

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
MEETING OF THE BORREGO SPRINGS COMMUNITY SPONSOR GROUP
APPROVED MINUTES

Wednesday, December 3, 2025, 4:30 p.m.

In-person at the Borrego Library, 2850 Country Club Rd, Borrego Springs & also via Zoom
THE PUBLIC IS ALWAYS WELCOME TO OUR MEETINGS
WE REPRESENT YOU WHEN ADVISING THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO ON LAND USE ISSUES

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

John Peterson, Chair	Present
Jim Dax, Vice-Chair	Absent
Bruce Durbin	Absent, attended via Zoom (cannot vote)
Rebecca Falk	Present
Bill Haneline	Present
Anne O'Connor	Present
Nancy McRae, Secretary	Present
Seat #5	Vacant
Seat #9	Vacant

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE MEETING of November 5, 2025

Motion: Anne O'Connor

Second: Rebecca Falk

Discussion: Falk requested that a 3rd question she had asked regarding Rams Hill about "required community benefit" be added, and so it was added.

Vote: Unanimous of the 5 members allowed to vote

C. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION (will be limited to 3 min): Opportunity for members of the public to speak to the Group on any subject within the Group's authority that is not on the posted agenda.

No one spoke in person or on Zoom. Public comments closed.

D. ACTION ITEMS: (*Note the items in italicized text are being reheard due to a power outage during our November 5, 2025, meeting.*)

1. *Alcoholic Beverage Control Permit PDS2025-ABC-25-008 for the Bighorn Fudge Factory (attachments). Carryover from November 5, 2025*

Letter submitted at the meeting from Martha Deichler, Community Resource Center Executive Director in support of request. John Peterson read the letter and it is reprinted in its entirety below:

December 2, 2025 - Borrego Springs Community Sponsor Group

This letter is written in support of the Bighorn Fudge Factory's request for an Alcoholic Beverage Control Permit. As a 20 year full time resident of Borrego Springs, I have come to understand and appreciate the skills, patience and tenacity required to maintain a business here in our village with incredible seasonal fluctuations and an unpredictable customer base. I have witnessed many businesses fold under these dire circumstances.

After many conversations with Bighorn Fudge Factory owner, Jeremy Fife, I understand that 80% of his business is from tourists and folks passing through Borrego Springs. If this means that I can access a fabulous cup of espresso or a croissant or a brick of scrumptious fudge throughout the year, then bravo for those tourists who allow Jeremy's business to stay open! This means the business survives, locals gain employment and residents can enjoy the goodness that is the Bighorn Fudge Factory for many months of the year.

For this to occur, however, one must be shrewd, creative and able to diversify. This is exactly what Jeremy is doing in order to keep his business alive. He is hoping to offer tourists something of a regional/California wine, cider or brew to purchase and take home as a souvenir of Borrego or something "near to Borrego."

Let's support folks who have the courage to make a business successful in our village. There is nothing sadder than an empty store front. It's a reflection on the direction we are headed in our town.

Sincerely,
Martha Deichler
Borrego Springs Community Resource Center
Executive Director
Former Honorary Mayor

JP asked for questions. MP (Member of the Public): asked what are the hours of store operation, why do we feel we need to offer alcohol and is there a drive-through? Jeremy Fife, Owner of the Fudge Factory: 8am - 4 pm are the hours of operation. The permit being requested is strictly for retail sales and off-site consumption. It is all local product unique to California and predominantly SoCal. No drive-through. They've had requests from clients for local products, for example, Julian hard cider.

MP: David Garmon - representing BCDC Board which owns the shopping center where the Fudge Factory is located. "As the owner of the property we strongly support the application. The approach that Mr. Fife is using to diversify offerings is a good idea and we want to register our support."

MP: Will the wine be competing with Borrego Outfitter (BO) and the liquor store, or will there be a different type of wine? A: Falk talked with BO, and Ben (owner of BO) said

he would never object to this project. Fife: We will source wine that is not on distribution trucks, instead wine that is from mom and pop owned wineries. He doesn't want to compete with other shops, wants a unique product.

MP: Marsha Boring "I am the wine buyer for BO. This will not be a problem for us." It's a totally different offering than what they have.

MP: Jim Wermers, Owner of The Mall, added that he had spoke with the Desert Pantry (grocery store across the street from Fudge Factory) who had no problem with this.

MP: Said he was in support of the application because he can now spend money in Borrego to get local wines instead of driving to other communities. Keep the money in Borrego.

