

April 5, 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 7:01 p.m. on Thursday, April 5, 2007 in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL:

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

Absent: Commissioner Chim.

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

It was noted that Commissioner Chim was previously granted an excused absence for this meeting.

3. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson McCabe.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Decker, seconded by Commissioner Watson, 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

Daniel Coffee and Arohe Sharma, West High School Environmental Club, presented information about the ordinance recently passed in the City of Santa Monica banning the use of expanded polystyrene from certain food packaging. They discussed negative impacts of the use of polystyrene on the environment and economy as well as biodegradable alternatives that are available. They urged the Commission to join other cities in adopting a similar ordinance that would ban the use of non-biodegradable materials in restaurants.

Chairperson McCabe requested that staff bring the item back at the May 3, 2007 Commission meeting.

Commissioner Reilly asked presenters to bring back more information about the City of Santa Monica ordinance and its implementation process.

In response to Commissioner Decker's inquiry, Daniel and Arohe discussed the recycling program and other environmental activities at West High School.

City Librarian Weiner discussed the upcoming program, proposed by the Library Commission and Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission, to screen the film "An Inconvenient Truth" followed by a book discussion on June 27, 2007. She described and distributed information on Torrance Public Library's Real Books, Reel Life series that provides an opportunity for the community to discuss social issues in a non-polarizing environment. She stated that staff has identified a companion book, Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change, by Elizabeth Kolbert for the discussion. She noted that the Library owns a copy of the film and licensing rights and offered to provide a book and materials display at the event.

Commissioner Watson commended City Librarian Weiner for her efforts, offered her assistance, and stated that she was looking forward to the working partnership with the Library Commission.

Chairperson McCabe 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

6A. MEETING OF MARCH 1, 2007

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

7. ANIMAL MATTERS

7A. DISCUSSION OF FERAL CAT ISSUES

Deputy Director Cessna presented staff recommendations in the material of record that address concerns expressed by the City and by feral cat advocates. She stated that the first recommendation would be to establish a "feral cat club" through the Community Services Department that would provide training and information to the public as well as serve as a liaison between the City and feral cat feeders. The second recommendation is to adopt an ordinance that would regulate the feeding of feral cats on City property only. She noted that the "feral cat club" could consider the implementation of a spay/neuter and/or microchipping ordinance after the establishment of the first two recommendations. She stated that staff anticipated that the "feral cat club" would provide guidance and direction to anyone who wishes to feed feral cats within the City and not just on City property.

Responding to Commissioner Griffiths' inquiry, Deputy Director Cessna stated that the Community Services Department would oversee the "feral cat club," noting that they already have a number of charter clubs such as the Dog Obedience Club.

In response to Commissioner Reilly's inquiry, she advised that the ordinance would allow for changes to be made to the designated feeding areas, as circumstances require, but that at this point there are no specifics. She explained that the ordinance may specify that feeding areas would be approved through the "feral cat club" and would

not necessarily be specified in the ordinance itself; rather, it would specify a way of determining and keeping track of feeding locations through the “feral cat club.”

Responding to Chairperson McCabe’s inquiry, Deputy Director Cessna explained that the initial concept is that anyone who wishes to feed feral cats on City property would be registered through the “feral cat club” so that the City would know who is authorized to feed and on what City locations.

Commissioner Griffiths received clarification from staff that probably very little feeding occurs on City property as compared to on private property.

Deputy Director Cessna stated that staff was looking for consensus on a general conceptual plan from the Commission and City Council before writing an ordinance and charter.

When Chairperson McCabe stated that he would like to see a comprehensive education program included in the recommendation, Deputy Director Cessna responded that the educational component would come from the “feral cat club” itself.

At 7:37 p.m., Chairperson McCabe welcomed public input.

David Young, Victor Street, stated that he would support the recommendations and advised that Donna Baker, Feral Cat Caretakers Coalition, has recently received a grant to conduct a Trap, Neuter, Return program.

Laurie Clark, Plaza del Amo, stated that she was in favor of the recommendations and that she hoped the feral cat caretakers would be asked for input when the details of the program are being established.

Debra Corwin, Purrfect Partners, West Bulova Street, suggested that information about a low-cost spay and neuter program be promoted in the Torrance Seasons.

Deputy Director Cessna advised that, if approved by the Commission, the recommendations would go to City Council in mid-May 2007 for consideration. If approved, staff would work with Community Services to establish the “feral cat club” and the Legal Department to develop an ordinance.

When Commissioner Griffiths inquired about the problem of pet “dumping,” Deputy Director Cessna stated that the club would come up with ideas and methods of dealing with this and other issues.

Commissioner Griffiths noted that the previous agreement with the Parks and Recreation Department did not work out and questioned why this one would. Deputy Director Cessna responded that there is a bigger understanding now of what the issues are in the community and that this would be an established, formalized, chartered group overseen by the City.

Codelle Perez, Harbor City, explained that the lead person who signed the previous agreement moved out of the City and that the feeders lost contact with the Parks and Recreation Department. She suggested that Animal Control officers distribute educational materials at schools, the Farmers’ Market, and fairs.

Chairperson McCabe asked staff how the Commission would get feedback to make sure that all its collective wisdom and suggestions are implemented in the program. He stated that he wanted to make sure that the general framework is consistent with priorities that the Commission has focused on the last two Commission meetings.

