

March 1, 2007

**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 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 1, 2007 in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Commissioners Chim, Decker, Griffiths, Minter, Reilly, and Chairperson McCabe.

Absent: Commissioner Watson.

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

MOTION: Commissioner Chim moved to grant Commissioner Watson an excused absence for this meeting. Commissioner Reilly seconded the motion and, hearing no objection, Chairperson McCabe so ordered.

3. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson McCabe.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Reilly, seconded by Commissioner Decker, 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

None

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

6A. MEETING OF FEBRUARY 1, 2007

MOTION: Commissioner Chim, seconded by Commissioner Griffiths, moved for the approval of the February 1, 2007 Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission meeting minutes as submitted; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Watson and with Commissioner Minter abstaining).

7. ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

7B. U.S. MAYORS CLIMATE PROTECTION AGREEMENT AKA COOL CITIES

Deputy Director Cessna reported that Virginia Hilker gave a presentation regarding the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement at the December 7, 2006 Commission meeting. In the Agreement, Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels challenged U.S. cities to meet or beat a 7% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels by 2012. She noted that the City of Manhattan Beach recently signed the Agreement and that its staff report was included in the agenda material. She inquired if the Commission wanted to make a recommendation that City Council considers signing on to the Cool Cities program and Mayors Agreement.

Responding to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry, she advised that the cost of the program has not been quantified yet; however, it is her understanding that the City would sign on to make a good faith effort to meet the program's challenge. She noted that the City was already making strides in that direction and that staff was in agreement that the Commission should make the recommendation to City Council.

In response to Commissioner Chim's inquiry, Deputy Director Cessna stated that the City would need to do a baseline survey to determine carbon dioxide pollution levels in 1990 and at present before identifying ways to reduce emissions.

Commissioner Reilly stated that two phases should be to assess what current programs and projects the City can link together to meet the goal and then conduct a cost/benefit analysis to determine what can actually be done to reduce emissions.

Deputy Director Cessna advised that several City departments were in the process of preparing inventories of existing green practices and policies and that staff would provide this information at the April 5, 2007 Commission meeting.

MOTION: Commissioner Decker moved to recommend that City Council sign on to the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement aka Cool Cities Program. Commissioner Chim seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Watson).

Virginia Hilker, Calle de Castellana, Redondo Beach, expressed appreciation to the Commission for its support and enthusiasm. She announced that as of today 413 cities have signed the Agreement, 74 in California. She stated that technical assistance is available from the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and the Climate Registry.

Chairperson McCabe explained the policies and procedures of the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to City Council.

8. ANIMAL MATTERS

8A. DISCUSSION OF FERAL CAT ISSUES

Commissioner Minter stated that he has been advised by the City Attorney to remove himself from discussion on this item due to his position as Senior Business Manager for the Community Services Department. He left the meeting at 7:17 p.m.

Commissioner Chim commended staff for preparing the agenda package for this meeting as well as the February 1, 2007 meeting. She stated that she was glad to see that the possible ordinance banning the feeding of feral cats was “off the table” and admitted that she was a feral cat caretaker during college.

Staff presented a 24-minute video presentation by Alley Cat Allies on Trap-Neuter-Return: A Humane Approach to Feral Cat Control. The video outlined steps for implementing a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program, steps to successful trapping, sterilization of cats and kittens, returning the cats, and relocation of a cat colony.

Deputy Director Cessna reported that at the February 1, 2007 Commission meeting staff and community members identified issues that needed to be addressed to understand why the City was considering passing an ordinance to ban the feeding of feral cats. She advised that the goal of tonight’s meeting was to explore possible resolutions and solutions to the problems in order to formulate recommendations that address City and community concerns. She noted that the agenda material included some ideas for potential solutions that were proposed by staff from input received at the February meeting. She reviewed the suggested proposals and noted that, based on input gathered this evening, staff would return on April 5, 2007 with a tentative plan that could be forwarded to City Council.

At 7:46 p.m., Chairperson McCabe welcomed public comments.

Margaret O’Regan, Sara Drive, stated that the City should take responsibility for maintaining its property, for long-term care of feral cats, identify that the primary cause of the problem is the dumping of cats, require mandatory microchipping, ban leaving unattended pet food outdoors, and oversee the health of City workers.

Mary Zeitler, Calle de Andalucia, TLC, suggested the possibility that rashes on City workers at Building 8 were caused by asbestos exposure and not from flea bites and volunteered to clean up the compound to determine if there is still a problem there.

Park Services Manager Wilson clarified that Building 8 has been determined to have no free asbestos and that the building would be undergoing a complete restoration to become a new maintenance shop.

Christi Metropole, Stray Cat Alliance, Los Angeles, provided information about Nylar insect growth regulator to control fleas as well as the proposed California Health Pets Act legislation. She noted that the majority of feral cats at Wilson Park have been spayed or neutered.

