

**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, February 1, 2007 in the West Annex Meeting Room at Torrance City Hall.

**2. ROLL CALL:**

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

Absent: Commissioner Minter.

Also Present: Deputy Community Development Director Cessna, Development Review and Environmental Manager Lodan, and Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Chim moved to grant Commissioner Minter 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 Watson, seconded by Commissioner Griffiths, 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**

John Constable, Bulova Street, expressed concern about a bird problem in his neighborhood. It was determined that his concerns would be addressed under Item 8 later in the meeting.

**6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**6A. MEETING OF NOVEMBER 2, 2006**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Chim, seconded by Commissioner Watson, moved for the approval of the November 2, 2006 Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission meeting minutes as submitted; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Minter).

**6B. MEETING OF NOVEMBER 21, 2006**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Griffiths moved for the approval of the November 21, 2006 minutes of a joint meeting with Torrance City Council as submitted. Commissioner Reilly seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Minter).

**6C. MEETING OF DECEMBER 7, 2006**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Reilly moved to approve the December 7, 2006 Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission meeting minutes as submitted. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Minter).

**7. SIGN HEARINGS**

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

**7A. SNP06-00008: NATIONAL SPORTS GRILL-3210 SEPULVEDA BOULEVARD**

**Request:** To add one 27" high x 78" electronic readerboard cabinet onto the existing 26' high pole sign. The pole sign is located on the east side of the driveway entrance at Sepulveda Boulevard.

**TOTAL REQUEST: 14.6 SQUARE FEET**

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends denial of the request to keep an electronic readerboard cabinet on the existing pole sign. Staff suggests re-installing the manual readerboard cabinet previously approved by the Commission.

With the aid of slides, Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones introduced the request. She reported that the Commission approved the previous manual readerboard cabinet in 1993 and noted that the current electronic readerboard cabinet was installed prior to obtaining a permit or approval from the City. She stated that, in accordance with Electronic Readerboard Guidelines, staff recommends that approval of electronic readerboards be limited to large, multi-tenant developments.

**MOTION:** At 7:15 p.m., Chairperson McCabe moved to open the public hearing. Commissioner Chim seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Tony Garcia, President of National Sports Grill, West Sepulveda Boulevard, stated that he and his partner are new owners and are seeking to make the establishment more family oriented, improve its image, and attract more business.

Responding to Commissioner Chim's inquiry, Mr. Garcia stated that he was aware of the Electronic Readerboard Guidelines and apologized for installing the electronic readerboard without approval.

When Chairperson McCabe asked that the applicants provide justification for the request, Mr. Garcia stated that they wanted to update the manual readerboard to a more modern look. He expressed concerns about visibility when traveling eastbound on Sepulveda Boulevard due to a curve in the road.

Robert Towers, West Sepulveda Boulevard, discussed safety concerns for employees who have to manually change letters on a ladder on a manual readerboard. He stated that applicants were willing to be in complete compliance with all conditions for electronic readerboards.

Commissioner Reilly received clarification from applicants that types of messages they would display would be for strictly business-related operations.

In response to Commissioner Griffiths' inquiry, Mr. Garcia stated that they did not consider other signage options.

**MOTION:** At 7:27 p.m., Commissioner Reilly moved to close the public hearing. Commissioner Griffiths seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Commissioner Reilly stated that the size of the requested sign would not be detracting and that it would address the applicant's visibility and safety concerns. She noted that her only concern was the type of messages that could be displayed.

Commissioner Griffiths received clarification from staff that the applicant has room to increase signage but that the pole sign is their best exposure.

Chairperson McCabe expressed concern that the reasons given by the applicant for requesting approval could be used by every electronic readerboard sign request reviewed by the Commission. He stated that he did not see extenuating circumstances to deviate from the guidelines and approve the request.

Commissioner Griffiths stated that he witnessed the sign while it was illuminated and that he thought it was too bright and could be distracting to drivers.

Commissioner Reilly received clarification from staff that limiting illumination could be a condition of approval.

Commissioner Chim noted that visibility was not a major issue, that applicants have significantly improved the property in other ways, and that ignorance of law is not a valid excuse. She stated that she was in favor of denying the application because there was not a special circumstance that would warrant deviating from the Electronic Readerboard Guidelines.