Deputy Director Cessna stated that the program would be the people who organize the "feral cat club," noting that it will be their decision how they want to move forward with issues and to serve as liaison with the City, the Parks, and Animal Control. She stated that club members have the expertise and passion and should determine what is in the charter and how it should be implemented.

Park Services Manager Wilson stated that the club would need to be granted a charter by the City and that the framework and guidelines would need to be in place before being approved.

Chairperson McCabe stated that he wanted the Commission's recommendation to City Council to be well thought out and to provide a framework for the program to succeed.

Deputy Director Cessna stated that the ordinance would definitely come back to the Commission for approval before going to City Council and that the charter could come back for review once it is put together. She advised that, following conceptual approval from City Council, staff would work with the club to iron out the details.

Mary Zeitler, Calle de Andalucia, stated that the cat caretakers have been doing most of the proposals and networking with each other for 18 years but do not know how to comment until the program is in writing.

David Young, Victor Street, received clarification that the charter group would work with a staff liaison from the Community Services Department.

Jeanne Young, West Carson Street, expressed concern about the wording of the ordinance and suggested that specific City locations be banned from feeding.

Deputy Director Cessna responded that there would be a specific ban at Madrona Marsh and that other areas would be included as designated through the club, noting that there would be an opportunity for flexibility.

Ron Corcillo, North Hollywood, suggested that the ordinance be written in a way that would provide a warning system to feral cat feeders.

When Codelle Perez, South Normandie Avenue, questioned how to stop the general public from feeding feral cats, Deputy Director Cessna stated that the ordinance would allow Animal Control to give a written warning before issuing a citation.

MOTION: At 8:20 p.m., Commissioner Decker, seconded by Commissioner Watson, moved to close the public hearing.

Commissioner Decker stated that it was important to educate the public that leaving pet food outside attracts skunks.

Commissioner Reilly stated that the Torrance Seasons and homeowners associations could be source of education and communication.

MOTION: Commissioner Decker moved to recommend that the following staff recommendations be forwarded to City Council for its approval:

1. Establish a "Feral Cat Club" through the Community Services Department, which would provide training and information to interested members of the public, as well as serve as a liaison between the City and the feral cat feeders. In addition, this group could become the sponsor of spay/neuter days and other educational outreach efforts within the community; and
2. Adopt an ordinance banning the feeding of feral cats on City property, except for certain, designated locations and requiring that any person feeding feral cats on City property be registered to do so through the "feral Cat Club." Protocols such as Trap, Neuter, Return and guidelines such as those presented by Alley Cat Allies should be included either within the ordinance or as a part of the registration process for feeders. The ordinance should allow for changes to be made to the designated feeding areas, as circumstances require.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Griffiths and passed by unanimous roll call vote approval (absent Commissioner Chim).

8. INFORMATION ITEMS

8A. INFORMATION REGARDING "GREEN" PROGRAMS IN THE CITY OF TORRANCE

Deputy Director Cessna distributed information from various City departments regarding policies, procedures, and programs that are designed with energy conservation in mind. She noted that the report from General Services Department was extremely comprehensive and that information regarding the curbside residential green waste collection pilot program was included in the agenda material.

Commissioners Watson and Griffins thanked staff for providing this information on green programs in the City and Chairperson McCabe suggested putting it on the website.

A brief discussion centered on City Council's approval of the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement also known as the Cool Cities program on April 3, 2007.

Deputy Director Cessna offered to bring back an item next month on the Cool Cities framework to see how it could be incorporated into the goals of the Commission's subcommittees. She stated that the basic assessment presented at this meeting is a good first step and that the next step would be to determine a baseline.

Chairperson McCabe stated that he attended a Harbor City/Harbor Gateway Chamber of Commerce meeting on April 5, 2007 and that many environmental issues were discussed. He recommended that at the next meeting each subcommittee present initial thoughts about its direction and how it relates to the Cool Cities program.

Commissioner Watson suggested giving a Green Pride in Torrance award to Virginia Hilker and her group. She commented that she was also interested in giving an award to Starbucks on Sepulveda Boulevard and Anza Avenue.

MOTION: Commissioner Watson moved to present a Green Pride in Torrance award to Virginia Hilker and members of Environmental Priorities Network. Commissioner Decker seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Chim).

9. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Deputy Director Cessna stated that April 27, 2007 is Arbor Day and asked Commissioners if they were interested in sponsoring a small tree planting at Wilson Park on that day. Following a brief discussion, it was decided to wait until next year to establish an annual tree planting program on Arbor Day.

Commissioner Decker distributed a letter dated April 4, 2007 from Tom Newman, Bluff Street, advocating the importance of greenscape in commercial centers.

Chairperson McCabe suggested the possibility of having a landscaping program similar to the existing sign programs.

Deputy Director Cessna stated that technically there is a landscape program in place and that it is a matter of enforcement.

Commissioner Decker stated that businesses needed to know that they have a responsibility to the City also.

Commissioner Griffiths noted that many buildings at Eastgate Plaza on Carson Street and Western Avenue have deteriorated awnings.

Commissioner Griffiths reminded Commissioners about the 6th Annual Municipal Green Building Conference and Expo on April 12, 2007 in the City of Downey.

Chairperson McCabe asked staff to review the Energy Efficiency Assessment commissioned by the South Bay Cities Council of Governments and provide to feedback.

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 9:12 p.m., Commissioner Reilly moved to adjourn the meeting to May 3, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex meeting room. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watson and, hearing no objection, Chairperson McCabe so ordered.

Approved as Submitted May 3, 2007 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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