
THE COSTA MESA PARKS & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMISSION

MARCH 13, 2025
6:00 P.M. – OFFICIAL MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER by Chair Brown at 6:00pm.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE by Commissioner Komala.

ROLL CALL

☒ = Present ☐ = Absent

Commissioners

- ☒ Cristian Garcia Arcos
- ☒ Jake Husen
- ☒ Jason Komala
- ☒ Brandine Leger
- ☒ Elizabeth Dorn Parker
- ☒ Shyanne Wright, Vice Chair
- ☒ Kelly Brown, Chair

City Staff

- ☒ Brian Gruner, Parks and Community Services Director
- ☒ Monique Villasenor, Recreation Manager
- ☒ Raja Sethuraman, Public Works Director
- ☒ Robert Ryan, Public Works Maintenance Manager
- ☒ Laura Fautua, Executive Assistant
- ☒ Kathia Viteri, Office Specialist II

PRESENTATIONS:

1. BRIDGING THE GAP OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN AGING SERVICES

Mr. Enyelber Franco, Recreation Coordinator and Lucy Tseng, Community Social Worker presented.

Commissioners commended the City's role in aging services and discussed opportunities for training and expanding transportation support networks for seniors. Comments supported exploring grant funding and leveraging volunteer resources.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jay Humphrey: Spoke about Huntington Beach for excluding Costa Mesa from its EIR regarding the air show and urged the city to ensure such oversight does not continue.

Sergio Tellez: Invited the public to attend upcoming Coastal Corridor Alliance workshops.

Alisa Ochoa: encouraged integrating arts into Public Works park projects and advocated for cross-departmental collaboration using the Arts and Culture Master Plan as a guide.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Commissioner Leger: Spoke about her Park Ranger ride-along and highlighted issues with Harper and Fairview Park, and asked for the Coastal Corridor Alliance information be emailed to commission.

Commissioner Komala: Shared observations from his Park Ranger ride-along, highlighting tools used to address park safety. He expressed appreciation for efforts to protect natural areas and emphasized the need for social support solutions for unhoused individuals.

Commissioner Dorn Parker: Spoke about her Park Ranger ride-along observations on park activity and improvements for TeWinkle Park and skate park. She praised the City's long-term efforts to address homelessness, highlighting reduced encampments and a more strategic, humane approach. She commended the City's comprehensive response and emphasized the high level of community use at local parks.

Commissioner Husen: Talked about the skate park project process and expressed interest in partnering with the Arts Department and learning more about the outreach process.

Commissioner Garcia Arcos: Shared updates on several events (*Arborist Conference*, *Love Costa Mesa Day*, and *Día de Los Niños*). He expressed appreciation for community collaborations in the Shalimar neighborhood and asked staff about follow-up on concerns related to the air show's environmental impact. He also thanked the Coastal Corridor Alliance for ongoing partnership and engagement efforts.

Vice Chair Wright: Requested revisiting the topic of park ranger data and supported more frequent updates from staff. She suggested using signage with QR codes at parks to inform the public about upcoming projects. She also expressed appreciation for the affordability and accessibility of City-run Aquatic Center programming.

Chair Brown: Thanked staff for updating the online meeting minutes. She expressed interest in receiving an update on the recent pickleball meeting and acknowledged the importance of public input in shaping future Commission discussions.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Minutes – March 13, 2025 PACS Draft Minutes

2. Department Report – March 2025

MOTION: To approve Consent Calendar items

MOVED/SECOND: Vice Chair Wright / Commissioner Dorn Parker.

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Commissioner Dorn Parker, Commissioner Garcia Arcos, Commissioner Husen, Commissioner Komala, Commissioner Leger, Vice Chair Wright, Chair Brown

Nays: none

Absent: none

Motion Carried: 7 – 0

MONTHLY REPORTS

1. PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Mr. Brian Gruner, Parks and Community Services Director presented.

Commissioner Komala thanked staff for addressing Harper Park issues via the 311 App and inquired staff follow-up from the joint meeting with Newport-Mesa Unified School District.

Commissioner Wright praised the quick responsiveness of the 311 App and requested more data on its usage and public awareness.

Commissioner Leger recommended staff provide background on long-term park issues to new appointees and noted lack of institutional knowledge on Harper Park and Fairview Park.

