

**RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION**

**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

**February 10, 2026, 4:00 p.m.**

**City Hall Council Chambers**

**110 East Cook Street**

**Santa Maria**

Members Present: Commissioner Rebecca Carey, Commissioner Sally Lopez, Commissioner Jose Ramirez

Members Absent: Commissioner Cynthia Gudino, Commissioner Yolanda Zamora

Staff Present: Recreation Supervisor Rudy Gutierrez, Business Program Leader Neville Smeda, Interim Director of Recreation and Parks Dennis Smitherman, Administrative Assistant Shannon Mendez

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**1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**2. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Commission Chair Carey called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

**3. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**3.a Approval of Minutes**

**Moved by:** Commissioner Sally Lopez

**Seconded by:** Commissioner Jose Ramirez

**Approved**

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (Not to Exceed 15 Minutes)**

Julie Sainz, representing the local Girl Scout Service Unit, addressed the Commission regarding park rental fees at Pioneer Park.

**5. PRESENTATIONS**

**5.a Homelessness Update**

Principal Park Services Officer, Ruben Ramirez, provided a presentation on homelessness impacts within the City and the role of City Rangers.

He also reported an increase in individuals arriving from Los Angeles, Ventura, and Kern Counties.

**6. REGULAR BUSINESS**

**6.a Seating of Commission Chair- Commissioner Gudino**

Item postponed to next meeting due to the absence of Commissioners Gudino and Zamora.

**6.b Seating of Vice Chair- Commissioner Ramirez**

Item postponed to next meeting due to the absence of Commissioners Gudino and Zamora.

**6.c Recommendation to City Council to place Alexander "Alex" Posada on the Eligibility List for Future Park and Facility Naming**

Staff presented a recommendation to place Alex Posada on the eligibility list for future park and facility naming and forward the recommendation to City Council.

**Moved by:** Commissioner Jose Ramirez

**Seconded by:** Commissioner Sally Lopez

**Approved**

**6.d Assign/Reassign Commissioners to the Committee List**

Committee assignments were not addressed and will be postponed until the next meeting.

**6.e Canceling the Commission Meeting of March 10, 2026**

**Moved by:** Commissioner Jose Ramirez

**Seconded by:** Commissioner Sally Lopez

**Approved**

**7. REPORTS BY STAFF**

Interim Recreation Manager, Rudy Gutierrez, gave an update on the recreation division.

Breakfast & Big Ideas (January 31): Teen-led enrichment event at Able Maldonado Youth Center; 35 students participated. Featured six local professionals and focused on career exploration and leadership development.

Rec Ready Mentorship – Cohort 3: 12-week partnership with Allan Hancock College connecting recreation students with City mentors. Participants will complete capstone projects benefiting the department.

Los Flores Ranch Park: Operating days adjusted to Friday–Sunday (low Thursday usage); hours 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., expanding to 8:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m. in spring/summer.

Upcoming Event: Cupid’s Pajama Breakfast Bash at Elwin Mussell Senior Center, supporting senior programs.

Recreation Guide: New bilingual (English/Spanish) print and digital guide released; includes QR access. Commissioners commended the design and presentation.

Business Manager, Neville Smeda, provided an update on the department budget:

Budget Overview: Approved General Fund & Measure U budget totals approximately \$15.7 million. \$1 million in reductions already approved; department directed to identify an additional \$2 million in cuts for FY 2026–27. Approximately 67 percent of the budget supports salaries and benefits.

Positions Eliminated: Teen Outreach Coordinator, Recreation Supervisor (Youth Center), two Recreation Coordinators, Program Specialist, one City Ranger vacancy, part-time laborer, and 30,000 hours of limited-service staff.

Impacts: Reduced youth prevention programming, fewer recreation offerings and facility hours, decreased park safety presence, longer maintenance response times, and potential aquatics reductions.

Additional Information: Several vacancies remain unfilled. Staff noted long-term sustainability concerns and advised that all program areas may be affected if additional reductions proceed. Commission encouraged to communicate community priorities to City Council.

Staff emphasized commitment to maintaining core services while exploring revenue opportunities.

Interim Director, Dennis Smitherman, gave an update on the Parks Division and the Department:

Japanese Community Center: Exterior and landscaping nearly complete; interior lighting and ADA improvements underway. Grand opening anticipated Spring 2026.

Sports Park: Earthwork largely complete; irrigation installation in progress. Minor storm delay. Anticipated opening Spring 2027.

Dog Park: Administrative delay addressed; contractor coordination ongoing for amenities installation. Opening anticipated Spring 2026.

Budget reductions remain a priority.

Budget Committee to reconvene to review programs, operations, and fee structure.

Fee-setting authority amendment clarifies City Council retains final approval.

Commission will hold public hearings and recommend fees.

Ordinance anticipated for March 3 Council meeting; implementation follows 30-day adoption period.

Japanese Community Center fees tied to ordinance update.

## **8. ORAL REPORTS OF COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Lopez: Attended District 5 Supervisor kickoff; active with Boys & Girls Club 60th Anniversary Committee and Mexican Ladies Social Club; reported \$15,000 raised for Boys & Girls Club.

Commissioner Ramirez: Attended District 5 Supervisor campaign kickoff.

Chair Carey: Attended Buena Vista Beautifiers meeting, Friends of the Library luncheon, County Parks Master Plan workshop, and Mayor's Youth Task Force meeting (planning Los Angeles educational trip).

A concern was raised regarding use of a motorized remote-control boat at Jim May Park and potential wildlife impacts; staff to review applicable ordinance and enforcement options

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

Commission Chair Carey adjourned the meeting at 5:12 p.m.

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Dennis Smitherman, Secretary