

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

Wednesday, March 4, 2026, 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	Present
Bruce Durbin	Present
Bill Haneline	Present
Melissa Huston	Present
Rebecca Falk	Present
Anne O'Connor	Present
Nancy McRae, Secretary	Present
Seat #9 - Vacant	

B. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE MEETING of February 4, 2026, (Attached)

MOTION: Jim Dax

SECOND: Anne O'Connor

DISCUSSION: Haneline regarding LCDZ, Cecena is correct spelling of name.

VOTE: APPROVED

John Peterson, Chair	Yes
Jim Dax, Vice-Chair	Yes
Bruce Durbin	Yes
Bill Haneline	Yes
Melissa Huston	Yes
Rebecca Falk	Abstain (not at previous meeting)
Anne O'Connor	Yes
Nancy McRae, Secretary	Yes
Seat #9 - Vacant	

C. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION (limited to 3 min per 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.

Nancy McRae let the group know of Bill Berkeley's passing on February 27. She read the following: "Bill was a valued member of the Sponsor Group serving during two

separate times. Bill loved Borrego Springs. The later years of his life were devoted to the revitalization of the Rams Hill golf course and community. Thanks to Bill's vision, Rams Hill is once again the thriving golf course and active community that we know today. He worked with the investment group that turned Rams Hill from a barren and desiccated landscape in 2014 to the town's largest employer today. Bill had a tremendously positive and lasting impact on our community and for that the BSCSG will always be grateful."

Kathleen Lippett wants to share an item written by Planning Group (not the BSCSG) member Robin Joy Maxon. In it she spells out what's been going on at the county. There is a trend to marginalizing planning groups. Their input and agendas were taken over by County Planning services who determined what their agendas were. The lack of transparency just got worst. There's little connection between what cities want and what unincorporated areas want, and now the unincorporated areas have lost their voice. Never heard backcountry clamoring for cannabis shops, bike lanes, green farming. County outreach about meetings was posted in newspapers that backcountry residents don't read, therefore only a handful of people came to the 3 meetings. Doesn't know how we can get the power back to the people. Nancy McRae requested that the "written item" Kathleen referenced in her first sentence be emailed to John Peterson; Kathleen agreed to do so.

Elena Thomson has a suggestion. Last year we had code enforcement people out which helped them understand BS issues and held them accountable. Have them out annually on a field trip or via zoom.

John Peterson - Rebecca Falk will be leaving the BSCSG after this meeting.

D. ACTION ITEMS

1. Socially Equitable Cannabis Program, Nancy McRae to present a summary previous CSG action. Elena Thompson Presenting

NM - Encouraged people to read minutes from April 2025 meeting available on County website. Explained that 2 motions were made regarding this issue, but neither got sufficient votes to enable writing a letter to the County.

Falk - there is still a hearing before the County planning group on 4/10.

Elena Thomson - I am interested in this topic. I have been coming to Borrego since the 70s. Have seen the impacts of cannabis at the coast. Got interested in what the County was doing on this issue. I want to see BS kept free from the problems of the coast and keep our gem safe and protected.

Attended recent County meeting. The source of info for her presentation comes from State and County websites. Diagram of county supervisors. Jim Desmond, District 5. History of Socially Equitable Cannabis (SEC) program. In 2006, Prop 64 legalized cannabis in California. The full title was "Control, Regulate and Tax the Adult Use of Marijuana." Within SD county, there were 27,000 individuals in jail or with misdemeanor or felony convictions to do with marijuana. All those people had their cases dismissed.

What is the program exactly? The County's new program started evolving in 2020 under Nathan Fletcher and allows commercial cannabis businesses in unincorporated areas, where approx 550K people reside. The program is being designed for safe access to cannabis and to provide an equitable path to cannabis business ownership for those individuals previously convicted.

The program includes regulatory requirements, licensing, environmental considerations (maybe). The program is for "eligible" people provided they have no new convictions, but "eligible" is not clearly defined.

The program allows for cannabis retail dispensaries. Encinitas - where the proposition won 51-49 %, now has 5 dispensaries, and they have seen the impact. Cannabis lounges, events, cultivation, manufacturing. We've seen cultivation and manufacturing when we drive by Lake Henshaw. One of the tribes has a facility up there.

Stakeholders in BS. At the 1/14 County meeting, many other planning/sponsor groups from all over County were represented - concerns were universally shared. Concerns include Sheriff and police - we don't have a local force; Fire/ambulance - we don't have enough; Medical providers are not strong in this town. The businesses, residents, youth, tourists, visitors and the wild animals will all be impacted. Countless studies throughout the state show the deleterious effects of marijuana on youth. She recommended that BS ask to be exempt.

