



CITY CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES FROM September 30, 2025
Huntington Beach City Hall

Call to Order at 5:32 PM

Roll Call

- Committee Members: *(Present) Delaine Bailey, Ellen Kuhnert, Patricia Pappas, Yolanda Campos, Julian Douglas, Michael Latham, Valentina Bankhead*
- Council: *None*
- Staff Liaison: *Julie Toledo*
- Other Staff: *Ashley Wysocki, Marisa Rodriguez*
- Public: *Amory Hanson, Paula Jean, Dave Rynerson, Lori Sueki, Kathie Schey, Jynene Johnson*

Public Comments (3 minutes per speaker)

- *Amory Hansen discussed having a Civil War month in August*
- *Jynene Johnson discussed the HB Interfaith Council goal of having 250 service projects for America's 250th Birthday. Said April could be Volunteer Month*

Approve minutes from August 20, 2025 meeting *(Michael Latham, 2nd by Julian Douglas)*

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

1. 2025 Celebration Calendar Themes

- a. January – “Founder’s Legacy – Celebrating Huntington Beach’s Origins”
- b. February – “Shop & Dine Locally”
- c. March – “Honoring Huntington Beach – Celebrating Community Service & Volunteerism”
- d. April – “Appreciating Huntington Beach’s Ecological Legacy”
- e. May – “Exploring Public Art”
- f. June – “History of Independence Day & What it Means”
- g. July – “Surf City Showcase – Highlighting our Lifeguard Legacy”
- h. August – “Huntington Beach Pier – A Long History”
- i. September – “Celebrating Aviation”
- j. October – “Horses, Cows & Dogs, Oh My!”
- k. November – “History of our Military – Honoring Important Military Dates”
- l. December – “California History”

2. Proposed Events for 2025

- a. **October – “Horses, Cows & Dogs”**
 - Julie announced public tour to the Equestrian Center on Monday, October 20 at 4:30pm. Sign up will take place online in October.
 - Yolanda Campos provided update on volunteer opportunities at the OC Humaine Society at Newland Street. The group agreed to host a drive at City Hall in October to have people drop off necessary supplies like blankets, towels, food, etc. Julie will coordinate social media campaign. Supplies will be donated to various non-profit organizations like OC Humaine Society and Wetlands & Wildlife Center.



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d. **November – “History of our Military – Honoring Important Military Dates”**

- Will look at existing opportunities for an event

e. **December – “California History”**

- Julie announced Chris Epting will host another event on Dec. 10 from 6pm to 8pm at the Central Library Theater with the focus on California History/HB History and discuss Shell Beach, Pacific City, etc.

3. **2026 City Celebration Calendar**

a. **City Archivist Kathie Schey**

- Kathie presented a plan with calendar themed ideas for 2026:

The “Fourth Estate”: Our Patriotic Press

The important newspaper history of Huntington Beach. Newspapers and newspapermen have played a consistently critical role in our city’s development since well before our incorporation. In the early years, the papers announced the military joining of our city’s youth and often published many of their letters “home” so our entire close-knit community could learn of their experiences. During the Second World War, every man and woman who served was listed, and the fallen mourned. Cap Sheue of Huntington Beach High School, raised money to send the paper to servicemen – many his former students – because word from home gave them critical encouragement. Not surprisingly, several editors were much admired, respected, and honored even to the point of parks naming.

Beyond the 4th - Patriotic Parades in Huntington Beach

Our wonderful July 4th parade is an honored tradition, but it is not the only patriotic parade celebrated here. There have been many others. The popular Armistice Day Parade commemorated our victory in the First World War while the Veterans Day Parade celebrated all who served. In our earlier years, schools regularly marched down Main Street to individually honor the birthdays of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. All were incredibly popular and involved the whole community!