Chair Brown complimented the 311 App's graffiti response, asked about repainting versus removal and suggested adding girls' volleyball to city programming.

Commissioner Dorn Parker highlighted a surge in girls' flag football interest and encouraged support for expanding access to school and park spaces for the sport.

Commissioner Garcia Arcos raised concerns about graffiti on private alleyways and asked how property owners could be held accountable for cleanup.

Commissioner Leger added that school district programs have made flag football popular among both boys and girls, with growing participation citywide.

Public Comment: None.

OLD BUSINESS: NONE

NEW BUSINESS:

1. **DONATION OF A MEMORIAL TREE, BENCH AND PLAQUE AT TEWINKLE PARK**
Mr. Rober Ryan, Public Works Maintenance Manager presented.

Commissioner Garcia Arcos asked how the City ensures the long-term health of memorial trees and inquired about maintenance practices and tree selection criteria.

Commissioner Leger expressed her appreciation for the choice of a magnolia tree, noting its fragrance.

Commissioner Dorn Parker confirmed the selected tree and bench location would not interfere with future upgrades and praised the project design.

Public Comment:

Mike D'alessandro: Thanked the City for honoring their daughter, Sierra, and shared her legacy and connection to Tewinkle Park.

Sergio Tellez: Encouraged prioritizing native tree species for their ecological compatibility, disease resistance, and lower maintenance needs.

Commissioner Garcia Arcos asked how the City ensures the long-term health of memorial trees and inquired about maintenance practices and tree selection criteria.

Vice Chair Wright expressed gratitude to the family for their contribution and hoped the space would bring comfort and peace.

MOTION: To approve the tree, bench and plaque with the addition of a certified arborist present during the installation.

MOVED/SECOND: Commissioner Garcia Arcos / Commissioner Komala

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Commissioner Dorn Parker, Commissioner Garcia Arcos, Commissioner Husen, Commissioner Komala, Commissioner Leger, Vice Chair Wright, Chair Brown

Nays: none

Absent: none

Motion Carried: 7 – 0

2. **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (CIP) PARK PROJECTS UPDATE**

Mr. Raja Sethuraman, Public Works Director presented.

Mr. Sethuraman requested a small change to the recommendation, asking the Commission to provide feedback on both the one-year and five-year Capital Improvement Plans (CIP), and noted that their input would be incorporated into the comments presented to City Council.

Vice Chair Wright asked about CIP funding sources and emphasized prioritizing neighborhood parks; she also suggested adding community gardens and fencing to future project lists based on public demand.

Chair Brown expressed appreciation for the presentation's transparency and advocated for reinstating West Side park development as a critical equity issue deserving of immediate funding.

Public Comment:

Ralph Taboada: commended staff and commissioners, and urged advancing delayed projects such as bike trail lighting and West Side park development and spoke about repeated deferrals of key playground upgrades.

Sergio Tellez: raised concerns about over-pruning of coast live oak trees at Lions Park and the city's pruning practices.

Commissioner Leger inquired about festival grant funding, coordination with police on vandalism prevention, and expressed gratitude for having CIP information to share with constituents.

Commissioner Husen requested clarification on project funding cycles, reallocation of surplus funds, and how current maintenance levels compare to previous years.

Commissioner Komala asked how long projects have been deferred, whether reprioritization is possible, and if smaller repairs fall outside the CIP scope.

Commissioner Dorn Parker recommended allocating \$250,000 toward West Side park development and stressed the need to track the age of playground equipment to inform replacement priorities.

Commissioner Garcia Arcos questioned the clarity of CIP funding for specific parks, raised tree maintenance concerns, and supported reallocating funds based on actual needs in the field.

MOTION: To approve the updated report, with an added recommendation to allocate \$250,000 as a starting investment towards the West Side Park Development Plan. The motion also recommends establishing appropriate annual disbursements to support the continued development and implementation of the plan.

MOVED/SECOND: Commissioner Dorn Parker / Chair Brown

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Commissioner Dorn Parker, Commissioner Garcia Arcos, Commissioner Husen, Commissioner Komala, Commissioner Leger, Vice Chair Wright, Chair Brown

Nays: none

Absent: none

Motion Carried: 7 – 0

MOTION: To take a ten-minute recess.

