

**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, April 2, 2015 in the West Annex meeting room at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Commissioners Deemer, DeWitt, Endo-Roberts, Martin, Montgomery, Wright, and Chairperson Gobble.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Deputy Community Development Director Cessna, Senior Environmental Quality Officer Duncan, Environmental Quality Officer Bradshaw, Environmental Quality Officer Colclasure, Environmental Quality Officer Guevara, Environmental Quality Officer Oorts, and Environmental Quality Officer Travers.

3. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Deemer led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Endo-Roberts, seconded by Commissioner Wright, moved to accept and file the report of the secretary on the posting of the agenda for this meeting; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

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

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES : MARCH 5, 2015

Commissioner DeWitt offered a correction as follows: Page 3, Item 10, "**MOTION:** Commissioner Montgomery seconded the motion and...."

MOTION: Commissioner Endo-Roberts moved to approve the Commission meeting minutes of March 5, 2015 as amended. Commissioner Wright seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval (Commissioner DeWitt abstaining).

7. ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

7A. OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL DIVISION

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Duncan provided an overview regarding the many different responsibilities that Environmental staff members have in the City. She stated that staff members not only enforce Torrance Municipal Code (TMC) but also do plan checks, final inspections, issue sign permits and create sign programs, property maintenance, and enforce noise issues. With the aid of slides, she explained that the City is divided into four sections and each of the staff is responsible for Code enforcement within their area. She stated that their mission is to preserve the appearance, character, and quality of the neighborhoods and to continue to maintain the high standards that make Torrance a desirable place to live. She described the progressive steps that are used to accomplish these goals that include compliance through education, enforcement, and dispute resolution between neighbors with Lance Widman, South Bay Center for Dispute Resolution.

She described the two sides of the One Stop Counter: 1) Building & Safety where permits and business licenses are issued, fire prevention, and plan check and 2) Environmental and Planning where land use development standards are reviewed and enforced. She stated that representatives from each of the Divisions are at the Counter to assist the public and review plans. She reviewed the Summary of R1 Development Standards that include set backs, square footage being added, lot coverage, open space, garage size, parking requirements, and fence height. She showed slides of standards for industrial/commercial properties that include location of equipment and screening, signage, trash enclosures, adequate parking and striping, and noise. She noted that a Building Inspector conducts final physical inspections on site to make sure that properties are cleaned up and built to plan.

Environmental Quality Officer Bradshaw provided a slide presentation regarding residential and commercial property maintenance and discussed efforts to keep Torrance clean and beautiful. He showed examples of violations that include hoarding, inoperative vehicles, used furniture sales, and loading and unloading in the public right-of-way. He noted that staff members typically respond to citizen complaints but also to referrals from the Police and Fire Departments. He discussed enforcement of Conditional Use Permits and ensuring that companies abide by the conditions that they signed to conduct business. He stated that he also addresses noise complaints and works with dealerships to ensure they have sufficient designated employee parking.

In response to Commissioner Deemer's inquiry, he stated that overgrown vegetation is their most common complaint.

Chairperson Gobble received clarification from staff that installing artificial turf on front lawns is permissible.

Environmental Quality Officer Oorts provided a slide presentation on signage. He read the Torrance Municipal Code (TMC) definition of a sign and showed slides of different types of signage throughout the City that include wall signs, pole signs, ground signs, monument/blade signs, canopies, and roof signs. He showed examples of temporary signs such as real estate signs, window signs, and cloth banners as well as prohibited signs that include inflatable balloons, flashing electronic readerboards, vehicles used as billboards, bow banners, and A-Frame/Sandwich boards. He showed slides of commercial centers and newer developments that have sign programs that are used to establish standards and criteria for all signs in a center, noting that the

Environmental Division reviews and enforces them. He stated that TMC also requires maintenance of signs as well as removal of signs when a business has left the premises.

In response to Commissioner Wright's inquiry, he stated that flashing electronic readerboards require permits, and Deputy Director Cessna explained the guidelines that were developed for readerboards and how they are approved on an as-needed basis. She added that sign appeals have been going to the Planning Commission for the last two or three years.

Chairperson Gobble inquired if the City helps businesses know about the signage regulations and Environmental Quality Officer Oorts stated that they plan to start distributing handouts about them at the Permit Technician's office.

Environmental Quality Officer Colclasure discussed property maintenance regarding vegetation and noted that the TMC prohibits overgrown, decayed, diseased, or hazardous vegetation. With the aid of slides, she stated that overgrown vegetation often harbors vermin, obstructs visibility, and restricts access to pedestrians and vehicles. She stated that they also work with property owners to install ground cover due to potential runoff into storm drains and NPDES violation. She also showed examples of garages that have been converted into living quarters and noted that the TMC prohibits discontinuing or dispensing of required garage spaces, building without permits, and improper occupancy. She stated that staff members are mainly concerned with safety and that enforcement is often complaint driven. She explained that staff ask the owner if they can inspect the property and, if the owner refuses, and if there is enough evidence that a garage has been converted, staff can obtain an inspection warrant.

Chairperson Gobble inquired about State legislation that allows a second dwelling on an R1 lot, and she stated that they are only allowed if grandfathered in and if the lot is large enough to meet garage and parking requirements. Deputy Director Cessna added that second dwellings are prohibited in hillside areas due to topography.

Responding to Commissioner Martin's inquiry, staff stated that hedges up to four feet in height are allowed in front yards.