Motion: Falk - To approve the application

Second: Haneline

Discussion: None

Vote: Unanimous of the 5 members allowed to vote

2. Public input for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) priority list. Vote required, presented by Rebecca Falk. Carryover from November 5, 2025.

Falk - CIP list has already been sent to County in July. All the items on the list (which was in the last agenda) were drawn from previous lists except for the crosswalk between the malls, and we'll be discussing that next. Other items on the list were for example, the sidewalk project, drainage issue in DeAnza, roundabout. None are controversial but she is happy to read every item on the list if desired. No one needed that.

Motion: By Falk - To approve the CIP list that was submitted in July.

Second: O'Connor

Discussion: The CIP Priority List is a "wishlist" and is fine as submitted. The crosswalk on Palm Canyon is included in the CIP, but the PLANS for the crosswalk are specific and a proposal that requires a separate vote (see item 3, below).

Approval: Unanimous of the 5 members allowed to vote.

3. Crosswalk proposal for connecting the two commercial centers across Palm Canyon Drive.

Peterson: Michael Kenny from County Department of Public Works (DPW) was supposed to join the meeting but is not on Zoom. BSCSG will hear comments from public, but without the County representative it will be hard to vote on it.

MP: Wermers, Owner of The Mall and David Garmon representing owner of The Center. Wermers has spoken with Richard Orne, architect who developed the original plan for Palm Canyon Drive infrastructure improvements, including crosswalks, sidewalks, landscaping and wayfinding. There has been robust discussion over the past 12 years. We appreciate the County finally getting around to "how to we cross the street safely." But

current proposed plans put the crosswalk closer to pharmacy end of The Center (western entrance) and at the The Mall west of its main entrance. The Center already has an ADA access. Better to move crosswalk 110 feet to the east of the original County design where it is currently proposed. This would be more convenient for pedestrians, especially those under ADA, and more centered. Location where County has proposed it is dangerous given where automobiles exit and how they look at traffic. Richard Orne sent something to Jim about looking at shortening crosswalk by painting out to the bicycle path, and then the crosswalk would only be 50 feet wide instead of 80 feet. We could even red zone down to the intersection - make it easier to see and be seen. Red zone is a red curb, which means no parking. Could lengthen red zone on The Center side - clear visibility all the way to the driveway.

O'Connor - Will it be striped? A: County will decide. Any changes will delay the project.

MP: Will they build a bridge? A - Wermers: Bridges are really expensive. The new crosswalks at the circle are getting used and are really safe.

MP Jeremey Fife: Sitting in our store (Fudge Factory) watching people cross the street, it's only a matter of time until there's a fatality. However we can facilitate a crosswalk, it will save a life.

Peterson: Agrees with Wermers - not a major redesign, just needs to move crosswalk down the road to the east 100 feet. Better sited 100 feet east.

MP Boddy: Did anyone from the County consult with anyone in Borrego?

MP Wermers: We've talked to the County about it for a dozen years, they never asked about the location even though we've shown it to them and they did not present it to any committee.

MP Boring: They did not consult the Infrastructure Committee, which she heads up.

Haneline: Looked at google earth . It shows an ADA compliant crosswalk. That looks fine to him because there's already an existing one.

MP: Sponsor Group should not approve until the crosswalk is sited where you want it.

Peterson - Will talk with Jim Wermers, and then send letter from the Chair to the county move crosswalk approximately 100 feet to the east near ADA parking, there must be a red zone on 50 ft on either side and it should be extended further than that for better sight line. Wait to look at re-design and have this re-heard in January.

Motion: Peterson - To have Peterson collect additional information from Wermers about optimum location for crosswalk and red zone; then send a letter to the County DPW (Dept of Public Works) requesting changes to the Specific plan as proposed based on info to be obtained from Wermers. Re-hear this agenda item in January.

