



MINUTES

Recreation and Community Services Commission
Adjourned Regular Meeting
November 12, 2025

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 6 p.m. by Chairperson Anitza Valles

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was led by Commissioner Veronica Lucio.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Chairperson Anitza Valles
Vice Chairperson Dave Allen
Commissioner Veronica Lucio
Commissioner Ted Spaseff
Commissioner Kristie Larison

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting of October 8, 2025. A motion was made by Commissioner Ted Spaseff and seconded by Vice Chairperson Dave Allen to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 8, 2025. Minutes were approved as submitted with Commissioner Kristie Larison abstaining.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Director Valarie Frost began her announcements by informing the commission that since the city is no longer responsible for managing the Lakewood Equestrian Center (LEC), the proposed report for the commission's receipt was removed. Instead, she shared that a brief overview of current operations would be verbally provided.

Ms. Frost reported that Pilmore Equestrian LLC., owned and operated by Cindy Flavin, began leasing the LEC in January of 2025 and, as of October 31, has 52 horses boarding on the property. It was said that the pony ride and petting zoo concessions remain the most popular public activity on the grounds. Ms. Frost noted that Ms. Flavin was currently in the early stages of providing design and installation plans for new horse stalls and is concurrently repairing existing stalls in both horse barns on the facility. It was said that the overall footprint of the facility was reduced to the southerly section, located below the Longworth Channel. She shared that the northerly section of the facility would officially become part of Rynerson Park on January 1, 2026. The commission was informed that the city was in the process of soliciting demolition plans for the remaining pipe stalls located in the northerly section. Ms. Frost mentioned that the trailers used for storage of tack and almost all boarder-owned sheds had already been demolished and stated that staff were currently working with the leaseholder in preparing the southerly section of the facility to accommodate horse trailers currently on-site. She noted that the leaseholder was expected to provide the City Council with a report in early 2026 outlining the business' profit and loss, operational updates, and completed and planned improvements.

Ms. Frost reported that the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Long Range Plan was fully completed on October 1 and was now available as a public resource. She shared that the document could be easily accessed on the city's website by searching the keyword "*Long Range Plan*." Commissioners were encouraged to review the plan, as they had contributed valuable thoughts and feedback during its development.

Next, Ms. Frost reported that in the beginning of 2026, the Park Development Committee will receive quarterly progress reports to coordinate with staff on actionable goals identified in the Plan. Commissioners will be notified of these meetings and are welcome to attend as members of the audience when staff present updates to the council committee.

Ms. Frost informed the commission that the annual Lakewood Celebrates Holiday Reception was scheduled for Tuesday, December 9, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. in the Weingart Ballroom at The Centre. It was said that the evening would feature a light buffet and plenty of holiday spirit as the city recognizes individuals and groups for their achievements and expresses appreciation to organizations for their continued generosity towards the Project Shepherd program. Ms. Frost mentioned that attendees were encouraged to bring an unwrapped toy or canned food item in support of Project Shepherd. She asked the commission to RSVP with their secretary by December 1.

The commission was informed that although all volunteer assignments for Project Shepherd had been filled, commissioners who would still like to lend a hand are warmly encouraged to help at the warehouse between December 1 and 13. If interested, the commission was asked to let their secretary know.

Assistant Director Kevin Bright announced that the department had filled the vacant Community Services Supervisor position.

Next, Mr. Bright provided information on programming and upcoming events. He announced that Lakewood Youth Sports (LYS) playoffs for volleyball were under way at the Hoover Middle School gym for 10-11 and 12-14 age groups. He shared that flag football championships were scheduled for Thursday, November 13 at San Martin Park, with two games at 5:30 for 8-9-year-olds and 6:30 for 10-11-year-olds. It was said that if it were to rain, football games would be rescheduled to Tuesday, November 18 at the same time and location.

Mr. Bright reported that the Special Olympics Southern California Fall Games would take place on Saturday and Sunday, November 15 and 16, at Mile Square Park in Fountain Valley. He shared that Lakewood would be represented by two softball teams and one soccer team, supported by city staff and volunteer coaches. It was said that pool play would be held on Saturday, followed by final bracket competition on Sunday. The commission was informed that rain was to be expected over the weekend and if so, games may be altered. He shared that Special Olympics Southern California would provide a contingency update by the end of the day on Thursday, November 13. He asked that if the commission would like to attend, that they RSVP with their secretary so she can arrange for updates via text by Community Services Supervisor Noel Munoz.

