

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND
ENERGY CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission convened in a regular session at 7:05 p.m. on Thursday, October 1, 2009 in the West Annex meeting room at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL:

Due to the absence of Chairperson McCabe, Vice-Chairperson Reilly led the meeting.

Present: Commissioners Chim, Griffiths, Watson, and Vice-Chairperson Reilly.

Absent: Commissioner Gobble* and Chairperson McCabe.

Also Present: Deputy Community Development Director Cessna and Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones.

MOTION: Commissioner Chim moved to grant an excused tardy to Commissioner Gobble and an excused absence to Chairperson McCabe for the October 1, 2009 Commission meeting. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

*Commissioner Gobble arrived at 8:16 p.m. following adjournment of the meeting.

3. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Griffiths.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Griffiths, seconded by Commissioner Chim, moved to accept and file the report of the secretary on the posting of the agenda for this meeting; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Amy Wagner, West 228th Street, relayed comments by her veterinarian that less than 5% of animals in his practice are not altered. She provided information regarding Maddie's Fund that donated \$12 million dollars from 1999 to 2002 for California animal programs. She expressed concern about divisions among animal groups and stressed the importance of patience, courage, and finding common ground in contentious issues. She encouraged compliance with scoop, leash, and licensing laws and not burdening residents with a mandatory spay/neuter law.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

6A. MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 3, 2009

Vice-Chairperson Reilly requested that the following be added to the September 3, 2009 meeting minutes:

Page 4, Item 7A: "Commissioner Reilly voiced support for no-fee permits, such as habitating an RV due to home fire, home destruction, or remodeling, that are flexible on time restrictions based on reasons for requests. She recommended adding boats to the definition of an RV."

Page 5, Item 8L: "Chairperson McCabe requested an update on the tree planting for former Commissioner Jackie Decker."

Page 5, Item 8M: "Chairperson McCabe requested that the Commission be placed on the City Council calendar for a joint meeting."

MOTION: Vice-Chairperson Reilly moved for the approval of the September 3, 2009 meeting minutes as amended. Commissioner Griffiths seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Gobble and Chairperson McCabe).

7. ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

7A. SOLAR PANEL PERMITTING FEES

Deputy Director Cessna noted that a staff report and the Sierra Club report on Solar Permitting Fees and Practices throughout Southern California were attached in agenda materials. She reported that Torrance was rated number 7 in Southern California; however, staff determined that the information the Sierra Club received was for more generic type permits rather than specifically solar practices. She stated that the permitting fee for the solar panel system would actually be approximately \$250 and that plan check would take a period of up to three days. She advised that City fees and permit issuance times have been forwarded to the Sierra Club and should be reflected in the upcoming revision of their report. She noted that revisions should reflect that Torrance charges less than the Sierra Club recommends and permit issuance would be within their recommended time frame.

She reported that under current practices there is an additional plan check from the Fire Department that includes a flat fee of \$239 and a wait of up to two weeks for plan check. She advised that Building staff is working with Fire personnel to see if there are ways to streamline the current process while still maintaining the level of safety required for maximum fire protection, adding that one proposal is to have an annual solar symposium for residents. She stated that staff is working with South Bay Council of Governments and Los Angeles County to benefit from AB811, an incentive that would help residents install solar systems with minimal up-front costs.

She relayed City Council's request that the Commission consider the possibility of waiving permitting fees to lower costs, offering incentives and education programs, and providing a qualified vendor list.

Responding to Commissioner Griffiths' inquiry, Deputy Director Cessna stated that there are less than 30 residential solar panel installation requests per year and that there is pressing desire to make it more accessible, easier, and affordable. She added that at this point hillside overlay considerations would be part of solar panel installation.

In response to Vice-Chairperson Reilly's inquiry, staff estimated that less than 1% of City residents have solar panels and that there have been no permits issued for wind turbines.

Commissioner Griffiths expressed support for offering as many incentives as possible including reduction of fees and combining the Building and Fire plan check processes.

Responding to Commissioner Watson's inquiry, Deputy Director Cessna stated that in the past Building staff has been wary of providing lists of providers due to liability concerns. She added that the public could be invited to yearly workshops that would provide a list of guidelines that are required.

