

August 2, 2007

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

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The Torrance Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission convened in a regular meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 2, 2007, in the West Annex meeting room at Torrance City Hall.

2. **SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman McCabe.

3. **ROLL CALL**

Present: Commissioners Chim, Decker, Griffiths, Reilly, Watson and Chairman McCabe

Absent: None

Also Present: Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones and Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich

4. **AFFIDAVIT OF POSTING**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Watson moved to accept and file the report of the City Clerk on the posting of the agenda for this meeting. Commissioner Griffiths seconded the motion and a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

None.

6. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 7, 2007**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Reilly moved for the approval of the June 7, 2007 minutes as written. Commissioner Chim seconded the motion and a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

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

7. **SIGN HEARINGS**

7a. **CONSIDERATION OF A REQUEST FOR AN ELECTRONIC READERBOARD GROUND SIGN AT 3565 DEL AMO BOULEVARD, HEALTHCARE PARTNERS**

With the aid of slides, Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones reviewed the request and discussed staff's analysis and recommendation. She pointed out the many medical facilities in the City and noted that staff was wary of opening the door for this

Environmental Quality and  
Energy Conservation Commission  
August 2, 2007

usage. She reported that the while staff can make requests about the content of readerboard postings, the legal department indicated that the City could not control the verbiage posted unless the code is amended.

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones reported that she did not have information currently available about signs approved in the past with conditions, but she noted that businesses are usually cooperative with City requests about readerboard verbiage. She indicated that the code was old and needed updating but a review was not scheduled yet and she did not foresee it happening in the immediate future.

Chairman McCabe reported that the sign tour issue would be addressed at the September meeting and he felt that could push the issue of amending the code.

The Commission discussed banners, monument signs, manual reader boards and issues associated with them, the existing Medical Spa sign, and how much signage was allowed.

**MOTION:** Moved by Commissioner Reilly, seconded by Commissioner Watson and unanimously passed to open the public hearing.

Norman Nelson, Site Administrator for HeathCare Partners, reported their strong commitment to community awareness of healthcare programs that they offer seasonally, some of which are free to the public. He felt the readerboard would be the best method to communicate with the community about available services and he expressed concern with the visibility of banners and with potential vandalism issues with manual signs.

Responding to Commission inquiry, Mr. Nelson indicated that the location in question was HealthCare Partners' largest facility and the readerboard would be most effective there. He reported that they did not usually advertise in the newspaper but sometimes placed ads in magazines. He added that the facility is open to the public and he summarized services and procedures available at the recently opened Medical Spa.

Commissioner Griffiths received clarification that the existing sign would remain in place as it is more of a directional sign and the proposed readerboard sign would be monochrome, amber in color, with a text only display.

Mr. Nelson explained that the hours of illumination would be limited to be 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday to correspond with the facility's hours of operation.

Responding to Commissioner Chim, Mr. Nelson stated that competitors in the area included Kaiser and other smaller medical groups.

Steve Lagalleon, Sign Industries, felt that banners would be cumbersome to change and not very visible

**MOTION:** Moved by Commissioner Reilly, seconded by Commissioner Griffiths and unanimously approved to close the public hearing.

Commissioners Reilly and Watson questioned whether they should participate in the decision since their doctors are in the complex and Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich clarified that the decision should be made based on their level of comfort with being able to make an unbiased decision.

Commissioners Reilly and Watson both felt comfortable continuing with the hearing.

The Commission discussed the issue and several Commissioners expressed concern with the ability to control sign content but agreed that HealthCare Partners needed better signage. Commissioners appreciated the limited hours and preferred the monochrome display over a graphic, multi-colored sign.

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones suggested conditioning the hours of illumination to protect residents across the street and she noted that the City could ask for cooperation in keeping the verbiage on the sign to business related announcements only.

Commissioner Reilly felt banners sometimes looked tacky and short term and she expressed support for the proposed sign.

Commissioner Chim commented that since there is a policy against electronic reader boards, the Commission should heed that rather than worrying about whether the community would gain from the proposed sign. She suggested that if the Commission decided to grant the sign, the policy should be amended to include large medical facilities.

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones indicated that it might not be necessary to amend the policy because the Commission should consider the totality of the facility when considering readerboards as not all facilities will be like this one.

Commissioner Chim expressed concern with setting a precedent and not being able to get cooperation from other facilities.

Commission and staff discussed other readerboard situations in the City and Commissioner Watson felt it part of their task to consider requests on a case by case basis.

Commissioner Chim acknowledged that the proposed area is not overloaded with signs.

Commissioner Decker felt that HealthCare Partners needed more signage but she did not agree with readerboards and she felt HealthCare Partners could advertise their programs in the paper if they wanted to generate interest in their programs.

Chairman McCabe referenced the guidelines the Commission had previously worked on noting that it is impossible to think of every potential situation. He wanted to see a code review meeting or session where there could be additional discussion with the City Council or adjoining cities as he was not sure where everyone stood on the issue.

**MOTION:** Moved by Commissioner Griffiths and seconded by Commissioner Watson to approve Case SNP01-0003 as proposed with illumination restricted to the hours between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. and a strong request of cooperation to keep content relative to the functions of the facility. A voice vote reflected unanimous approval with the exception of Commissioner Decker who dissented.

Responding to Chairman McCabe, Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones indicated that she would make a finding of fact.

