

NEWPORT BAY CONSERVANCY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING
MINUTES

Wednesday, February 25, 2026, 5:30 PM, In Person and **ZOOM**

Attending:

President – Bryan Tsu

Board Members – Mario Cuevas, Diane Daruty, Bettina Eastman, Lori Metherate (virtual), Julia Powers, Yugina Yun, McKenna Wegner

Staff and guests - Heather Cieslak (virtual), Thomas Shields

OC Parks – Molly Waldram

Excused Absence: Maureen Flanagan, Peter Bryant

5:35 Call to order/roll call: Bryan

Approval of Minutes: January 2026 Board Meeting Minutes

Bettina moved; Molly seconded; Unanimously approved

1. Operations Report: Heather

The Operations Report was provided ([see attached](#)).

In the process of interviews and recruitment of an Administrative Assistant, which remains a priority, with final selections expected within the coming weeks.

2. Restoration Committee: Yugina

The Restoration Report was provided ([see attached](#)), and an update was provided on the financials for Big Canyon Phase 3 project. Plant procurement is nearing completion with the final delivery scheduled for February 26, 2026, following successful adjustments to the plant palette. Operationally, the OC Weed Warrior program is now active, with ongoing evaluation of current vehicle logistics.

3. Treasurer's Report: Julie

The Finance Committee Report was provided. The organization has implemented a refined financial reporting structure, now providing detailed profit and loss statements for each individual project and event. Looking ahead, the new administrative position will be tasked with processing these statements to streamline the financial workflow, subject to final review and approval by leadership.

4. Audit Committee: Diane

Following a review of three prospective auditing firms, the Audit Committee recommends the engagement of UHY, citing their strong reputation and alignment with the organization's mission. The committee aims to initiate the audit this summer. The Committee formally requested a board motion to authorize the commencement of contract negotiations with UHY.

Bettina made the motion to pursue a contract negotiation with UHY, Mario seconded. Motion passed.

5. Education Committee: Mario

The Education Committee Report was provided ([see attached](#)). The Education Committee presented a proposal for two new naturalist programs, "Drawn to Nature" and "Indigenous People."

Recognizing the need for immediate funding ahead of the final 2026 budget approval, after which the Education Committee would have approved funding for programming, the Board approved a motion—moved by Julie and seconded by Yugina—to allocate \$1,250 in unrestricted funds to support these initiatives.

For the Indigenous People program/walk, Mario will oversee plant sourcing and ensure that all educational literature explicitly communicates a "no-take" policy. Furthermore, the Committee reported on ongoing efforts to increase Earth Day engagement within the Santa Ana community, including transportation options.

6. Board Recruitment: Diane, Heather

Diane and Maureen as co-chairs of the board development committee, have started to ramp-up the recruitment process.

The board recruitment form is available online. Heather will be providing a list of potential naturalists to recruit from. Emphasis to try and find a balance of both naturalists and board members who can bring additional fundraising capacity to the organization.

7. Fundraising Committee: Bryan

GBTB - bi-weekly meetings have commenced with the working group to start planning.

Spirit Run - approval/permitting process nearly complete; not ready for the working group to commence meeting yet.

8. Research and Advocacy Committee: Peter

The Research Committee Report will be provided at the next meeting.

9. Community Outreach Committee: Bettina

The Community Outreach Committee Report will be provided at the next meeting.

6:50 Adjournment: Bettina moved; Molly seconded.

Respectfully submitted,
McKenna Wegner, Secretary and Bryan Tsu, President