

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

Wednesday January 7, 2026, 4:30 p.m.

In-person at the Borrego Springs Library & 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	Present
Bruce Durbin	Present
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 December 3, 2025

Motion: To Approve, by Rebecca Falk

Second: Bill Haneline

Discussion: None

Vote: Six Aye votes - Peterson, Durbin, Falk, Haneline, O'Connor, McRae. One abstain - Jim Dax because he was not physically present at December 2025 meeting.

C. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION (limited to 3 min/person): 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.

MP (Member of the Public) Jan Stubbs spoke on his upcoming construction plans. He doesn't live here, but has an AirBnB on Verbena, so he is here a lot and has been coming out for many years. He recently bought a couple lots - one west of Natchez nursery (the nursery next to Center Market). This lot is zoned for tourist activities and lodging. His idea is to build a small unit there that would act as a model home. The builder is JDB Builders - they are building one in his backyard. \$54,000 to construct. Dax asked - is it modular? A: No, it is only 200 sq ft. If that goes well, he will build up to a dozen more like that to be used as Short Term Rentals (STRs). He has another lot slightly smaller just across the street from Yellow Woman Ranch on Palm Canyon. That property is zoned as a RV park. It is right between 2 other RV parks. His idea is to let people bring tiny homes on wheels. The County recently decided that was legal in unincorporated parts of County.

Peterson - Will add this topic to the agenda for February. Cannot discuss it tonight because it is not on tonight's agenda.

Durbin - Recommend Stubbs attendance at meeting on Flood maps.

Stubbs - Homes will be built on stilts.

MP Becky Rapp (?) Spoke via Zoom on the update regarding County's draft marijuana ordinance and EIR report. County BOS is scheduled to hear next week. This is a crucial moment for backcountry towns to be heard. The County had not even reviewed information from backcountry residents on environmental risks and impacts. The Sheriff's department has not provided an official statement. So moving forward without that perspective would be irresponsible. Urging Community groups to come to meeting in person or via Zoom - need to register in advance for that item on the agenda.

MP Elizabeth Rodriguez said she appreciated that the BVEF has been asked to speak at this meeting and asked that the Community Resource Center (CRC) to be invited to make their report at a future meeting.

No other comments from the public. Public comments closed.

D. ACTION ITEMS

1. Proposed Cross Walk on Palm Canyon Drive. Issue remains regarding its location across Palm Canyon Drive.

Michael Kenny - County Traffic Engineer, DPW (Dept. of Public Works) and Abe Ramlaoui, DPW. Showed aerial view of proposed location of crosswalk. County DPW have recently been installing a lot of flashing yellow lights that are pedestrian activated. He has heard about the alternate proposal (discussed at the BSCSG December 3, 2025 meeting) but wanted to explain how this location was selected. The location was selected largely because of the shopping center driveways and how left-turning vehicles would access those driveways in presence of crosswalk. Those are the most challenging entrances. They try to place crosswalks in locations that affect left-turning as little as possible. In the case of the proposed crosswalk, the diagram showed that the crosswalk is between The Center Market's westernmost entrance (Center Market is on the north side of Palm Canyon) and the middle entrance to The Mall (The Mall is located on the south side of Palm Canyon).

He then showed a diagram of BS's alternate proposed for crosswalk. It is on the east side of The Mall's middle driveway (the driveway currently being considered).

MP Jim Wermers, owner of The Mall shopping center - We have looked at the proposal and we thank you very much for putting crosswalks in BS. The ones at the Circle are working very well and we are grateful for them. The ADA access to The Center is right at the BS's proposed alternate point - right at the ramp to pharmacy and other parts of the center. We have also heard from a person who is there every day - her input is that the County's proposed location is very dangerous because people turning left aren't aware of the sidewalk. We are open to hearing why the County thinks the BS alternate location would be more dangerous. Also, Palm Canyon does not need more parking. There is plenty of parking on-site at both shopping centers. Owners of both centers are present at meeting today.

Kenny showed a diagram illustrating the County's proposed crosswalk and the left turns from Palm Canyon into both shopping centers and that they would not be crossing crosswalk

because it is located between them. There would be no conflict with pedestrians. Left turners come out of the driveway and they would be crossing the crosswalk, but they are coming from a dead stop. The challenge with BS's alternate location is that the driveways are in opposite locations. You would have to cross (drive through) the crosswalk to make a left turn. That is why they don't prefer that location. He appreciates contributions of information from workers who are there everyday, but it would be different than it is today. Perhaps it can be improved upon. We'd like to stick with our original proposal. Mid-stream crosswalks have been challenging and so we are picky about where they get placed. It's all about safety.