**8. ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS**

**8a. PRESENTATION ON WIND TURBINES BY BOB MOHLE OF PAC WIND**

Bob Mohle, Pac Wind, distributed brochures and provided a brief presentation on vertical access wind turbines noting that they were quieter and safer for birds and wildlife than conventional wind turbines. He acknowledged that wind turbines were more popular in northern California where winds are stronger but he reported that Pac Wind would be installing one on a lifeguard tower in Hermosa Beach soon.

The Commission discussed issues relating to the wind turbines including measuring how much wind there is in an area, how much power could be generated, longevity, potential permitting issues, and costs.

Chairman McCabe reported making a presentation to the Planning Commission about Green Building Programs and he suggested consideration of sunlight rights.

Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich agreed to take that information back to the Planning Commission.

**8b. CONSIDERATION OF SMILE CLEANERS, 18270 PRAIRIE AVENUE TORRANCE FOR A GREEN PRIDE AWARD**

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones reported that Smile Cleaners had obtained a new machine that was good for the environment and she wanted to recommend them for an award because although they are required to make changes by 2017 they are making them now.

Chairman McCabe expressed support for the award and suggested that other cleaners in the City doing this should be recognized as well.

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones agreed to research the matter in order to collectively recognize cleaners who are working to help the environment.

**9. NEW BUSINESS**

**9a. RESCIND ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRPERSON AND INITIATE A NEW VOTE**

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones explained that the Brown Act required that all votes except for permissible closed session be cast in public. At the last meeting the Commission voted in error with a secret ballot so the election for Vice Chair will have to be redone with an open ballot.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Watson moved to appoint Commissioner Reilly as Vice Chairperson of the Torrance Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission. Commissioner Chim seconded the motion and a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

## **10. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones reported that a green purchasing policy would be coming forward in September and she was scheduled to attend a seminar about that on August 23. She noted that she had also attended a meeting on July 25 with Linda Cessna at the South Bay Energy Resources Center regarding the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives.

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones reported that the feral cat group was working with Parks and Recreation to create an ordinance if the charter does not get off the ground. She read a letter to Mike Wilson indicating that they had agreed to establish a charter club for the welfare of feral cats, addressing issues such as feeding in designated areas, spay/neuter, flea control, etc.

Chairman McCabe suggested the City look at how they could support the trap/neuter/release program because he felt that was the most effective solution to the feral cat issue.

Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich provided a summary of recent Planning Commission actions.

Responding to Chairman McCabe, Planning Associate Hurd-Ravich indicated that she was not aware of any formal conversations about green building programs with certification and benefits to reward those who build to a certain standard. She explained that since there were no strong standards or a code, it could only be encouraged, not required.

Commissioner Decker reported attending the solar home tour as well as the Green with Envy seminar in Santa Monica. She wondered how Torrance compared with Santa Monica in their recycling efforts and she suggested that the Mayor and Council write letters to business and residents about what they can do to help the environment.

Commissioner Chim reported attending a West Basin Water District event about conservation efforts where Assemblymember Ted Lieu spoke. She also attended a groundbreaking ceremony for the new Miyako Hotel in Torrance which has focused on green building and she reported on her efforts at composting with red worms.

Responding to an inquiry from Chairman McCabe about what the City is doing to encourage developers to make green building a priority, Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones reported that more developers are voluntarily building green projects. She indicated that the City was asking applicants to use green building methods and she agreed to communicate with Building and Safety to find out what type of incentives could be offered such as fast tracking green projects.

Commissioner Watson thanked Commissioners Chim and Decker, Chairman McCabe and staff for participating in the joint event with the Library which she felt was very successful. She reported that the Library was considering another partnership event about the Electric Car and the Commission agreed to pursue that with an action item.

Commissioner Watson reported that the Torrance Historical Society had been working on architectural guidelines with the City Council and the Los Angeles

Conservancy. The guidelines provide information on different architectural styles and advice on not overbuilding, and she pointed out that they were environmentally friendly as well. She agreed to get a copy for everyone noting that the Community Development Department had designed the brochure and she felt the green standards should have a similar look. She expressed concern with expiring environmental rebates and she indicated that she had learned a lot from attending green fairs.

Chairman McCabe reported that many people were unaware of green building standards and Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones agreed that information could be handed out at the Planning Counter.

Chairman McCabe asked that the three subcommittees be placed on the agenda for the next meeting and Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones indicated that Deputy Director Cessna wanted to be notified and aware of subcommittee meetings.

Chairman McCabe asked about the status of the energy audit update that was done last year. He reported that the Chamber of Commerce had come up with a website in conjunction with the City for businesses to get information on how to be environmentally friendly. He asked the publicity subcommittee to promote the website which is greentorrance.com and he asked Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones to have the department report put on the website.

Chairman McCabe wanted to see Torrance moving in the right direction and ahead of what is being enforced and he asked Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones to find out whether the City could adopt the green building program for all City projects so that they could start doing what they were asking other people to do.

The Commission discussed leaf blowers and Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones reported that staff had gathered information and surveyed other cities but the matter never went anywhere because they were not given direction or support. She added that other cities had outlawed leaf blowers a long time ago. Chairman McCabe asked that the matter be put on the next agenda.

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:27 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Thursday, September 6, 2007, at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex meeting room at Torrance City Hall.

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| Approved as Submitted<br>September 6, 2007<br>s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk |
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Kristi Callan  
Recording Secretary

Environmental Quality and  
Energy Conservation Commission  
August 2, 2007