let me know if you have questions.
- December Nights – The Taste of December Nights will be held Dec. 4 through Dec. 6 from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. in the Inspiration Point parking lot. The event will recreate some of the spirit of past December Nights with some favorite food vendors and food trucks in a drive-thru setting in the Inspiration Point parking lot.
- Palisades – Mayor Faulconer, Assemblymember and Mayor-elect Gloria, Directors Andy Field and Kris McFadden and others opened the new Palisades Plaza yesterday.

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

- The December holiday season in San Diego officially begins on Friday morning with an opening ceremony for the Taste of December Nights, which reimagines the annual popular December Nights festival held in Balboa Park for the past four decades. A diverse assortment of San Diego's most popular food vendors in a convenient, contactless and safe environment. The drive-thru event will be held Friday, Dec. 4, through Sunday, Dec. 6, from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. each day at the Inspiration Point parking lot on Presidents Way in Balboa Park. The first 500 vehicles each day will receive a commemorative tote bag with giveaway items. In addition to food vendors, the beloved House of Pacific Relations International Cottages will have sweet treats from around the world available during daytime hours. All COVID-19 safety protocols instituted by San Diego County public health officials will be in effect. Masks must be worn by every customer. Attendees must remain in their cars and no pedestrians, bicyclists or scooter riders will be allowed to participate in order to preserve the health and safety of all attendees.

Balboa Park District Manager Mario Llanos reported the following:

- The pedestrian bridge over the Interstate 5 freeway will be closed during the Taste of December Nights event.
- The next Balboa Park meeting will be conducted in a Zoom Webinar format.

BALBOA PARK NON-PROFIT PARTNER UPDATES

Balboa Park Conservancy – Jackie Higgins reported the following:

- Thanked Grant Reader, Morgan Fox and his team who have been instrumental in the reopening of the House of Hospitality. The County inspector gave them a 100% score in compliance with County Health requirements.
- Enhancements made to the Casa del Rey Moro Gardens
- Enhancements made in the Cactus Garden
- On November 7, a tree planting in honor of Kate Sessions was held. Tree ambassadors are monitoring the 700 trees planted over the last three years.
- Congratulations to Parks and Recreation and support groups on the reopened Palisades. They will have park ambassadors in both the Plaza de Panama and Palisades.

Balboa Park Cultural Partnership – Peter Comiskey reported the following:

- The One Park ♦ One Team's inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility initiative working group recently wrapped up the first Parkwide IDEA survey which sought feedback from team members on their perceptions of inclusion and engagement within their organizations. Seven members participated in the effort and will use the data to implement change based on team member feedback. Thank you again to the Parker Foundation for making this possible.
- Our congratulations to the City of San Diego and specifically Parks and Recreation for the launch of the Palisades project. We would encourage the focus for work in this area to remain on the completion of the improvements to this southern section – in particular the fountain – and to identifying options for the replacement of lost proximate parking spaces that has occurred.
- Since 2008, the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership Sustainability Program has achieved extensive and ongoing energy efficiencies and environmental operation improvements in a huge range of projects, practices, and programs thanks to the support of SDG&E, the City of San Diego and the members of the Cultural Partnership. The commitment of our arts, science and culture members to sustainability has flourished under this program and so it is natural that this program now transitions to the individual implementation and operations of those members.
- Finally, while the news from the State of an impending lockdown was not encouraging, the Cultural Partnership and its members are focused on and dedicated to doing three things:
 - Delivering the missions of their organizations whether that be in-park, in the community or online.
 - Operating their venues within Balboa Park in a safe manner for guests and team members today and into the future.

And the one they all look forward to returning to in an ever bigger and bolder way – serving as the key compelling elements of the broader Balboa Park experience.

Committee of 100 – Roger Showley reported the following:

- Excited about completion of Phase I restoration and encouraged by everyone's enthusiasm
- Phase II will necessarily involve addressing parking and circulation
- Automotive Museum façade beautification is beginning in January and will take two months to install the mural and ornamentation.
- Hope to improve the Municipal Gym by paying for exterior paint with City providing the labor
- Active with the design review process efforts
- Excited about the merger of the Friends and Conservancy, may wish to join them in the future

Friends of Balboa Park – John Bolthouse reported the following:

- Researching the parking and circulation issue – providing findings to Parks and Recreation in a few weeks
- Congratulations to all on the Palisades project. The Friends were pleased to support funding for the landscaping
- The Morton Bay Fig project has taken longer than anticipated due to COVID and affects on the supply chain
- Please to supply the mobile fire suppression system for park rangers
- In support of the donor recognition program

Save Starlight – None

ACTION ITEMS

Consent

101. None

Adoption

201. Balboa Park Star Sky Wheel. Presenters: David and Lesley Cohn, Cohn Restaurant Group and Ben Pickett, Sky Views of America.