MP Jim Wermers: We appreciate your reasoning. I can see the conflict you're trying to avoid. I saw this morning two people trying to cross the street and they were crossing at the alternate area being proposed. The main entrance to The Mall is to the east, not at the middle driveway where the County thinks it is. Fewer pedestrians come from the west. It would be more functional and safer to put it where we are proposing.

MP David Garmon, owner of The Center (technically President of the 501 3 (c) that owns The Center), agrees with everything that Mr. Wermers just said. From a pedestrian standpoint, the County's proposed crosswalk doesn't relate to how people cross the street, particularly people with mobility issues. Flashing lights may not be necessary - the road is not that heavily trafficked. However, if we have them, moving them 100 ft to the east would be more helpful.

Kenny - Further to the right there's a crosswalk that is accessible from the sidewalk. Not sure we need to relocate the sidewalk to address that.

McRae - Asked Kenny if he or anyone working on this project has actually been out to the site to observe how traffic and pedestrians naturally utilize the entrances and cross the street. Kenny replied he had been out, but Ramlaoui has not. She said that the County's proposed crosswalk location will not be used because most pedestrians come from the east and the proposed location means they would have to walk much further and cross the middle driveway to get to it. They won't do that. They'll just run across the street from the east side like they're already doing. Also most cars from the west enter the western entrances to either shopping center, and most cars from the east enter the eastern entrances to both centers so there would not really be the left-turn issue he is discussing with the BS alternate crosswalk. Recommended that they come out and see how people are really using the area.

MP Marsha Boring - If you put the crosswalk where you're proposing it is it possible to have signage to remind drivers exiting driveway to remind them crosswalks are there? A: No.

MP Rich - We would inadvertently create an unsafe environment. Pedestrians are coming from the east side. They're going to cut across and ignore the crosswalk. Very few people come from the west so the majority will not naturally go down there.

Durbin: I don't have an opinion as to the exact location. I tend to listen to traffic engineers because safety is a critical concern. This is a major piece of infrastructure on our main street. I don't want to oppose what the property owners wishes are, but when things like this go in, other things follow so perhaps changes can be made that will be good for the County's proposed new crossing. With time and with improvements you can improve the layout to funnel people to where you want them to cross the street.

MP Jim Wermers. We appreciate getting a crosswalk, but where this one is proposed it is difficult to go from north side of crosswalk to pharmacy, especially for ADA. It's downhill. People

don't like to walk uphill to cross, then go downhill. The County's proposed crosswalk would be used at certain times where there is more traffic (like flower season), but otherwise people will cross without using crosswalk.

Peterson suggested a field trip out here to see first hand the "hills" referred to by Wermers and to see the way cars and pedestrians naturally use the area .

Kenny is happy to come out. Just bear in mind that crossing mid-block is discouraged in general. There is liability incurred with this installation as it is, even more so with the new BS proposed crosswalk. "I'll come out there, but you'll have to prove me wrong. I'll change my mind if there's better evidence."

MP Garmon - We don't have blocks per se. Its a miles long road with some driveways here and there. The reason I wouldn't cross where crosswalk is drawn is that I'd have to keep track of traffic on Palm Canyon *and* in driveways. It's confusing and difficult to cross there and much clearer 100 feet to the east. Maybe when you're out you will have that experience yourself.

Anne O'Connor - The majority of times when we need a crosswalk are high traffic times. People are coming from the east. I have mobility issues. There is no way I would walk up to the 2nd (middle) driveway on the Mall side. It won't be used.

MP - I cross Palm Canyon from one side to the other often. I would not go up to the left (the County's proposed crosswalk). Has there been a count on cars that use the middle driveway? We use the ones on the sides, especially on the east side.

Peterson: We'll set up a time that's convenient for you and talk about it in the field. We also recognize that county is concerned about the liability issues.

MP Jim Wermers - We would love to meet with you and show you. But listening to your concerns, maybe another solution is to move it 200 feet to the east (current alternate proposal is 100 feet to the east) - move it just left/east of the east entrance to the mall.

Peterson and Kenny agreed to meet next Wednesday January 14 on site. Thank you for listening and being willing to come out.

