

Aransas Pathways Steering Committee

Minutes of July 7, 2026 Regular Monthly Meeting at 3:00 P.M. at the Aquarium Education Center located at 706 Navigation Circle, Rockport, Texas, 78382

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 P.M. by Co-Chair Rich Connell.

2. Roll Call and Confirmation of Quorum

Members present: Commissioner Pat Rousseau, Rich Connell, Pam Stranahan, Dr. Rebekah Rylander, Jim Farnsworth, Jatin Bhakta, Councilwoman Mary Ann Pahmiyer, and Diedra Amaya

Members absent: Andrea Hattman and Dr. Steve Ferguson

Staff: Rene Butler and Leah Medado

Guests: Commissioner Bob Dupnik, Chad Kacir, Pat Cruz, and Nannette Eiland

A quorum was present.

3. Citizens to Be Heard

Boater Education and Vibrio Awareness – Pat Cruz

- Boater Education Course rescheduled to the first or second week of August.
- Aquarium Education Center confirmed as the proposed venue.
- Partnership opportunities with the Volunteer Fire Department were discussed.
- Vibrio awareness materials were distributed.
- Community education on prevention and safety will continue through future outreach efforts.

4. Approval of June 2, 2026 Minutes

- Approval of June 2, 2026 Minutes
- Minutes were presented and reviewed.
- Motion to approve was made and seconded.
- Approved unanimously.

5. Steering Committee Co-Chair's Report – Rich Connell

Strategic Planning Update

- Strategic planning priorities and project list continue to be refined.
- Future project lists will be coordinated through the Facilities Department.

Marketing and Outreach Structure

- Discussed transitioning from a separate Marketing Subcommittee to marketing and outreach updates within regular APSC meetings.
- Members discussed communication, transparency, budget oversight, and stakeholder engagement.
- Marketing efforts will continue under staff coordination with support from committee members.
- A revised outreach structure will be presented at the August meeting.

6. Commissioners Report

- Continued emphasis on strategic planning and coordinated outreach.
- Supported strengthening communication between staff, committee members, and community partners.
- Discussed continued improvements in project oversight and reporting.

7. Subcommittee Reports-

7.1 History – Pam Wheat Stranahan

- Texas Tropical Trail regional activities and heritage tourism opportunities were reviewed.
- Coastal Bend Regional Tourism Council meeting scheduled for July 28 in Rockport.
- Planning continues for the October American Volkssport Association (AVA) walking events.
- Draft walking routes highlighting local history are under development.
- Membership recruitment for a local AVA-affiliated club continues.

7.2 Kayak- Jim Farnsworth

- Eco Summit and Kayak at Sunset recap presented.
- Weather-related cancellation of the sanctioned paddle was reviewed.
- Planning continues for the Pumpkin Paddle event.
- ADA-accessible kayak launch opportunities remain under evaluation.
- Texas Parks and Wildlife paddling trail designation and kiosk planning continue.
- Little Bay shoreline improvements and habitat restoration efforts were discussed.

7.3 Birding –Rebekah Rylander, PhD

- Planning continues for the 2027 Aransas Bird Days event.
- HummerBird Celebration programming and hummingbird banding updates were provided.

- eBird and citizen science education initiatives continue.
- Bird City Texas designation opportunities were discussed.
- Additional community partnerships will be explored.

7.4 Land Use / Site Planning – Chad Kacir (Representing Dr. Ferguson)

- Contract with Triton has been executed.
- Development of the Coconut Cove Ranch Land Use Management and Conservation Plan is underway.
- The plan will focus on habitat conservation, low-impact public access, invasive species management, volunteer engagement, education, and long-term stewardship.
- Completion is anticipated by the end of 2026.

7.5 Facilities / Site Maintenance – Rene Butler

- Ongoing vandalism concerns at Tule East were discussed.
- Staff continues coordination with local law enforcement.
- Replacement of older trash receptacles with standardized green metal containers will begin.
- Linda Castro well project remains pending contractor scheduling.
- Vegetation management and habitat restoration efforts continue at several sites.

7.6 Events-Leah Medado

- Aransas Pathways' 15th Anniversary campaign continues under the theme "**Be Part of the Pathways Story.**"
- Event performance metrics for Bird Days and Kayak at Sunset were reviewed.
- Continued development of Pathways in Motion initiatives (Trail & Kayak)
- Regional and statewide marketing partnerships continue to expand.
- July 28 Regional Tourism Council meeting preparations are underway.
- Hotel coordination continues for the October AVA walking events.

Next Regular Meeting

The next regular meeting is scheduled for August 4, 2026, at 3:00 P.M.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and passed. The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:14 P.M.