MOVED/SECOND: Commissioner Dorn Parker / Chair Brown

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Commissioner Dorn Parker, Commissioner Garcia Arcos, Commissioner Husen, Commissioner Komala, Commissioner Leger, Vice Chair Wright, Chair Brown

Nays: none

Absent: none

Motion Carried: 7 – 0

MOTION: To return to the meeting from the ten-minute recess.

MOVED/SECOND: Commissioner Dorn Parker / Commissioner Husen

The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Commissioner Dorn Parker, Commissioner Garcia Arcos, Commissioner Husen, Commissioner Komala, Commissioner Leger, Vice Chair Wright, Chair Brown

Nays: none

Absent: none

Motion Carried: 7 – 0

3. **PARK CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PRINCIPLE AND VALUES WORKSHOP**

Mr. Brian Gruner, Parks and Community Services Director and Mr. Raja Sethuraman, Public Works Director presented.

Chair Brown encouraged the Commission to treat the discussion as the beginning of an ongoing, creative, and collaborative process to identify park priorities. She proposed staffing a booth at the upcoming Earth Day event to engage the public and gather feedback, reminded staff to use existing tools for documentation to minimize extra work, and suggested a more free-flowing, thematic discussion style to foster deeper conversation and consensus. She also emphasized the importance of inviting and hearing from the public at this early stage.

Public Comment:

David Martinez: Advocated equity in park access, particularly for Westside residents, and advocated for intersectional CIP projects that address environmental sustainability, stormwater, and multi-use public spaces. He urged the Commission to reference existing master plans and prioritize both outdoor and indoor public spaces like community centers.

Ralph Taboada: Supported Mr. Martinez's comments and praised staff and commissioners for advancing CIP engagement. Noted that differences of opinion are part of the process and ultimately decided by the City Council.

Commissioner Leger emphasized that equity means meeting park needs regardless of who attends meetings, and highlighted outdated signage at Paularino Park as an example of unequal attention.

Commissioner Dorn Parker advocated for integrating shade, drinking fountains, and solar elements into park upgrades to ensure climate-resilient and equitable spaces.

Commissioner Garcia Arcos proposed including native tree replanting and long-term tree health strategies in the CIP, citing lessons learned from Shalimar Park.

Chair Brown described community gardens as an equity issue tied to basic needs and climate resilience, and recommended adding them as a concrete CIP line item.

Vice Chair Wright noted that investing in underserved neighborhoods improves property values and called for CIP priorities that reflect the needs of renters, seniors, and diverse communities. Vice Chair also suggested a values-based framework tailored to available funding each year.

Chair Brown recapped major themes raised: maintenance/safety, community engagement, innovation, and optimization, and proposed grouping priorities by principle to aid planning and consensus-building.

Commissioner Leger suggested organizing agenda items under broad principles like equity and safety, with subtopics grouped beneath them for clarity.

Commissioner Dorn Parker urged greater collaboration across local institutions to optimize public space use and highlighted interrelated safety issues like off-leash dogs, bike storage, and park infrastructure.

Commissioner Komala emphasized that community-centered planning must guide equity and sustainability efforts, noting that different neighborhoods have different priorities.

Chair Brown supported Commissioner Komala's call for community-minded planning and stressed engaging youth, multilingual communities, and incorporating arts into park spaces.

Vice Chair Wright proposed developing a funding spectrum framework to prioritize safety and maintenance during lean budget years and innovation during well-funded cycles.

Commissioner Leger clarified that equity is about meeting actual park needs, not just responding to the most vocal or well-resourced communities.

Chair Brown encouraged a balance of short-, medium-, and long-term projects in the CIP to prevent long-term equity goals from being indefinitely deferred.

Commissioner Dorn Parker expressed concerns on focusing too quickly on funding constraints, emphasizing the importance of defining a clear long-term vision and advocating early to attract external support.

Commissioner Garcia Arcos suggested embedding engagement in existing community spaces and events to gather more inclusive and efficient public input.

Vice Chair Wright proposed setting annual Commission priorities to better align values with realistic financial conditions and project scopes.

Chair Brown emphasized that this process should remain visionary and unconstrained by budget until values are clearly established, so future CIP decisions are grounded in consensus and equity.

Commissioner Komala agreed and suggested developing structured surveys for Earth Day to gather quantifiable public input on parks priorities and values.

ADDITIONAL COMMISSIONER MEMBER & STAFF COMMENTS - None

ADJOURNMENT by Chair Brown at 9:50 PM.