Durbin - One more comment. Flashing lights? Could go with reflectors rather than a yellow flashing light? Don't want to spoil dark skies.

Motion: (No vote needed to be taken at this time.)

Second:

Vote:

2. Election of CSG Annual Office Holders for 2026. All offices are open for any candidates.

Potential nominees included: John Peterson-Chair, Jim Dax-Vice Chair, Nancy McRae-Secretary.

Motion: By Falk - To keep officers exactly as they are

Second: Durbin

Discussion: Do we need to vote on Co Chair? A: Position not established yet.

Vote: Unanimous approval of the 7 members currently serving.

E. NON-ACTION ITEMS:

1. Report on Borrego Valley Endowment Fund (BVEF) report, David Garmon, President, presenting.

This is an exciting time for Fund. We are in a period of growth. The Fund turns 32 this year. Primary focus has been healthcare. Endowment in excess of \$11M. Since inception, BVEF has put more than \$6M back into the community in support of healthcare activities. Endowment is generating \$400K - \$500K annually that can be reinvested in the community. This year we invested \$325K in renovation of physical "plants" that are our primary healthcare. The clinic located near Rams Hill, the pharmacy at The Center market, and the Woolcott dental clinic. None had been updated in 40 years. New equipment, paint, carpet, tile has transformed those facilities into something that community can be proud of and comfortable utilizing. BVEF's new healthcare partner is DAP Health; they purchased assets of the bankrupt Borrego Health Foundation two years ago. They are a wonderful partner dedicated to Borrego Springs. David Brinkman, DAP CEO, will be here next week to meet with community and BVEF Board.

In addition to these renovations, we have supported medical emergency helicopter evacuation to residents. We used to purchase an insurance policy from Mercy Air, but California's Attorney General nixed med evac insurance policies. So now the BVEF pays out of pocket expenses of helicopter flights.

We also support our CRC. We thought it was a great idea and underwrote its incorporation and pay 1/2 the rent, and sometimes help them purchase items, for example a refrigerator that is used for their food bank.

"Let's Go Borrego" was piloted by the BVEF to provide reimbursement to community members who drive others to doctor appointments. "Let's Go Borrego" is now part of CRC and the program gets grants of \$250K from county and state.

BVEF's Small Grants program supports various non-profits like: BASIC (summer program for Borrego Springs students - BVEF has paid for the lunches for many years), Borrego Ministers Association, Borrego Village Association's wilderness education programs, support of arts and educational programs, Film festival, music academy, interpretive host program which is a CTE program at high school teaching how to be an informed host to visitors. This program has been in existence for 4 - 5 years, and recently 2 graduates were able to get employment with the State Park. Those funding efforts just discussed on all on the healthcare endowment side.

Now we have the development of a new community endowment. This can be for arts, education, environment, all sorts of activities that support the community but are outside of healthcare. The cornerstone of the community endowment is the Wermers' gift of The Center shopping center to the BVEF; the net revenues generated by The Center, rather than benefiting individuals or out of town corporations, are able to be reinvested in the community. We support the children's center, started the Teachers' Fund to help every teacher in the Borrego Unified School District buy classroom supplies that they need. The BVEF Community Endowment is now beginning to generate revenues that we can fold into our small grants program - last year \$50K, this year will be 3x that amount. We will be outreaching for letters of interest from organizations, so if you know of someone let them know.

We are in process of hiring an executive director. This is a growth step. We have been a volunteer organization, but are just about to outgrow that status.

MP Elizabeth Rodriguez - It sounds wonderful. Small grants for non-profits. Would Borrego News be a potential recipient or would the Borrego Sun? A: The grants that we can make are to other 501 3 (c) organizations. If they're not, they can't receive funds from the BVEF.

Peterson: Where does the endowment lie? Are you part of the San Diego Foundation? A: We are not part of the SD Foundation . We are our own Foundation with our own investment advisors, currently Blankenship & Foster, and the funds are with Schwab.

MP: What is the size and purpose of the small grant program? A: To support local charitable organizations. The size of contributions is evolving.

Dax - When you donate on line, it doesn't show different categories where you can donate. A: Donations can be specified. If they aren't specified they go into "Unrestricted Donations."

2. Should the BSCSG consider a "co-chair" position within our structure?

Falk: Suggestion prompted by the fact that there is a lot of email that goes to Chair from the County. It's easy to miss things. At a minimum a co-chair could be authorized to also receive emails so there is a second review of them, so that if there are deadlines, etc. there would be a second pair of eyes.