Next, Mr. Bright shared that with the Project Shepherd season in full swing and registration already under way at Palms Park and the Burns Community Center, the department was looking to raise funds for the program with the annual Turkey Softball Tournament. He shared that to date, six teams have registered and \$1,000 was committed from backstop sign sponsors. It was said that the tournament was scheduled for Saturday, November 22 at San Martin Park, and possibly Palms

Park, if enough teams register. Mr. Bright shared that the tournament typically raises about \$3,500 for Project Shepherd.

Lastly, Mr. Bright informed the commission that on Friday, December 5, the annual Tree Lighting Ceremony would take place in the Centre Plaza. He shared that rain or shine, a great time is sure to be had by all. It was said that the event begins at 4:30 p.m. with food trucks, game booths, visits with Santa Claus, and a countdown at 6:30 p.m. to light up the tree and kick off the yuletide as snow magically falls from the sky.

Parks Superintendent Abel Andrade shared that the Environmental Resources Division (ERD) staff attended the annual Landscape Expo in Anaheim on November 12 and 13. He shared that the two-day event features numerous industry vendors, new products, showcases and educational seminars.

Next, Mr. Andrade reported that with the impending rain, ERD staff was proactive in preparing facilities by setting out sandbags and turning off irrigation controllers.

Commissioner Ted Spaseff commented that he attended Fest-Of-All, Lollipop Lane and the Lakewood Education Foundation Golf Tournament. He shared that all events were a success and thanked staff for their hard work and dedication.

Ms. Frost clarified for Commissioner Kristie Larison that there were not yet design plans in place for the formerly northern section of the Lakewood Equestrian Center.

Commissioner Larison commented that the newly paved street on Lakewood Blvd. looked amazing. She also shared that she attended the Fest-Of-All event and mentioned that it was a great time and a seamless transition to the new location at Palms Park.

Commissioner Veronica Lucio mentioned that the cover band at Fest-Of-All was phenomenal and shared that she was very impressed. She echoed Commissioner Larison's comments regarding the new location, stating that it was a nice change to the event.

Chairperson Anitza Valles commended staff for having contingency plans in place for upcoming events in case it rains.

REPORTS:

1. Aquatics Program Annual Report

Community Services Supervisor Teneale McCullough displayed slides and provided information regarding the aquatics program in 2025. She reminded the commission that the City of Lakewood maintains two seasonal pool facilities, providing aquatics programs, which include swimming instruction, recreational swim sessions, water fitness classes, lap swim, a Junior Lifeguard program, special events, and facility rentals.

Ms. McCullough shared that 2025 was another successful year for aquatics in Lakewood. Details regarding both youth and adult swim lessons, recreation swim, adult exercise classes, lap swim, the Save-a-Life event, Family Friday Nights, the Junior Lifeguard

program, aquatics staff training and recruitment, and private pool rentals were provided as noted in the written report.

Commissioner Larison thanked Ms. McCullough for her detailed and informative presentation. She mentioned that the pool parties were a great idea, and shared that she has heard nothing but good feedback regarding the Junior Lifeguard Program.

Ms. McCullough confirmed for Chairperson Valles that the Junior Lifeguard Program was designed for youth ages 12-15.

Chairperson Valles commented that the high retention rates of aquatics staff was a testament to how amazing the program is.

Commissioner Spaseff thanked Ms. McCullough for her profound enthusiasm and passion for the aquatics program.

The Commission received and filed the annual report on Aquatics Program.

2. Incident and Injury Annual Report

Community Services Manager Joseph Vasquez expanded on information on the department's incident and injury reporting process as noted in the written report. He reminded the commission that recreation staff completes a department incident and injury report form to record all incidents and injuries occurring on a city recreation facility. Management personnel, including the department director, review the reports for completeness and to identify potential trends. Statistical information, including type of incident and an estimate of loss to the city, is transferred into a spreadsheet allowing staff to recognize specific types of incidents and injuries occurring on a facility. Mr. Vasquez reported that through October 2025, there were 187 incidents reported across all facilities for the year, which reflects an 11% decrease, and was said to be the lowest total number of incidents in the past three years.