Commissioner Watson stated that she would support approval of the request because the electronic readerboard replicates the size and position of the original signage, it is located in a commercial area, and that its intensity could be regulated.

Commissioner Decker stated that she does not care for electronic readerboards at all and expressed concern that their overuse would change the character of the City.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Griffiths moved to concur with staff recommendation to deny approval of SNP06-00008. Commissioner Chim seconded the motion; the motion passed as reflected in the following 4-2 roll call vote (absent Commissioner Minter):

AYES: Commissioners Chim, Decker, Griffiths, and Chairperson McCabe.  
NOES: Commissioners Reilly and Watson.

**8. ANIMAL MATTERS**

**8A. DISCUSSION OF FERAL CAT ISSUES**

Deputy Community Development Director Cessna reported that this item was referred to the Commission by City Council in December 2006, noting that it would take a minimum of three meetings to hear the issues and formulate a recommendation. She stated that the goal of this initial meeting was to identify the issues that need to be addressed and to understand why the City felt it needed to move in the direction of considering passing an ordinance to ban the feeding of feral cats. She advised that staff would provide potential resolutions to address these issues at the March 1, 2007 Commission meeting, with recommendations for the Commission to consider to be presented at the April or May 2007 Commission meeting. She noted that issues surrounding a potential ban on the feeding of all feral animals might need to be considered.

Park Services Manager Wilson discussed unhealthy conditions for employees at Wilson Park since 1992 that include fleas and feces. He stated that guidelines outlined in an agreement, crafted in 1999 between the City of Torrance Parks and Recreation Department and Concerned Caregivers Regarding the Feral Cats at Wilson Park, were not being followed by the current feeders. He noted that last summer the maintenance building had to be sprayed for fleas every three days and that he had to reassign employees to other parks. He stated that he was hopeful that a solution could be found for the employees as well as the cats.

He provided clarification that to date there have not been any Workers' Compensation claims, that approximately three employees have been affected, that there are 40 to 70 feral cats at Wilson Park, and that the organization Actors and Others for Animals helped to craft the 1999 agreement.

Responding to Commissioner Watson's inquiry, Park Services Manager Wilson stated that the agreement was made in 1999 because the situation at Wilson Park had become unmanageable and intolerable. He stated that the problems have resurfaced possibly due to lack of resources, training, or failure to adhere to established guidelines. He noted that this is an international issue, and that if there was an organized group working cohesively the situation could be better controlled.

In response to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry, Park Services Manager Wilson stated that there has also been vandalism at the maintenance building.

Animal Control Supervisor Brinkerhoff reported that his office has received complaints from residents, Torrance Unified School District, and businesses near Wilson Park, including a claim that damage was done to a car engine. He stated that there are also problems with littering, that there has been an increase of animals killed on nearby

roads, that the feeding attracts skunks and other wildlife, and that it promotes dumping of animals. He stated that there are no licensing requirements for cats and pointed out other areas in the City that have feral cat colonies that include Torrance Park, De Portola Park, the 1700 block of Del Amo Boulevard, and the Madrona Marsh Preserve.

Commissioner Reilly requested that Supervisor Brinkerhoff provide statistics on the volume and location of dead animals killed on the roads near areas where there are cat colonies.

Risk Manager Sellers discussed liability concerns for the City, noting that as landowners the City can be held responsible for the condition of its property. He stated that there was a possibility that the City could be sued by neighbors and would have to pay legal fees and damages over the condition of their property as a result of the condition of the City's property. He provided clarification that if an employee becomes sick or injured they would have a Workers' Compensation claim that the City would need to honor.

At 8:16 p.m., Deputy Director Cessna welcomed public input.

Margaret O'Regan, Sara Drive, expressed concern that the cats at Wilson Park would be left to starve to death and stated that the City needs to do something about people who drop off cats and other animals at the park.

Bill Dyer, Howland Canal, Venice, from In Defense of Animals, discussed the success of the Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) program at Harbor/UCLA Medical Center. He suggested that City officials and caregivers work together to address concerns and to penalize people for illegally dumping cats. He stated that the banning of feeding feral cat would only increase their population and that it is better to have managed control colonies.