Donna Baker, Feral Cat Caretakers Coalition, discussed her organization’s feral cat caretaking workshops, suggested creating a group of caretakers that could follow organized guidelines, discussed her success with TNR with her own feral cat colony, and recommended the use of a Four Paws flea control product.

Jeanne Young, West Carson Street, discussed the managed feral cat colony at Harbor/UCLA Medical Center, distributed information about Program and Capstar flea control products, and stated that she was supportive of most of staff’s ideas for potential solutions with the exception of the idea to enclose an area in Wilson Park for the exclusive use of the feral cat colony.

Codelle Perez, South Normandie Avenue, Harbor City, stated that the Wilson Park cats are behind fences, are well contained, and that volunteers and not the City should be responsible for their care taking. She expressed concern that an individual was trapping cats and skunks and dumping them in North Torrance and Madrona Marsh.

Madrona Marsh Preserve Manager Drake stated that she did not want skunks or cats dumped at the Preserve because it upsets the natural balance of the habitat.

Lauren, Carson Street, Culver City, discussed her cat colony and the importance of care for life and recommended accessing Google Alert/Feral Cats for information.

Peter Dabbieri, Via el Chico, stated that there should not be a ban on feeding pets outdoors and that registering caretakers should be encouraged but not mandatory.

Debra Corwin, Purrfect Partners, distributed correspondence from Taimie Bryant, Professor of Law at UCLA, and Lisa Pierson, DVM, and expressed concern that a Torrance Unified School District employee is trapping and dumping feral cats.

Animal Control Supervisor Brinkerhoff stated that the individual has been informed that any trapped wildlife should be taken to the Carson shelter.

Lisa, one of three eighth grade students from Parras Middle School, Redondo Beach, stated that they chose animal rescue and overpopulation as their topic for the Democracy in Action—The Power of One project and invited Commissioners to attend the presentations on April 4, 2007 at Parras Middle School, Redondo Beach.

Rebecca Chambliss, San Pedro, shared information about the February 25, 2007 Free Spay event in San Pedro where 123 cats were spayed or neutered. She noted that it costs less to spay/neuter than to round up and euthanize animals and that the City would benefit by implementing a low or no-cost spay/neuter program.

Ron Corcillo, North Hollywood, suggested the use of nematodes, diatomaceous earth, ants, and boric acid for flea control and indicated that outdoor pets that are not spayed or neutered are a bigger problem than pet food left outside.

Ha Adolfo (no speaker card), discussed her involvement with the Free Spay/Neuter event in the City of San Pedro and offered her assistance in helping the City organize a similar event.

Laurie Clark, Plaza del Amo, stated that there have been feral cats at Wilson Park for over 30 years, that there is not a major problem there, and that she hoped a solution could be found.

Brian Benoit, 242nd Place, stated that he adopted a Wilson Park kitten and urged them not to “put them down.”

David Young, Victor Street, stressed the importance of educating the public in all languages. He suggested offering incentives to management companies that make their apartment buildings “pet friendly.”

Chairperson McCabe requested that comments be offered on staff’s ideas for potential solutions and reduction of feral cats with a TNR program.

Mary Zeitler, Calle de Andalucia, stated that the number of feral cats at Wilson Park has gone down drastically in the last 15 years and that the majority have been spayed or neutered. She noted that there is not a major problem there, questioned why it has become such an issue now, and expressed concern about the individual who is trapping and dumping animals.

Animal Control Supervisor Brinkerhoff stated per Torrance Code that if an animal is found trespassing on private property it can be legally trapped and released within a half-mile radius or be legally euthanized at an animal shelter.

Park Services Manager Wilson clarified that recent interest is due to employee health and safety as well as the safety of the cats because of nearby condominium development, construction within the Park, and if the Plaza del Amo extension goes through. He stated that aerial photographs of the Park might determine a possible relocation area for the cats.

David Young, Victor Street, stated that numbers in four out of five of his feral cat colonies have been reduced with TNR.

Cordelle Perez, South Normandie Avenue, stated that the approximately 10 cats on the north side of the Park could be relocated to the south side.

Yvonne Slinger, Ocean Avenue, commended volunteer efforts, discussed limited hours at the City's Animal Control center and the Carson shelter, and commented that some City employees were disrespectful at the February Commission meeting.

The Commission was in recess from 9:04 p.m. to 9:16 p.m.

Laurie Clark, Plaza del Amo, related her understanding that the dumping of animals was not a high priority of the Torrance Police Department.

Donna Baker, Feral Cat Caretakers Coalition, stated that reduction of feral cat colonies is inherent in the actual outdoor lifestyle of the colony and that the life expectancy of a feral cat is six or seven years. She suggested that the focus should be on ongoing managed care and scheduled trapping rather than reduction of the population.