Second: McRae

Discussion: No additional discussion

Vote: Unanimous of the 5 members allowed to vote

4. Discussion regarding regulations of short-term rentals. Bill Everett, Vice-Chair of Julian Planning Group presenting.

Julian's Planning Group has been working on this since 2021. Everett is a native SD. Moved to Julian 25 years ago because it is a real community, like BS, not just an outpost. Julian is a vibrant community, gets overrun with tourists in the fall, far more people visiting than live there. We have noticed a change in the community in the last 5 years. The first indication was there were NO long term rentals - zero. Families who had been there 5 generations have had to move out because they can't find a place to rent. They realized people were switching to short term rentals (STR) because they're very profitable. Contacted County - what do you about how many STR there are in Julian? County has no idea. They don't regulate them, even though they're a business. Then the question became, do people pay Transit Occupancy Tax (TOT) which comes back to the community? Answer: No. The only way you can find out how many STR you have is by going to their websites and looking for them. Julian has over 250. Owners have great profit motivation to do STR. Less than 10% of STR are paying TOT. Because the County has no means to go after them, they don't collect TOT. Julian said then the TOT is voluntary because you don't enforce it. Hit a blind wall with the county. Other changes in the community - fewer younger people, more transient people, merchants can no longer find people to work because the workers can't afford to live there. Five years ago we approached the County and got absolutely nowhere. No response. We started talking to the supervisors and their aides. Hit a stone wall. Heard that San Diego is too big. Can't apply an ordinance to the whole county. Every city in the county has a short term rental ordinance. **SD County is the only county in coastal California that does not register and regulate its STRs.** Even though running a STR is a business, there is no business license required. Also, this means businesses are being run in areas that are zoned residential. One negative example of what can happen: Short term renters started bonfire in the yard. The owners threatened to hire an attorney to come after the neighbor who complained .

MP: Why are there no long term rentals? A: Owners can make more money with STR. One 1 BR/1BA home in Campwood neighborhood is a STR rental and the owner is making \$9000 month.

Falk: What would you like us to do?

Everett: Joel Anderson is termed out and is disinclined to do anything controversial. There is controversy because people are making a lot of money. Joel Anderson and senior aide say the county is too big. We said look at Riverside county; SD could make special districts like they have done. The response from Anderson was "I'm not going to do anything on this until there's a coalition showing that more than just Julian wants this."

McRae - The incentive for STR is more than just the extra money. It's a nightmare being a landlord in this state, and a STR landlord can avoid all those onerous regulations.

Everett: we want the county to regulate STR as a business, get your license, tell us where you are and start paying your TOT.

MP: Brought concern to BSCSG a year ago because there is a housing crisis in every tourist town. So many people have been locked out of their communities because of conversion to STRs. Same thing in BS - people pushed out to Salton City. Started during Covid. We have over 300 STRs in BS. Finding a long term rental is a long term project. We should have the power to put a limit on what we have here. We've lost a lot of families here because of this issue.

MP: Problem is AirBnB corporate. The only way things will change is to get to corporate side.

MP: Regulation starts locally. She would love to see BSCSG take this on and become part of a coalition.

Everett: Other counties have told AirBnB that they must collect TOT, which AirBnB does, but San Diego has not required that of AirBnB or any others.

O'Connor: Has home at Moonlight Beach in Encinitas. STRs are very heavily regulated. Require that you have a visible plaque stating that you are a STR. Almost every home on her street is a STR now. Is this resistance to regulation just because we're unincorporated?

Everett: He's not a fan of government regulation, but this has gotten crazy. Association of planning and sponsor groups - that's where he's going next to see if they are all having the same problem. He's been dealing exclusively with Anderson. It would be a wonderful thing if someone from Desmond's district could help get this ball rolling. Why is SD the only county doing this?

O'Connor: Even if we collect TOT, the issues don't go away. There still won't be any long term rentals.

Everett: Some counties have said there's only a certain percentage that can go STR. They are businesses operating in residential zones.

Motion: Falk: We write a letter to Supervisor Desmond saying we are concerned about issue and how it's impacting our community and we would like the BOS to require registration and licenses for these businesses so that TOT are collected.

Second: Haneline

Discussion: McRae will help with the letter.

MP: Everett 90% of unincorporated SD is in 2 districts - 2 and 5 (Anderson and Desmond).

MP: Wermer brought this up to Desmond a couple years ago, he was not in favor it because it would increase bureaucracy and there would need to be new staff, etc. The

County district doesn't get to keep TOT from unincorporated areas, it gets shared with other districts.

Durbin: Los Angeles County went through this last year. We implemented an unincorporated ordinance for the more than 3,000 square miles that are unincorporated. The way this will get traction is by working with supervisors but really its the treasurer and tax collector. They will begin to understand how much money they're losing. LA prohibited any Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) from being STR. It was extremely unpopular, got a lot of "The widow Jones relies on this" kind of letters. Has it been implemented smoothly? No, but it's coming along. Everyone has to register in LA county. Very political. If a county like LA can, SD can - just needs 3 supervisors to approve motion to make the study. Recommends studying LA county because they just did this over the last 3 years.

Vote: Unanimous of the 5 members allowed to vote.

5. Interview for potential BSCSG member Sondra Boddy.

Peterson: Sondra has gone through the process. Will ask the same 5 questions that every applicant gets asked.