Mr. Vasquez reported that of all the facilities, Boyar, Del Valle, and Mayfair parks had reported the highest number of incidents in 2025. The most common types of incidents were said to include vandalism, patron injuries, and Gatekeeper calls made by city staff. Mr. Vasquez shared that vandalism remains a frequent issue at city facilities. In 2025, it was said that staff documented 39 instances of vandalism, with graffiti being the most prevalent. Other forms of vandalism were said to include turf damage, property damage, and fire. Information was provided as noted in the written report regarding the two most costly incidents of vandalism reported in 2025, which occurred at Boyar Park and Del Valle Park.

The commission was informed that a summary of the 2025 incident and injury reports and a three-year comparison of statistics, by facility and by type, was provided in their agenda packets.

Commissioner Larison inquired about emergency calls to the Sheriff's Department and how they had decreased significantly from the year prior, while unruliness had increased. Mr. Vasquez informed her that it could be due to the way incidents are classified by the reporting staff member, as unruliness can include calls to the Sheriff's Department.

Mr. Vasquez also confirmed for Commissioner Larison that staff have been working diligently with the Public Safety and Public Works Departments to address issues with e-bikes at parks. He noted that signage was soon be posted at each park regarding the "No Bicycle" policy.

Mr. Vasquez clarified for Chairperson Valles that the Gatekeeper is the Public Works Department on-call management staff who receive calls from staff regarding maintenance or security issues that occur at facilities after-hours.

Commissioner Spaseff commented that the incident and injury numbers would be much higher if it weren't for the ERD crews who have a constant presence at parks and facilities from early mornings to late evenings. He noted that their presence alone greatly helps to deter crime.

The commission received and filed the annual report on Incident and Injury.

3. Holiday Recreation Programs and Events

Recreation Program Coordinator Catherine Schad displayed slides and provided details regarding 2025 holiday recreation programs and events. Ms. Schad announced that the city's 12th annual tree lighting ceremony and community gathering would take place on Friday, December 5 outside The Centre beginning at 4:30 p.m. with festivities wrapping up at 8 p.m. Information regarding the many holiday events planned for seniors were provided by Ms. Schad. Details regarding the Senior Holiday Luncheon, the Grandparents, Grandchildren, and Great Grandchildren's Holiday Party, the Kristmas Karaoke Dance and Sing party, and the annual Ugly Sweater Party were provided as noted in the written report.

Next, Ms. Schad provided the commission with details regarding events such as the Pathway's Light Up a Life event, instructional classes unique to the holiday season, and planned holiday fun for Special Olympians and Adaptive Recreation Program participants as noted in the written report.

Ms. Schad shared that the Lakewood Project Shepherd Holiday Warehouse operations begin on Thursday, December 4 with volunteers assisting with organization of food delivery and packing boxes of food for registered Lakewood families for distribution on Friday, December 12 and Saturday, December 13.

Holiday programs at local parks, as well as park hours of operations, were detailed by Ms. Schad. It was said that during the school winter break period, winter break camp is offered in two sessions, December 22 to 26, 2025 and December 29 to January 5, 2026. Camps were said to include winter themed arts and crafts, games, activities, an excursion to

Starlight Cinemas during week one and a New Year's themed party with special entertainment during week two. Additionally, Ms. Schad shared that Santa would make an early appearance on Saturday, December 20 at each of the parks, followed by a candy cane hunt.

Ms. Schad reminded the commission that in an effort to maximize efficiency as well as service to residents, park hours are amended during the winter break period. City parks will be open from 12 to 5 p.m. during the two weeks of school vacation—this includes New Year's Day—but will be closed on Wednesday, December 24 and Thursday, December 25 in recognition of the Christmas holiday. On New Year's Eve, parks will see an abbreviated schedule of 12 to 3 p.m.

Ms. Frost informed Chairperson Valles that Project Shepherd registration was trending as usual in 2025. She pointed out, however, that donations to the program were higher currently than they were at the same time in 2024.

Commissioner Lucio thanked Ms. Schad for a great presentation and shared her appreciation for how organized the Project Shepherd Holiday Distribution was. She commented that it was amazing what the program does for the community.

The commission received and filed the annual report on Holiday Recreation Programs and Events.

4. Activities and Maintenance Report No. 5

A written report and discussion of the Recreation and Community Services Department Programs, Services and Maintenance Activities for the month of October and a listing of upcoming activities for December 2025.

The commission received and filed the report.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Letter to Effdhavies Amores, Employee of the Month for September 2025.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business brought before the Recreation and Community Services Commission, Chairperson Valles adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m. to Wednesday, December 10 at 5 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Michelle Williams, Administrative Secretary
Recreation and Community Services Commission