Jeanne Young, West Carson Street, discussed the attrition rate at Harbor/UCLA Medical campuses, noting that reduction in numbers is extremely slow.

Peter Dabbieri, Via el Chico, stated that an overall animal program should address penalties for dumping animals, enforcement of spay/neutering, adoption programs, making services available, education, and management programs.

Yullan, 182nd Place, Redondo Beach, suggested that the City advertise a list of adoption agencies in local newspapers.

Patrick Wren, Torrance Animal Control, clarified that their work hours are 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily and until 8:00 p.m. on Mondays through Thursdays and that the Carson shelter is open 24 hours a day for impoundment of animals and emergencies. He noted that Torrance has two animal control officers and a supervisor.

Ron Corcillo, North Hollywood, proposed that the City implement a spay/neuter voucher program and advertise that dumping of animals is illegal.

David Young, Victor Street, suggested a voucher program and free spay/neuter days in the City.

Lauren, Culver City, discussed the importance of ongoing trapping, difficulty in determining if an animal is on private property or lured onto that property, offering incentives to management companies for making their buildings "pet friendly," and to position a spay/neuter van in front of City Hall.

Susie Park, Elgar Avenue, noted that pet stores do not allow adopted animals to be returned and that people should be encouraged to adopt from private organizations.

Geralyn Ruane, North Hollywood, stated that it should be the City's responsibility to take care of a problem that has been generated by its citizens.

Donna Baker, Feral Cat Caretakers Coalition, stated that it would be difficult to ever stop the dumping of animals and that the solution to the problem is long-term managed care and scheduled trapping.

Commissioner Griffiths initiated a brief discussion regarding the possibility of implementing a mandatory licensing or microchipping program for cats in the City.

Chairperson McCabe asked staff to research the cat licensing program in the City of Lomita.

Commissioner Decker recommended that the City allow the TNR program to continue, ensure that the cats are in a safe location, and provide backup for caretakers.

Deputy Director Cessna stated that at the April 5, 2007 meeting staff would present at least one recommended action to be forwarded to City Council.

Commissioner Chim stated that she would be absent from the April meeting and recommended, along with a TNR program, establishing a volunteer organization for feeding feral cats in the City. She further suggested that the City print brochures to educate the public about feral cats, offer free spay/neuter days, and publicize the ordinance against the dumping of animals.

Animal Control Supervisor Brinkerhoff provided clarification that there were signs posted at Wilson Park.

9. ORAL COMMUNICATION

Deputy Director Cessna announced a joint program with the Library to show the documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" in June 2007. She stated that the Library would be discussing the book Field Notes from a Catastrophe by Elizabeth Colbert after the showing of the film.

She informed Commissioners that National Sports Grill, Sepulveda Boulevard, is appealing the Commission's February 1, 2007 decision. The Commission approved by voice vote Chairperson McCabe's nomination of Commissioner Minter to attend the meeting, with Commissioner Griffiths to be available as backup.

Commissioner Decker shared information about the April 3, 2007 environmental event with Congresswoman Harmon at Toyota and suggested starting annual tree planting events on Arbor Day.

Commissioner Reilly expressed concern that the types of trees being removed because of the damage they cause are being replaced with the same types of trees.

Chairperson McCabe suggested that an annual tree planting event and types of trees planted by the City be discussed at a future Commission meeting.

Deputy Director Cessna offered to try to put together a small tree planting in a City park for this Arbor Day on April 27, 2007.

Commissioner Griffiths stated that Torrance YMCA recently began offering receptacles for recycling batteries, that he has seen the readerboard at Miami Auto Spa illuminated late at night, and announced the Southern California Gas Company's 6th Annual Municipal Green Building Conference and Expo on April 12, 2007 in the City of Downey.

Commissioner Chim stated that Assemblyman Lieu was looking into the showing of "An Inconvenient Truth" at a future town hall meeting in the City. She suggested that the Chamber of Commerce and homeowners associations be asked to nominate citizens for Green Pride Awards. She stated that the South Bay Cities Council of Government meeting was very informative and shared information about proposed legislation bill AB391 regarding expanding committee membership in the EQMD from 12 to 13.

Deputy Director Cessna advised that City Council approved a letter of support on the proposed legislation.

Chairperson McCabe suggested that the Commission revisit the issue of sunlight rights and announced that Torrance has joined a biodiesel co-op. He stated that he spoke at a Torrance Unified School District meeting on environmental matters and discussed ways to share information with them. He announced a Biofuels Conference and Sustainable Transportation Expo on May 19-20, 2007 in the City of Santa Cruz.

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 10:47 p.m., Commissioner Chim moved to adjourn the meeting to April 5, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Decker and, hearing no objection, Chairperson McCabe so ordered.

Approved as Submitted April 5, 2007 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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