Ms. Chadwick introduced the item and the question before the Committee tonight. A site plan was requested at our October meeting along with some operational issues which are addressed in the staff report. There are still some issues that aren't fully vetted yet however.

Mr. Cohn requested a vote of support by the Committee before moving forward with additional time put into the project. He thanked Ms. Chadwick for her assistance and has met with many of the park stakeholders. The idea is to reenergize the park, possibly with a park-wide event when approval is received and when the gondolas can be occupied per the health protocols. A revenue sharing agreement is also being worked through. The wheel installation is temporary and the only interest they have is to serve food and beverage available. Mr. Pickett stated that the wheel is operating successfully with full COVID measures in other areas of the country.

Public Comment:

- David Lundin – Our Park Advocacy group opposes the proposed exclusionary commercial exploitation of a large portion of the Plaza de Panama for the reasons expressed in the Petition now signed by more than 1,500 San Diego residents. This for-profit carnival ride is in conflict with the historic nature and design integrity of the Plaza space, would prevent recreational and quiet enjoyment uses of the Plaza by the general public.
- Frank Scales – No Ferris wheel in Balboa Park
- Keith Langhorn – Balboa Park is for the people to enjoy. Not for restaurants to use as a prop. No Ferris wheel In Balboa Park
- David Donnelly – I oppose ...the Ferris wheel it is not in keeping with the architectural theme of the park its tacky there is not enough space to do this is not historical
- Alex Garcia – This idea is a horrendous idea and would be an absolute eye sore in Balboa Park. Please keep the Plaza de Panama as an open space. There is no need to have a noisy behemoth in the middle of the park.
- Juliet Sykes – I oppose the for-profit project of placing a large Ferris wheel in the plaza in front of the Museum of Art. It is an Inappropriate use of park land and out of scale with the beauty of the surrounding park land and buildings. I urge you to reject this proposal.
- Erik Stuart Lundin– I grew up in San Diego and Balboa Park. Now live in Marin with my spouse and 2 great kids. We return to San Diego and the Park often. This absurd proposal will ruin the historic nature of the Plaza, remove thousands of square feet of the Plaza from public use and access, destroy views to the California Tower, and look foolish. All for the private profit of one Park tenant. Please protect our Park and say NO to this.
- Xa Miranda – No to Cohen business use if Balboa Park
- Charles Kaminski – The wheel belongs elsewhere: Seaport Village, Liberty Station, but not in the Plaza de panama which was freed of cars and now will be filled again. Additionally, \$1

for Balboa Park from the ticket is quite just a dollar. I understand the desire by the Cohn's. Like the Jacobs Plan good intentions go awry. Just as this proposal should go away.

- Marti Kranzburg – RE: Ferris wheel – If you do it – do RIGHT! And totally unique!! How about the students at UCSD Jacobs School of Engineering teamed with a designer/architect/artist concept chosen from an international contest?
- Gloria Brattich – As a lover of Balboa park, I think that the Ferris wheel idea as presented currently is an interesting and fun way to bring attention and money to the park at a time when it is sorely needed. I do not necessarily support the Wheel if it was to be permanent, but the views from the Cabrillo tower are fantastic and I would be excited to take a ride (or 3!). It is important to me that some of the revenue goes to Park maintenance. (Submitted Late)
- Cynthia Taiclet– Please do not put a temporary observation wheel in the heart of Balboa Park. That thing looks like a monstrosity and belongs somewhere more appropriate. If you check Facebook, you will see many SD residents agree with me. (Submitted late).
- Danielle McMartin– My parents moved here initially for the Navy when I was a baby. San Diego has always been my home. My vote on the prospective Sky Wheel: Please, oh PLEASE NO! Balboa Park is a treasure, please do not ruin it with a product that belongs in a circus. (Submitted Late)

Committee Comments:

- Is this the only location being considered? (Yes, due to location of the kitchen and fire lane requirements)
- Have the concerns in the park been addressed (Yes, they have met with every organization and satisfied most of their concerns)
- Where would the lines form in a socially distanced way? (Queuing at the front platform, contactless payment)
- A series of discussions have occurred with those affected and for the most part, concerns have been addressed. There has been a willingness to listen and respond to issues. A fund to benefit the park is a next step. This has been a devastating time and a need to uplift each other and the landscape is changing. There are still hurdles to overcome and hopefully lots of creative ideas are forthcoming.
- Surprised about the community comments about the wheel not in compliance with the historic park when the wheel is a temporary installation. It should be approved to bring people back to the park and perhaps encourage those that don't normally visit.
- There are only two institutions open at this time and something like this will enhance the visitor experience and attract people to the park
- Wasn't there a wheel in the park during the Exposition? (Yes, a Ferris wheel)
- Johanna Schiavoni stated that she will be abstaining from the vote due to her position on the Airport Authority Board and the remaining questions.
- Thanked David and Leslie Cohn and Christina Chadwick. Can the surface of the Plaza de Panama withstand the weight of the wheel and set-up? (Yes, it can withstand the weight and it is disbursed, and a sub- surface will be used and they will assume cost of damages).
- The Plaza de Panama is the heart of the park and is concerned that once clearance is given, it will be the spring or summer and a lot of people will be wanting access to the Plaza. The wheel takes up the entire area, it is the wrong timing and not reasonable in cost for families.

- Everything in the park is not free except the Timken. If providing something of value, you should be compensated for it – a free market.
- Possible to wait to vote since there is no urgency in a decision? (Requesting a vote tonight due to additional work needed to move forward)
- A conceptual vote should be granted tonight as there are additional hurdles ahead
- Liability and indemnification of the City is important, see food service on the wheel as an extension of service and incorporated into lease terms, anything that brings economic relief and joy is worthwhile, explore some discounts for tickets.

MOTION: MOVED/SECONDED MS. JOHNSTON/ MR. DAVENPORT

A motion was made by Ms. Johnston and seconded by Mr. Davenport to support the installation of the temporary observation wheel by Sky Views of America for no more than 180 days, contingent on all operational and public health issues being resolved to the City's satisfaction. Motion carried (7-1-1) with Ms. Schiavoni abstaining.

Special Events

301. None

WORKSHOP ITEMS

401. Botanical Building Naming Opportunities and Donor Recognition Policy Workshop, Presenters: Christina Chadwick, Assistant Deputy Director, City of San Diego and Jackie Higgins, Director of Planning, Design and Programs, Balboa Park Conservancy

Mr. Andrew Field, Parks and Recreation Director opened the conversation, which is not only about naming rights, but how donors are recognized in the park. This Botanical Building project is transformative for the park and will bring it up to modern standards and allow for collaboration to partner with the Conservancy. We will be listening to feedback while discussing the donor agreement components in greater detail and the Committee will take action in January. He introduced Ms. Connie Matsui, Chair of Board of Trustees, Balboa Park Conservancy. She introduced the naming policy presentation on behalf of the Botanical Building and Gardens project which will be the first project, if approved to enact the naming policy adopted by the City Council in 2017. She is looking forward to feedback as this program will be a useful tool to fund the historic features to bring the building and gardens back to its original grandeur. She thanked their partners for their letter of support, staff and design team. Jackie Higgins' presentation included historical 1915 building photos of the Botanical Building and gardens, the history of the building and the Conservancy's efforts to identify steps needed to make it a world class visitor experience. The donor acknowledgement elements consist of pavers, benches, interior water features, pergola statues, reconstructed urns and pedestals, drinking fountain, interior planters and promenade pathway pavers. She provided renderings of what the elements would look like. The 15 different naming opportunities were identified and are consistent with Policy 900-20. The Lily Pond was removed from the list. The opportunities were described in detail.

Committee Comments:

Balboa Park Committee
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- Thank you for the comprehensive, innovative and fun approach. Looks simple, modern and beautiful. A little scary if all the opportunities are taken. Will all the opportunities be needed to reach the goal? (A variety of opportunities to appeal to donors are needed order to fully realize the \$15 million project as envisioned. An endowment for the building will be created if the capital campaign raises additional funds.)
- Elegance in what is proposed, appreciate pulling the Lily Pond off the opportunity list. Asked to consider land acknowledgement as the building sits on the Kumeyaay land which would send a message that this is a place of belonging for all and is central in the park.
- Chairperson Johnston noted that this item will come before the Committee as an action item in January.

INFORMATION ITEMS

501. None

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 8:20 p.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: Wednesday, January 20, 2021
6:00 PM
Online Meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Lowery-Mendoza
District Manager