Some of the BS conflicts and risks for BS: 1. Water adjudication is trying to bring aquifer back into balance. Groves are closing out, how much sense would it make to bring in marijuana cultivation. Land is very cheap here. 2. Dark Skies. Light from nocturnal cultivation in greenhouses. Picture of lighted greenhouse shown. 3. Air pollution. Stench of marijuana. Cathedral City has taken action about the stench affecting residents and they are having to reverse course. 4. Public safety. 5. Driving on country roads (narrow and winding). 6. Burden on medical service providers.

Quality of Life - BS is a Park-centric community. We are about families and community. We are the largest state park. Do we want to be known as a cannabis destination?

She is not fear mongering. These are real world decisions that we should be paying attention to.

Next steps: Finalizing draft ordinance and EIR, draft licensing, then presenting SEC program to County Planning Commission, then will go back one more time to County Board of Supervisors (BOS) which has already voted 3 -2 in earlier vote. Expect hearing to be this summer. To what extent it could roll out here, we don't know.

Final recommendation. Request the SG to send a letter to the county requesting an exemption given the conflicts, risks and issues. The Major of El Cajon said you can have marijuana delivered anywhere, so dispensaries aren't needed.

Public discussion period opened

Anne O'Connor - My recollection was BS was exempt based on water restrictions. (That is not correct.) Could we ask for an exemption?

Durbin - Have to have industrial zoning, which BS has very little so the likelihood of cultivation here is very unlikely.

Falk - County doesn't operate that way (meaning granting exemptions)

Durbin - Can't exempt your community from a county-wide ordinance. The other issue is equity. Communities like Borrego, strong, volunteers, tight knit; other communities are more ethnic, not as organized, people are working 2-3 jobs, because they're not organized enough to say no all this would get shoved on them.

O'Connor and McRae - Yes, just like the State shoved the Sexually Violent Predators (SVPs) on us and left the coastal cities alone.

Public Discussion

Lippett - Prop 64 written by marijuana industry They outspent those who opposed 11:1. It barely passed. It did not have an overwhelming majority. If the industry is struggling, taxes won't be collected. The idea of letting marijuana industry educate on prevention makes no sense. The DOJ did an analysis on the numbers we were told were in prison for simple possession - 1 in 3 was in for simple possession. Most were in for dealing on a large scale. To her, it is violence when you reach out to young people whose lives may be ruined. Treatment is expensive. They talk about harms to those convicted. They never mention harms done to those in drug abuse or drug violence. The growers told the Planning Commissioners - we do not want to pay for municipal waters, we want to dig wells. They were given the right to do that.

Peterson asked that comments be kept relevant to Borrego Springs.

Brad Coe. Great presentation. We're in Santa Ysabel. When those greenhouse lights are on, it illuminates the entire area.

MP (Member of Public) Great presentation. Water is definitely an issue. I'll bring this up to Water Master Board (WMB). They were going to put a grove on the other side of the mountain. WMB wrote a letter in opposition. To say it's "unlikely" scares me. If it's unlikely, then let's just stop it. When you go by the 86, that smell is pervasive. Now two different ordinances (dark sky and SEC) will end up in court. If this is what community thinks, we should oppose and put it on record.

Brad Coe - The power they use. They run generators 24/7 - don't connect to SDGE. Go through 2K gallons of propane per week. Constantly growing. Manufacturing brings in other companies.

Durbin: False statements. There isn't a 24/7 growing operation. Only time you see lights are in winter hours until 8 pm. During winter, marijuana still needs 12 hours of daylight. Tribe is looking into installing interior curtains. The Lipay Nation has a fully licensed, sovereign, and taxed cannabis operation. 60% of clientele at that dispensary are over the age of 55. There are no teenagers working there. If there are generators, they

supplement the power supplies that already exist. If you want info about their operations, anyone is welcome to go and ask.

MP Claire Leaphart. Thank you for presentation. Two points. A letter is mandatory- even if it's not read, it's on file. The state park surrounds us - do they have a position on this? Do they attend our meetings? It would be great if they would make a statement - even though they are state government.

JP - Asked for additional comments. Public comments closed.

O'Connor - Made a motion to present a letter in opposition to the County, based on our risks and issues. The town of BS is overwhelmingly against this (SEC program).

There was no Second.

Dax - has been attending Planning Group meetings. BSCSG is not a voting member, advisory only. It's a complicated issue. Everyone has said they do not want it. They said they would like Alternative 4. We did discuss this in the past.

Falk - The BOS meeting that Elena and Anne went to voted on the options they wanted staff to pursue. Formal recommendation on zoning ordinance. Going to consider how to implement with zoning. Board will make final decision in June. Window of opportunity is before 4/10 meeting. Another piece of info: The Planning Dept is going to carry forward the option of not doing anything. Points she wanted to make - this was discussed in April, 2025. BS has a dark skies ordinance that any project has to adhere to and county would enforce that. A new business would not be exempt. Water is adjudicated and managed. It is not even a possibility the cannabis will be grown here. The water and light issues are red herrings for Borrego. When she talks to members in the community most of whom are unaware of the SEC, the people who she talks to would like a dispensary. Doesn't mean the whole community is opposed to it.