Christi Metropole, Executive Director of Stray Cat Alliance, Los Angeles, stated that there would be an increase of cats if the City banned feeding and that compassion cannot be legislated. She recommended that the City adopt TNR, implemented with an organized program, as an official policy.

Ed Boks, General Manager of Los Angeles Animal Services, Los Angeles, discussed his experience with feral cats and the development of the FELIX program. He suggested that there has been a mismanaged TNR program at Wilson Park and, with proper management, there would be amazing results. He offered his assistance and urged the City not to make criminals out of the people who can help them.

Donna Baker, president of Feral Cat Caretakers Coalition, Los Angeles, stated that her organization is presently conducting feral cat caretaking workshops at city and County shelters and has published a booklet to guide feral cat caretakers.

At Commissioner Reilly's request, Ms. Baker described behavior of feral cats and related how she got involved with their caretaking.

Mary Zeitler, Calle de Andalucia, President of TLC Cat Adoptions Rescue and Adoption, described her experiences with trapping feral cats for the last 18 years. She stated that in 2006 her organization trapped, neutered, and returned over 500 cats,

mainly in Torrance, and that residential developments that have been built near Wilson Park have forced cats into the park. She explained why feeding stations at Wilson Park had to be moved due to illegal trapping, how ears of neutered cats are clipped, and noted that dogs and other animals are also flea carriers.

In response to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry, Ms. Zeitler stated that she feeds feral cats at nine locations and estimated that there are thousands of feral cats in the City.

Jeanne Young, West Carson Street, provided background on feral cats at Harbor/UCLA Medical Center and efforts to produce the managed colony that exists there today. She offered suggestions for flea, feces, and odor control, offered her assistance, and stated that everyone needs to work together to find a solution.

Jackie Dehavan (no speaker card), Animal Alliance, commended the concordance of attitudes this evening. She stated that the ground needs to be treated for fleas and questioned the validity of the purported damage to a car engine.

Susan Taylor, Executive Director of Actors and Others for Animals, North Hollywood, stated that TNR works and needs to be implemented and recommended that the City pass a spay/neuter ordinance.

Judy Carnes, San Pedro, stated that she takes care of two managed colonies.

Mark Dodge, Best Friends Catnippers, Woodland Hills, stated that managed a TNR program will work, requires enormous volunteer efforts, and encouraged a City/private partnership.

Timothy Robinson, Los Angeles, challenged Commissioners to participate in a feeding at the park to give this subject the true weight it deserves. He suggested reasons why many men do not like cats, noted that cats keep the rodent population down, and urged that cats not be punished for problems that humans have caused.

Stacy Polk, Ardath Avenue, Pet Assistance Foundation, stated that she takes care of a colony in the City of Hawthorne and supports mandatory spay and neutering, the use of microchips, keeping cats indoors, and decriminalizing people who own more than four cats.

Liz Cava, Best Friends Catnippers, Woodland Hills, expressed support for managed TNR, commended volunteer caregivers, and discussed funding opportunities for spay and neuter surgeries.

David Young, Victor Street, stated that he takes care of several colonies in the City and that feeders should not be driven underground.

Codelle Perez, Harbor City, stated that she has been the main feeder at Wilson Park for 12 years and that her feeding areas are in the trees and behind fences. She stated that there was no reason for workers to be where the cats are, that there is not a flea problem, and that 99% of the cats have been fixed.

Jackie Sherman, Manhattan Beach, discussed her experience as caretaker of feral cats in the City of Manhattan Beach and noted that cats are instrumental in keeping the rodent population down.

Peter Dabbieri, Via el Chico, stated that the City should educate residents about their responsibilities as pet owners as well as implement spay/neuter laws, penalties for abandoning animals, and penalties for not picking up after their pets.

Sara Cozolino, Venice, stressed the importance of education and communication and shared information about Capstar for flea control.

Pat Figueroa (no speaker card), stated that it costs less to spay or neuter a cat than to euthanize one and that it is important to catch people who are dumping animals.

The Commission was in recess from 9:40 p.m. to 9:50 p.m.