Peterson: Other SG have this position. He likes the idea. The Chair position is all consuming. He's been including Vice Chair and Secretary in decisions about what goes on the agenda, etc. This co-chair position is something to consider for the future.

Falk: Theoretically every member oof the SG is willing to serve in an office, but in reality that hasn't happened. Co-chair could share the burden and be in training for Chair position. It could rotate, not by the month, but by the year.

Haneline: We've survived many many years without the new position. It sounds like the new position could be overwhelmed.

Peterson: In terms of amount of volunteer time spent behind the scenes, it's 80% the Chair - about 80 hours a month. It's all consuming. This isn't a dictatorship, it's a democracy. Last couple years, it's been the executive team, but we need to build and grow that.

MP Jan - Can you delegate? A: Yes and I try to do that.

Dax: It seems like a good idea, with the caveat that I don't want to do it. Takes some stress away from you.

McRae: Any issues with Brown Act? A: Quorum is 5, so no.

Falk: The county will only send emails to Chair and Co-chair, so that is why position is needed.

Peterson: Will think about this and make a decision in the future.

Falk: Let's not wait a year. Once the new members are formally on the SG, let's get going with the program.

3. Update from the Chairs meeting December 13, 2025. Presenting John Peterson

Quarterly meeting of Chairs of Community and Planning Group - 2 hour meeting.

Falk: What about ADU issue? Did it come up? A: Yes, and its a big deal. It was dealt with under housing legislation. Issues of septic, etc. STRs - Bill Everett spoke to garner support to get the County to deal with this. There is a coalition forming to motivate supervisors to deal with these

STR issues. John sent email 12/23/25 and people should review it - a lot of important information.

F: GROUP BUSINESS:

1. Status update regarding search for candidates for vacant seats.

Melissa Huston will be going through up-coming required training later this month. Regarding Sondra our recommendation has moved forward to the County. The clerk of the CBOS packages these things together as agenda items and the CBOS approves them, but John hasn't received a date yet for that. That's the last step and then she can be official. We have 9 seats, we've been operating two short, which can be tricky with a quorum - quorum is set not by the number of people present - its established by the number of seats on the record, so quorum number is five.

2. Status on Borrego Spirit Award - Report by Melissa Huston and Anne O'Connor
Program is going well. What is the purpose? The BS Community Service Award program is designed to recognize and celebrate individuals who demonstrate exceptional commitment to improving the quality of life in BS. The program honors unpaid community members who service, leadership and generosity help define the character of our desert community. It is for the people who operate "behind the scenes," not the ones who are already very visible.

Peterson: We have talked with Adrienne in the 5th district, she is very excited about it. Its to recognize the people who make a difference who are often not acknowledged. It would be from the CBOS to show appreciation of the recipient's community involvement. Do it at Borrego Days. Will continue to work on it and put it on agenda later for comment and questions.

The names being considered for the Award are: Community Impact Award; Making a Difference Award; Beacon of Service Award; Heart of the Community Award. Final naming to be determined collectively.

MP - Get this info out to the public so that people can nominate who they know.

McRae - Loves this award and appreciates the effort being made to develop it. It will be great to be able to honor people that contribute so much, yet get little recognition.

4. Meeting Updates: None

5. Correspondence received: Other than attachments, none

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

1. Road Maintenance, Bill Haneline - No update
2. Dark Sky Ordinance and issues, Rebecca Falk - No update
3. Association of Planning Groups, Jim Dax - Group is working on getting Unincorporated towns' voice added to the table.
4. Landscaping at the La Casa Solar Panel Field, Bill Haneline - No update
5. Short Term Rentals (STRs) Nancy McRae - In the course of working on letter to Supervisor Jim Desmond, as voted on at last meeting, came across research that indicates there are 600-800 STRs in the Borrego Springs area.

G. ADJOURNMENT 6:04

Motion: Durbin

Second: Falk

Vote: Unanimous by the seven members present.

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

Potential items for our next Sponsor Group meeting which is scheduled for February 4, 2025:

1. Open

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

To sign up for **County of San Diego** email or text notices about various programs and topics that you can choose, visit: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CASAND/subscriber/new?preferences=true#tab1> or search for the program at the county you want to find and scroll down to their email sign up link.

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> .