Before Surfing: “Boosting” Our Beach

Years before we became known for our surf breaks, our beach was touted as a lure to tourists, new-comers, and investors. Even after the beach was lined with oil derricks in the 1920s, pictures of people frolicking in the sandy sunshine with the oil rigs behind them were featured in ads luring visitors and investors alike. Our beach offered a playground, a bandstand, the famous Pav-a-lon Ballroom, and the Saltwater Plunge. It was also home to popular bathing beauty contests. A burgeoning surf-side mobile home park sheltered many folks including our first female city clerk and wife of the grandson of our first mayor, Alicia Wentworth, whose tape-recorded oral history interview survives to tell her story. The early Huntington Beach Co. was not always pleased with the “immoral” appearance of the site, and took action to remedy their concerns including beach-front “raids” overturning tents and other makeshift structures that might be concealing unseemly behavior.



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History of Honoring Military Service

A large number of our earliest pioneers were veterans of the Civil War. So many, in fact a yearly GAR encampment was held here for many years. Attended by veterans from throughout the region, this famous gathering honored their service and inspired the service of many others.

Some brief history of our legendary American Legion Post would also be great. It is one of the oldest continuously serving posts in the nation! Not only have they served veterans and their families here for more than 100 years, they have played historic roles in our community from serving as volunteer firefighters to helping patrol the city after the 1933 earthquake. (Our VFW post, created after WWII, disbanded by the 1970s.)

Early posters and a billboard noted the names of service members, but were cheap, temporary, and quickly lost to time. In 1931, the city opened Memorial Hall, dedicated to the “heroes of all wars”. At the time, said wars extended only through WWI as no other international wars had yet been fought. In 1949, following WWII, a concrete memorial plinth was produced, placed behind Memorial Hall on an altar-like dais. The focus of ceremonies for some years afterward, a plaque was added in 1964 naming the fallen as known at the time.

Our City at War

Huntington Beach was home to a critical resource, oil, during WWII. In what ways did this affect the daily lives of our citizens? Site take-overs by the military, responses through service by various civic groups, blackouts, underground listening stations and more. The High School airplane model club was called to service. Even our Christmas Pageant felt the effects.

Our Sworn Personnel: A History of Service.

“Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” are inalienable rights specified in the Declaration of Independence. But without those who keep the peace and protect our well-being and our property, these rights are endangered. We have rich resources to tell the history of our Huntington Beach Police and Fire Departments whose tireless efforts keep us safe.

Automobiles – From Family Fords to Race Cars!

The early and increasingly wonderful role of autos in our “oil city” Huntington Beach as we transitioned from horses to motor cars. Amazing stories of early car dealerships with enduring legacies, gas stations whose few owners including a popular mayor were referred to as “oilmen,” and more including auto thefts (a police car was famously stolen) and the shared rides offered by the American Legion during WWII as well as the city’s “Race Track” where famed driver Parnelli Jones made his debut. There is also a great story about a “blind” driver – a showman who dazzlingly plied his skills while blindfolded throughout the Southland including Huntington Beach, all the while showcasing whatever car he was hired to advertise! And of course, our city’s Bookmobile!

The Story of our Schools

From the days of our earliest American Republic, education has been cherished and encouraged. This tradition was proudly continued in Huntington Beach. Discuss the founding of our schools from the first elementary to the high schools and their respective districts. The tiny elementary classroom’s early years on Main Street, the creation of first and successive high schools and the educators whose skills and leadership engendered excellence. What and how were various amazing events celebrated by our schools, from “Rube Day” to Lincoln’s Birthday? Who were the schools named for and why? In what ways did they contribute to broader city events and needs?



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Our Parks and Playgrounds

Huntington Beach is home to a truly remarkable park system with origins dating back to our earliest years. From the early and now obscured Circle Park to Quimby Era parks on land set aside by developers often incorporating neighborhood demands, to our enormous famed Central Park, we have exceptional stories to tell. Who designed them? Why did they contain the equipment they did – including structures featured at a World's Fair and others created by famous designers - and who were the parks named for? We could feature a representative few.