Commissioner Chim agreed with Commissioner Griffiths that the process should be made as easy as possible and predicted that soon more people will be showing interest in installing solar panels. She voiced support for offering incentives that are limited to a certain term.

Vice-Chairperson Reilly recommended offering incentives that include waiving fees, merging the Fire and Building plan check processes together, promoting long-term cost savings, providing a list of providers who are familiar with the City process, and participating in the AB811 program with Los Angeles County.

MOTION: Vice-Chairperson Reilly moved to open discussion to the public. Commissioner Chim seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Don Clunch, West 238th Street, voiced support for combining the Building and Fire plan check processes as most installations would be done by contractors who are aware of requirements. He stated that he was in favor of waiving fees as long as it does not cost tax payers anything but would prefer a "department store concept" of buying now and paying later. He noted that there is more than one kind of solar panel and that the Strategic Plan is committed to promoting green processes.

Deputy Director Cessna summarized Commissioners' recommendations: no fee with a time limit and possible extensions, streamlining Fire and Planning plan check processes, promoting incentives, maximizing the AB811 program, developing a provider list, and providing yearly symposiums. She advised that staff would look into the recommendations and bring back a program for consideration at the next meeting.

Vice-Chairperson Reilly suggesting that staff contact the City of Santa Monica regarding its list of providers and Commissioner Griffiths requested that staff bring back the cost to the City if fees are waived.

8. NEW BUSINESS

8A. CITY COUNCIL AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR COMMISSION REVIEW

Deputy Director Cessna reported that an ad hoc Council Committee for Commission Review met on August 24, 2009 to initiate discussions for review of City Commissions. She noted that History and Background of City Commissions and Minutes from the August 24, 2009 meeting were included in agenda materials. She requested that Commissioners provide feedback and input which would be forwarded to the Council Committee.

She submitted Chairperson McCabe's recommendation to remove animals, signage, residential property recreational vehicle parking, and oil wells from the Commission's purview in order to be able to spend more time on traditional environmental issues. She noted that staff disagrees strongly with this recommendation except for animal cases which are now under the Police Department. She stated that the Department conducts business on the other items on a day-to-day basis.

In response to Commissioner Watson's inquiry, Deputy Director Cessna stated that there is no Commission that deals with Police Department issues but that that Municipal Code could be amended.

Commissioner Griffiths related his observation that animal, signage, RVs, and oil well issues have not been overly burdensome in the four years that he has been on the Commission.

Vice-Chairperson Reilly concurred with Commissioner Griffith, adding that the issues should remain with the Commission until such time that they become so dominating that nothing else can be addressed. She recommended not changing the scope of the Commission and to continue to meet monthly.

Commissioner Watson received clarification from staff that the Commission could meet more than once a month.

9. ORAL COMMUNICATION

9A. Commissioner Griffiths shared a September 24, 2009 section "Guide to Smart, Sustainable Living--Live Better Green" in the Daily Breeze and suggested that staff submit City activities for publication.

9B. Commissioner Griffiths, with concurrence from fellow Commissioners, recommended revisiting the issue of noise and pollution from gardeners.

9C. Commissioner Chim related her observation of an ASPCA poster on Assemblymember Lieu's door recommending September as "Adopt a Shelter Pet" month.

9D. Vice-Chairperson Reilly stated that the subcommittee met with Deputy Director Cessna last week to discuss the proposal to develop a City solar co-op program. She advised that the subcommittee recommends focusing more on the AB811 program with Los Angeles County but to continue to research liability, infrastructure, and terms and conditions involved with having a co-op program.

9E. Commissioner Watson announced an exhibit of environmental friendly means of transportation on October 2-3, 2009 in the City of Santa Monica.

9F. Deputy Director Cessna stated that the feeding ordinance as well as the carbon footprint report will be presented at the November or December 2009 Commission meeting.

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 8:15 p.m., Commissioner Griffiths moved to adjourn the meeting to November 5, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex meeting room. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion and, hearing no objection, Vice-Chairperson Reilly so ordered.

Approved as Submitted December 3, 2009 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