Mary Catalano (no address given) commended volunteer caretakers for their hard work and stated that a solution is viable.

Ron Corcello, North Hollywood, offered an explanation how and why TNR works. He noted that the spay/neuter program in Santa Barbara has been so effective that there are no kittens available for adoption there.

Abe Levine, Avenida de Jose, suggested that they look for data and documentation about health problems due to exposure to feral cat colonies and to contact the Center for Disease Control for information.

Jeralynn, North Hollywood (no speaker card), stated that the situation would become worse for residents if the feeding of feral cats were banned.

Debra Corwin, Purrfect Partners, stated that she would support mandatory neuter/spay laws and the use of microchips and offered to provide flea control in the form of liquid Program at Wilson Park. She distributed notebooks to each Commissioner on general information about feral cats.

John Constable, Bulova Street, discussed noise, health, and property damage issues in his neighborhood due to the feeding of crows, pigeons, and seagulls. He distributed copies of the July 19, 2006 "Identification and Assessment of Wildlife Damage: An Overview" from the Internet Center for Wildlife Damage Management.

David Young, Victor Street, noted that Debra Corwin and Purrfect Partners donate the funding for many TNRs. He suggested that the City implement a voucher program for spaying and neutering, and stressed the importance of providing education in all languages.

Abe Levine, Avenida de Jose, stated that he was supportive of TNR.

Rosemary Bailey, Purrfect Partners, requested that the Commission consider all correspondence received from residents.

Deputy Director Cessna encouraged audience members to attend the March 1, 2007 meeting that she hopes will be in a larger room.

The following issues were identified and recorded at the meeting:

*Unhealthful conditions for employees (fleas, feces)*  
*Feeding guidelines not followed*  
*Workers' compensation*  
*No organized group of caregivers*  
*Resident complaints*  
*Business complaints*  
*Littering*  
*Attracts skunks and other wildlife*  
*Roadkill*  
*Promotes dumping of animals*  
*Liability concerns for City*  
*As landowners we can be held liable for conditions resulting from cats*  
*Educate residents about their responsibilities as pet owners*  
*Penalties for dropping off animals*  
*Pooper scooper laws*  
*Spay/neuter laws*  
*Microchips*

## **9. NEW BUSINESS**

There was a brief discussion about the subcommittees that were established at the December 7, 2006 Commission meeting and following up on action items presented at the November 21, 2006 joint meeting with City Council.

Chairperson McCabe stated that he would like to continue discussions with Virginia Hilker regarding the possibility of Torrance becoming a Cool City and that he wanted to amend the policy statement presented to City Council on November 21, 2006.

Commissioner Watson stated that she would establish and present criteria for Green Pride in Torrance awards at the next Commission meeting, and mentioned that Starbucks, Walsers, and Gable House might be considered for candidates for recognition.

Commissioners welcomed new Commissioner Jackie Decker.

Commissioner Reilly shared information about the January 17, 2007 Solar Summit that she attended in the City of Santa Monica and initiated a brief discussion about protecting the right to sunlight and preserving an investment in solar panels.

Chairperson McCabe requested that staff provide a report in the next few months regarding the City's position on the right to sunlight.

## **10. INFORMATION MATTERS**

Commissioner Watson passed around a copy of the book 365 Ways to Save the Earth.

Commissioner Decker suggested showing the film "An Inconvenient Truth."

**MOTION:** Commissioner McCabe moved to appoint Commissioner Decker to serve on the Public Outreach subcommittee with Commissioner Watson; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Minter).

Commissioner Reilly requested an excused absence for the March 1, 2007 Commission meeting and Commissioner Chim requested an excused absence for the April Commission meeting.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Watson, seconded by Commissioner Griffiths, moved to grant an excused absence to Commissioner Reilly for the March 1, 2007 meeting and to Commissioner Chim for the April 2007 Commission meeting; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Minter).

Chairperson McCabe stated that he was proud that the City was experimenting with the use of biodiesel and announced that he bought a biodiesel Mercedes.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** At 10:58 p.m., Commissioner Watson moved to adjourn the meeting to March 1, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Decker and, hearing no objection, Chairperson McCabe so ordered.

Approved as Submitted March 1, 2007 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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