McRae - We live next to an officially designated wilderness area, yet twice now we are having to battle the installation of mega electrical transport towers right through the wilderness. Just because the government is not supposed to do something, doesn't mean that they won't change their mind and do it. We should at least write a letter in opposition.

O'Connor - If we are truly as impotent as it seems, we have wasted an hour discussing this.

Falk: Could make a motion that we sent a comment letter to the Planning Commission and copy to the BOS voicing our opposition - urge them to do Option 1.

MOTION: O'Connor - that we provide a letter recommending that we proceed with the option that says "No Project."

SECOND: Jim Dax

DISCUSSION:

Falk: AI summary of BOS meeting said - the motion passed . Staff said the no project alternative will still be provided to the board.

VOTE: MOTION NOT APPROVED, VOTE SPLIT 4 - 4

John Peterson, Chair No

Jim Dax, Vice-Chair	Yes
Bruce Durbin	No
Bill Haneline	No
Melissa Huston	Yes
Rebecca Falk	No
Anne O'Connor	Yes
Nancy McRae, Secretary	Yes
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McRae asked if a motion to write a letter in support of the other Planning Groups/Sponsor Groups who have opposed all alternatives except 1 and 4 might be approved. The program helps former drug dealers and users get their lives back together.

. The answer was no.

2. Potential land development on Palm Canyon Road, Jan Stubbs presenting.

No presentation because Jan Stubbs was not in attendance.

E. NON-ACTION ITEMS:

1. Report from the Borrego Springs Rotary. Diane Johnson, President of Rotary presenting.

12 members, small but mighty. Raised \$60K last two years and have given that away. Also have funds from an earlier Dennis Avery donation. Rotary Intl is all over the world. It has given away \$4B since inception. The Gates Foundation partnered with Rotary to eradicate polio - have come so close.

Gave away last year \$50K in scholarships for all kinds of education, from beauty school to Stanford University. Two other initiatives: 1. Send youth to Leadership Development; 8 kids/year, weekend retreat camps learn to speak in public, great exposure to kids from other communities. 2. Community development for example Community Concert Association, Art Institute to buy new shelves for educational art programs, Ernie Loza to help with orphanage in Calexico. Gave 22 scholarships this past year. If a student begins school, the amount increases from \$1K to \$2K in year two and stays at that as long as they're in school.

Dax - Primary way of raising funds? A: the gala. Also, the Miss Borrego Contest run by Sylvana Meeks, not at all just a beauty contest - the students taught how to speak and comport themselves in public. Is there a website for donations: borregospringsrotary.org

2. Report on the Borrego Spirit award. Melissa Huston presenting.

Handed out information about award. For a copy of info sheet, please email John Peterson. Huston said that the only since last meeting was that Adrienne Cisneros-Selekman (County staff) wants to cap at 4 recipients per cycle - 2 cycles per year.

Durbin - Some guidelines /definitions on volunteerism, acts of service; these terms are closely aligned, ambiguous. Huston: Agreed to tighten up so not left to interpretation.

Falk: Likes the word "heart" and would like "Heart of the Community" to be first choice.

3. Proposed Cross Walk on Palm Canyon Drive. Jim Dax presenting.

Nothing to discuss yet.

4. Status update on the letter regarding Short Term Rentals update. John Peterson presenting. Have not gotten a response from the County to the BSCSG letter, which was also sent to the public.

F: GROUP BUSINESS:

1. Need a temporary secretary for the April 1, 2026 meeting (Huston volunteered)

2. Schedule for the summer break for the CSG.

Last meeting is June 3, October 7 will be next meeting.

3. Status of required training for all members of the CSG. Per JP, up to each member.

4. Correspondence received: none

G. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Nancy

SECOND: Falk

VOTE: Unanimous Meeting adjourned at 6:14

The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 1, 2026, 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

Won't be here to continue this, but is in the middle of follow up with county to have a web page for dark sky ordinance. Intl standards and county standards don't match anymore. No one at the county to help with that. Would anyone like to take it on. Falk could work under the auspices of the Infrastructure committee. Anne O'Connor would like to know what is involved.

3. Association of Planning Groups, Jim Dax

Nothing new.

4. Landscaping at the La Casa Solar Panel Field, Bill Haneline

Anne O'Connor spoke with Cecena - they are transitioning to being self-managed, on back burner for now.

5. Report from the Infrastructure Committee, Bill Haneline.

Nothing to report.

Jim Dax is taking over for Code Enforcement.

Potential items for our next Sponsor Group meeting which is scheduled for April 1, 2026:

1. Report on flood control studies being conducted in the basin. Of specific note is the extent of the area of study. Presentation by the San Diego County Public Works Flood Control and Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA). Power Point Presentation. (Four Attachments)

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> .