Our Famous Architects

Structures throughout Huntington Beach have been designed by famous architects, some of whom were noted in their day and others who continue to be regarded for excellence years after their contributions to Huntington Beach were made. Richard and Dion Neutra created our renowned Central Library. Kurt Meyer designed our Civic Center Complex. Internationally prominent architect Victor Gruen contributed to many sites including the McDonnell Douglas Campus (later Boeing) here and at least one projected beach front development. There were many others whose work is represented in public and residential design. Prominent landscape architects also designed important projects here. Extremely prominent landscape architect Ralph Dalton Cornell contributed to the Bluff Top Park development in our city. Internationally renowned EDAW (Harvard educated Eckbo, Dean, Austin, and Williams) created Central Park. Richard Bigler, our first park landscaper, also achieved national fame. He designed Lake Park and went on to design Eader Park, incorporating celebrated cutting-edge ecological and preservation ideas. There are many others.

Time Capsules!

We have created and opened a number of time capsules in Huntington Beach. These are an idea with a fascinating history in American popular culture. We have had military time capsules, pier time capsules, school time capsules and library time capsules in our city – many decades old. The story of their creation, contents and discovery is remarkable. When I first offered a talk on this for our library during COVID (my first zoom talk ever!) our attendance jumped from previous talks at least four fold. People are extremely interested in this. I know even more about it now and have lots to share.

1933 Earthquake

Widely considered a Long Beach event, Huntington Beach was hit very hard by this earthquake. A local scientist captured the thing on his seismograph. Our Carnegie Library was severely damaged, requiring costly and innovative repairs. The Huntington Beach High School was so badly impacted, our American Legion Post was called into action to patrol and protect this and other sites. The Palm Street school complex was levelled while the City Pool and Gymnasium there surprisingly survived mostly intact. We have documentation for all this including the local seismograph recording, damage reports, repair correspondence and some remarkable photos. (Photo is of City Pool and Gym façade reconstruction)

Industry!

Beyond oil, Huntington Beach has been home to important industries that shaped our city and its future. The famed Holly Sugar Factory operated for years in the early decades of our city, coupled with agricultural sites like the "Beet Dump." While working in our famed celery fields, work horses wore special wooden shoes to protect them from sinking, disastrously, into deep mud. We had a successful tile factory and another which made brooms that put us on the map at the time! Our



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enduring tourism industry began before we were a city! The Lusk Industrial Park was widely celebrated. (We have already made extensive use of Douglas-McD- Boeing story.)

Additional Suggestions:

Our City's Growth! From the tiny area surrounding Main Street which was mapped in 1903, Huntington Beach has grown at least tenfold! At one point, we were the fastest growing city in the nation! Great stories about repainting "population" numbers on our welcome signs. What areas were annexed and when? How did some of our early subdivisions come to be and how were these "modern" homes marketed? How did our "assets" from Meadowlark Golf Course to the Douglas plant lure newcomers? Also share the story of Huntington Harbour annexed, designed, and developed as an amazing residential space.

Prehistoric Huntington Beach Early news articles and some early city reports describe prehistoric fossils found along the coast and just off of it. Great stories here. Everybody loves a good dino/early mammal story! Educational and family friendly. Plus, it ties into the story of oil! Can also discuss archaeological relics (to a point) which is also a fascinating story.

The Mail Must Go Through! As in many similar areas, household delivery of the mail did not exist in Huntington Beach until about the 1930s. How did this affect mail delivery, voter registration, real estate transactions? How did the mail "get through"? Who was our first Postmaster? Tell the story of our first Post Office.

4. 2026 Semiquincentennial

- Marisa Rodriguez and Ashley Wysocki shared the library plans events six to nine months in advance and said there are lots of events the Committee could possibly help promote.
 - Kite festival in March, Civil War Days, Revolution Days
 - Patti Pappas suggested a book display featuring the theme of the month
 - Valentina Bankhead suggested a organizing dance event/festival
 - Valentina Bankhead suggested a 250th Birthday HB Sticker
 - Julie Toledo said she would take both Julian Douglas' plan and Kathie Schey's plan and combine to share at the next Committee meeting.

Adjournment – 6:42 PM

The next scheduled meeting is scheduled for October 27, 2025 at 5:30 PM.