Chairperson Gobble initiated a brief discussion regarding the painting of front lawns with environmentally friendly green dye or the installation of artificial turf, and Environmental Quality Officer Travers noted that enforcing the TMC is challenging because it does not define what landscape is.

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Duncan described Zamperini Field as a General Aviation Airport that is home to approximately 500 based aircraft, flight schools, charter aircraft, and Robinson Helicopter. She discussed the mission of the Noise Abatement office to reduce aircraft noise and improve the Airport's compatibility with the surrounding community balancing Airport requirements with community needs. She stated that the Noise Abatement office provides enforcement of TMC regarding noise and some operations during take-offs and landings, curfew violations, and training operations. She explained that seven noise monitors are located in residential areas surrounding the Airport and that the initial goal of the program is voluntary compliance through education. She noted that violators are sent written notifications and, if there is no compliance, can eventually be referred to an Administrative Hearing Board and banned from the Airport. She stated that Quarterly Noise Abatement reports are presented to the Airport Commission. She provided information about the WebTrak

website that allows users to watch the movement of flights and air traffic patterns in the vicinity of the Airport. She added that Investigative Tools allow users to identify type of aircraft, altitude, noise reading, type of operation, and to submit complaints.

Responding to Commissioner Deemer's inquiries, Deputy Director Cessna stated that the new system in Los Angeles County was installed to monitor helicopters in the greater Los Angeles Basin and will be compatible with the City's noise abatement data. She explained that since installation of the noise abatement program citizen complaints have gone up and down, and she pointed out that total operations have decreased considerably since the 1970s.

Chairperson Gobble inquired about the flight school that moved from Torrance Airport to Hawthorne Airport, and Senior Environmental Quality Officer Duncan explained that the school was unable to meet noise requirements; however, she added that they are back at the Airport now with a different name and aircraft.

Environmental Quality Officer Travers presented information about the City's Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping technology, home occupations, and oil wells. He reported that GIS Field Data Collection applications have allowed them to identify and initiate enforcement of unused newsracks, unattended collection boxes, and unpermitted banners. He discussed home occupations, noting that TMC states that a home business must stay within the residence within the realm of the permit that is granted. He stated that standards and requirements include that the home occupation is secondary to the residence, does not involve more than one room of the dwelling, no structural alterations, cannot have customers and paid employees coming and going, subject to Fire Department inspection, and only one vehicle can be used for the home occupation. He presented a brief history of oil wells in the City and showed slides of the nine wells that are still active. He discussed periodic and annual site inspections, public hearings every three years, and site maintenance requirements. He briefly described additional responsibilities that Environmental Quality Officers have that involve vermin and pest control as well as standing water in gutters.

The Commission was in recess from 9:14 to 9:22 p.m.

7B. DISCUSSION OF ELECTRIC VEHICLE WEEK EVENT

Commissioners and staff discussed various ideas for Drive Electric Week, September 12-20, 2015. Deputy Director Cessna announced that the City's new electric vehicle (EV) charging stations would be up and running soon and that they hope to have a grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony in the Civic Center in conjunction with Drive Electric Week. She stated that, as there is a beach clean-up scheduled for September 19, staff is considering holding the event on September 26. She stated that the City could sponsor its own event or participate in an official Drive Electric Week event, which would require all publicity to include Plug In America, Sierra Club, and Electric Auto Association logos. She stated that they would like to have more than just the charger opening but may not want to share the glory with the other organizations. She raised the possibility of finding local EV enthusiasts who may want to plan an event that would tie in with the presentation of the EV charging stations.

Chairperson Gobble indicated his support for using the other logos as they are also trying to promote EVs, adding that a bigger event would enable residents to see what is available.

Commissioner Deemer suggested involving the South Bay Environmental Services Center and considering holding a road rally or parade with EVs.

Commissioner Montgomery recommended having the ribbon cutting ceremony followed by a Drive Electric Week event on the same day. He stated that surrounding cities would also be having events and there would be value to being tied in with Drive Electric Week. He disclosed that he is a member of Plug In America, Sierra Club, and Electric Auto Association and offered to volunteer his time as a resident to help organize ride and drives, finding a City captain, and inviting manufacturers to participate.

Commissioner DeWitt stated that he works for Honda and initiated a brief discussion regarding the purpose of doing the event.

Deputy Director Cessna stated that she would need to check on dates, would contact the South Bay Environmental Services Center, and would e-mail Commissioners with an update before the May Commission meeting.

8. NEW BUSINESS

9. ORAL COMMUNICATION

9A. Commissioner Deemer shared information about the Wyland Foundation Mayor's Challenge, California Friendly Landscape Workshops on April 18 and May 9 at West High School, and free electronics recycling at The Shredding Place.

9B. Commissioner DeWitt thanked fellow Commissioners for electing him Vice-Chairperson of the Commission.

9C. Commissioner Wright requested an excused absence for the May 7, 2015 Commission meeting.

9D. Commissioner Endo-Roberts encouraged Commissioners to see Torrance Theatre Company's "The Curious Savage" and stated that she may need an excused absence for the May 7, 2015 Commission meeting also.

9E. Chairperson Gobble stated that he is going on a Metropolitan Water District inspection tour to the Jensen Treatment Plant and the Edmonston Pumping Plant on April 25.

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 9:56 p.m., Commissioner Montgomery moved to adjourn to May 7, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex meeting room. Commissioner Deemer seconded the motion and, hearing no objection, Chairperson Gobble so ordered.

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Approved as submitted May 7, 2015 s/ Rebecca Poirier, City Clerk
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