

City's boards, commissions report major achievements at annual joint meeting with City Council

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Palm Springs Mayor Ron deHarte dines with some of the more than 100 volunteer board and commission members who were celebrated Tuesday evening.

Palm Springs elected officials, city staff, and department heads took time Tuesday night to shine a spotlight on the dozens of volunteers who give their time and expertise to serve on the city's various boards and commissions, hosting the annual joint meeting where these civic-minded residents report on their year's work.

The meeting began with the swearing-in of eight newly appointed and reappointed board members and commissioners, including representatives from various city boards and commissions.

The Palm Springs Airport Commission reported its most successful year on record, serving 3.2 million passengers in 2024 and generating \$2.5 billion in local economic impact. Commissioner Samantha McDermott announced that the airport supports more than 18,000 jobs across aviation, tourism, hospitality and retail sectors, with 98% of visitor dollars staying in the Coachella Valley.

"We now have 12 year-round non-stop routes on seven major airlines," McDermott said. "The airlines don't operate on hope, they follow demand. If we want to keep these routes, we need to keep flying them."

The Planning Commission reported approving 707 new housing units in the past year to help meet state-mandated housing requirements. The commission has dealt with 35 different development projects across 17 meetings this year, including both residential and commercial developments.

Peter Sipkins, chair of the Measure J Oversight Commission, told the council his group reviewed 51 community-initiated project applications seeking more than \$18 million in funding. The commission recommended approval of 22 applications totaling \$6.2 million.

The Library Board of Trustees announced plans for a 100-year anniversary celebration while preparing for a major renovation project that will temporarily relocate library services. The board has pledged \$1 million in financial support for the renovation and provided \$7,000 for new books and e-books this year.

VillageFest, now in its 33rd year, reported strong vendor satisfaction and sales in a recent survey. The weekly Thursday night event continues to draw thousands of visitors to the Palm Canyon corridor while supporting small businesses.

Public Arts Commission Chair Gary Armstrong requested increased budget support and dedicated staff to meet growing demand for public art projects

throughout the city. The commission is launching new initiatives including “Artscape in the Parks” and “Beautiful Shade” structures.

“Public art isn’t decoration, it’s the actualization of your goals,” Armstrong said. “It brings emotion to design, identity to infrastructure and vibrancy to civic life.”

The Human Rights Commission announced it is leading revisions to municipal code Chapter 2.45 to modernize civil rights protections and has partnered with the Palm Springs Police Department on public education initiatives distinguishing hate speech from hate crimes.



Human Rights Commission members Malakai Strong (left) and Carlotta Rinke enjoy the pre-meeting meal served at the Palm Springs Convention Center Tuesday evening.

Parks and Recreation Commission Chair John Miraglia reported the near completion of a comprehensive master plan and celebrated new playground openings at Victoria Park, Demuth Park and Barista Park. The commission is also overseeing expansion of pickleball courts from 12 to 24 courts at Demuth Park.

Councilmember David Ready praised the boards and commissions for their work despite resource constraints, acknowledging the challenges they face in implementing ideas quickly.

“I’ve seen so many great ideas emerge from boards and commissions, and we get around these resource and capacity issues by some creative thinking,” Ready said. “If you have good ideas that maybe don’t move right away, don’t give up, because staff can be creative to help you succeed.”