Q: Please describe your connection and history with BS? A: Husband Bob Smith bought a house in Feb 2024. Have been living here for 2 years. Still have home in Escondido, but spending more than 50% of time in BS. Even before owning the house they visited often, got involved with Anza Borrego Foundation, Anza Borrego Desert Natural History Association, local fundraisers, and are social members of DeAnza. Has been listening to and observing BSCSG meetings for the last two years. Contacted Peterson two years ago and has been following BSCSG ever since.

Q: How will your education and work experience benefit BSCSG? A: Has a background in land use. Urban planning and development certificates. Served as commissioner on Carlsbad urban planning commission 15 years ago. Practicing attorney for over 30 years.

Q: Why serve? A: I love BS. The more time I spend here the more I love it. I am looking for ways to serve the community.

Q: Are you able and willing to devote 8 hours/month? A: Yes. Absolutely willing to make the commitment.

Q: How do you handle disagreement? A: First thing I would do is listen. I might ask exploratory or clarifying questions to make sure I'm understanding. I might learn something new. At the end of the day, everyone is entitled to their opinion. This is foundational to our democracy. Aware that every issue has multiple sides . As a lawyer I understand consensus can be hard to reach, but it's not always necessary. Sometimes you accept that there's difference of opinion and move on.

Falk: Do you have a particular philosophy with regards to land use? A: Not really. It involves so many considerations. Not just legal or zoning. Also environmental, economic benefits, how projects may impact neighboring uses. As to philosophy, mine would be to

consider all the different factors and take into consideration needs and best interests of community.

Falk: Form 700 (financial reporting) is a requirement. Is that a problem? A: No.

Motion: Peterson: To recommend to SDBOS the approval of Sondra Boddy to BSCSG.

Second: Haneline

Discussion: None

Vote: Unanimous of the 5 members allowed to vote.

E. NON-ACTION ITEMS:

1. Should the BSCSG consider a “co-chair” position within our structure?
 1. Defer to next meeting.

F: GROUP BUSINESS:

1. Status update regarding search for candidates for vacant seats.— Peterson: We now have 2 open seats filled. Falk wants to retire, so please keep searching. Doesn't mean we're done. It's taken us years to fill these seats, but we're not stopping.
2. Report status on the Community Award program by Anne O'Connor and Melissa Huston — Peterson: had a conference call with Adrienne Cisneros-Selekmon, Community Liaison with 5th district - she loved idea. She didn't like “Borrego Hero Award” as a name for the award. That deals more with veterans. Maybe Borrego Spirit award. They have made progress and will continue to work on it to acknowledge our workers in the community.
4. Meeting Updates: None
5. Correspondence received: Other than attachments, none

Falk: From September ADU Zoning amendment, including separate sale of ADUs. Is going to planning commission this winter and to BOS in early 2026. ADUs could be sold separately. Will be update at Chair Qtrly meeting this month. Need to keep our ears open on this topic. Its a really important thing in the community to consider.

O'Connor: Was at La Casa del Zorro (LCDZ) and noticed updating landscaping in front. Carlos Vilchez, an independent contractor is project manager for landscaping improvement project. Anne asked about solar panel triangle; Vilches said he will be putting in 86 creosote in and agreed to put in boulders for solar field. Will start in March.

G. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: O'Connor

Second: Falk

Vote: Unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2025, at 4:30 at the Borrego Springs Library.

The Chair has appointed the following BSCSG Members to serve as points of contact for the following areas:

1. Road Maintenance, Bill Haneline
2. Dark Sky Ordinance and issues, Rebecca Falk
3. Association of Planning Groups, Jim Dax
4. Landscaping at the La Casa Solar Panel Field, Bill Haneline
5. STR issues, Nancy McRae

Potential items for our next Sponsor Group meeting which is scheduled for January 7, 2025 at 4:30:

1. Open

Emails sent to the Chair at petersonenv@hotmail.com will be forwarded to the appropriate person.

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For further information and to be added to the Sponsor Group email list to receive agendas and agenda packets, contact the Chair at petersonenv@hotmail.com . Address U.S. mail to: Community Sponsor Group, P.O. Box 1371, Borrego Springs, CA 92004-1371. For agendas, minutes and Community Plan, visit: <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/pds/gpupdate/comm/borrego.html> .

List of attachments is also listed here: Click on this link [2025-12-03 Public Folder](#)

1. Draft meeting minutes Sponsor Group meeting dated November 5, 2025
2. Short Term Rentals issues from Bill Everett, Julian Planning Group.
3. ABC permit application for Big Horn Fudge
4. CIP Improvement Priority List
5. Plans for cross walk on Palm Canyon Drive connecting our two commercial centers.