

Aransas Pathways Steering Committee

Minutes of June 2, 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, Steve Ferguson, Jim Farnsworth, Jatin Bhakta, Councilwoman Mary Ann Pahmiyer and Shelly Stuart

Members absent: Andrea Hattman

Staff: Rene Butler and Leah Medado

Guests: Dana Justice, Pat Cruz and Laura Fox

A quorum was present.

3. Citizens to Be Heard

- Boater Education Course Update – Pat Cruz
- Announced plans for a Boater Education Course on July 31, 2026.
- Program will focus on boating safety, navigation, and responsible waterway use.
- Discussed partnership opportunities with Aransas Pathways.
- Educational outreach related to oyster restoration and marine stewardship was highlighted.

4. Approval of May 5, 2026 Minutes

- Approval of May 5, 2026 Minutes
- Minutes were presented and reviewed.
- Minor correction regarding guest attendance was noted.
- Motion to approve was made and seconded.
- Approved unanimously.

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

Welcome remarks were provided.

- Welcome remarks were provided.
- Presented the Founders Bench concept recognizing individuals involved in the formation of Aransas Pathways in 2011.

- Discussion included location options, community involvement, and future design considerations.
- Formal concept development will continue for future review.

Strategic Plan Review and Update

- Event calendar reviewed and updated.
- Continued coordination among Birding, Kayaking, History, Trails, and Events programs.
- Ongoing review of Pathways projects and strategic priorities.

6. Commissioners Report

- APSC membership recruitment update.
- Aquarium Education Center renovation update.
- Marketing and outreach discussion.
- Continued emphasis on increasing visitor awareness and engagement.

7. Subcommittee Reports-

7.1 History – Pam Wheat Stranahan

- History Center programming updates.
- Historical Society activities.
- Historical Commission updates.
- Texas Maritime Museum exhibits and educational opportunities.

7.2 Kayak- Jim Farnsworth

- June 19 Kayaks at Sunset update.
- Volunteer recruitment continues.
- Future Pumpkin Paddle planning discussed.
- Linda Castro entrance improvements reviewed.

7.3 Birding –Rebekah Rylander, PhD

- Bird Days Festival 2027 planning underway.
- Potential American Oystercatcher Working Group meeting in Rockport.
- Hummingbird Banding and Education Program updates.
- Continued partnerships with local birding organizations.

7.4 Land Use / Site Planning – Steve Ferguson, PhD

- Environmental Planning Firm selection process update.
- Two qualified proposals received.
- Conservation stewardship and long-term land management discussed.

7.5 Marketing-Jatin Bhakta

- Marketing Committee update.
- HummerBird Celebration coordination meeting update.
- Visitor attraction and destination awareness strategies discussed.

7.6 Venue Site Maintenance / Improvements – Rene Butler

- Bird feeding infrastructure update.
- Well project delays due to contractor equipment issues.
- Security Camera Program update.
- Site improvements and monitoring activities.
- Antonio 'Tony' Sanchez recognized for selection as 2026 Texas Master Naturalists Class Representative.

7.7 Events-Leah Medado

- Women in Travel Summit (WITS) update.
- Destination marketing insights shared.
- Aransas Pathways brand positioning discussed.
- Partnership opportunities identified.
- Regional Tourism Council meeting hosting update for July 28, 2026.

Next Regular Meeting

The next regular meeting is scheduled for July 7, 2026, at 3:00 P.M.

Adjournment

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