

October 3, 2013

**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 7:03 p.m. on Thursday, October 3, 2013 in the West Annex meeting room at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Commissioners Chim, Deemer, DeWitt, Gobble*, Martin, Robbins, and Chairperson Griffiths.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Senior Environmental Quality Officer Duncan, Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones, Environmental Quality Officer Travers, and Planning Assistant Yumul.

*Commissioner Gobble arrived at 7:32 p.m.

3. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Martin led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Robbins, seconded by Commissioner Chim, 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. MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 5, 2013 COMMISSION MEETING

MOTION: Commissioner DeWitt moved to approve the September 5, 2013 Commission meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Martin seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Gobble).

7. ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

7A. LAND USE – LUS13-00002 – THE KEEPING OF CHICKENS AND BEES

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones introduced the item and welcomed Environmental Quality Officer Travers. She called attention to supplemental correspondence received after agenda packets were prepared.

Environmental Quality Officer Travers provided a PowerPoint presentation on proposed revisions to the Torrance Municipal Code (TMC) to establish standards to allow the keeping of hens and bees in single family residential properties. He reported that, under existing TMC Sections 41.1.1 and 41.1.2, chickens, hens, or roosters are considered as farm type animals and are prohibited. He noted that existing Code allows for the keeping of up to four pigeons and doves without requiring a Special Animal Permit. He stated that beekeeping is allowed in industrial zones with approval from the Commission per Section 41.10.1.

He noted that, based on existing processes established in the TMC, draft ordinances on the keeping of hens and bees can be applied through minor amendments and modifications. He stated that the hens draft ordinance adds language to allow up to four hens, prohibits roosters, and requires approval of a Special Animal Permit. He added that the ordinance establishes requirements on size and location of coops and has provisions for maintenance and revocations if there are nuisances. He stated that the draft beekeeping ordinance requires Commission approval, limits the number and size of hives, and has location, barrier, and placement requirements. He added that hives and colonies need to be maintained and are subject to inspection, with approval revoked or amended if there are nuisances. He presented options for the Commission to consider: accept and file the presented information, direct staff to conduct further research or outreach, or draft recommendations for suggested modifications to the TMC and forward them to the Planning Commission.

At 7:15 p.m., Chairperson Griffiths welcomed public comment, and there was concurrence to consider the keeping of hens and bees separately.

Annie Ko, 226th Street, stated that she has five hens, no roosters, and no noise or odor issues. She stated that she received a notice of Code violation today from Animal Control and has 30 days to remove them. She urged the Commission to recommend approval of the ordinance so that she can keep them.

Sherry Roberts, Wilton Place, encouraged Commissioners to approve both the chicken and bee ordinances.

Harry Stuver, Towers Street, stated that he would like to raise chickens and sees no problem with noise. He recommended reducing the set back requirement to five feet and permitting keeping of hens with revocation if necessary.

Charles Deemer, Talisman Street, stated that he and his wife do not support an ordinance allowing the keeping of chickens. He expressed concern about odor and insects, maintaining that they belong in the country and not a city.

Sandra Koerner, Fonhill Avenue, stated that she is in favor of passing the hens ordinance that would allow her children to reconnect with the world that nourishes them.

Roberta Kato, Long Beach, representing Los Angeles Urban Chicken Enthusiasts, stated that she has 20 chickens which is the legal limit in Long Beach.

Harold Clyde, Grant Avenue, submitted October 1, 2013 correspondence from his wife Tamlynn Clyde encouraging the City to allow residents to keep hens as pets without a special permit. He recommended that hens be classified the same as pigeons and doves and that set backs be waived if there is a solid fence between properties.

Emily Mattie, Lenore Street, concurred with Mr. Clyde that chickens should not be treated any differently than pigeons and doves and that proposed set back requirements would prohibit too many residents from keeping chickens.

At 7:40 p.m., Chairperson Griffiths welcomed public comment regarding beekeeping.

Ed Garcia, Emerald Street, voiced support for the adoption of both ordinances in keeping with the movement towards sustainability. He asserted that people will have chickens and bees anyway, and by passing the ordinances the City would be able to exercise more control over their maintenance.

Mr. Deemer stated that he is against the proposed beekeeping ordinance because bees should not be kept in backyards and around where people live.

Ms. Ko stated that she was a former beekeeper and discussed colony collapse disorder. She pointed out that almonds depend 100% on bee pollination and maintained that the City should be promoting California's agricultural industries.

Ms. Koerner stated that she lives one block from Ms. Ko and when she had bees there was never a problem.

Mr. Clyde distributed a fact sheet about bee stings, noting that deaths from bee stings are extremely rare. He expressed concern about the lack of bees at Columbia Park's Community Gardens and recommended encouraging a healthy bee population in Torrance.

Ruth Askren, Los Angeles, representing Bee Capture, stated that she removes and relocates wild beehives into human-maintained beehives. She pointed out that there is a plethora of bees in this area and it makes sense to raise, manage, and control their population.

Susan Rudnicki, Manhattan Beach, stated that she works with the City of Manhattan Beach to remove hives when there are complaints and that she is allowed to keep them in the public works yard until they are adopted out. She pointed out that there are nine feral hives per square mile in Los Angeles and stressed the importance of educational outreach and teaching people how to responsibly keep bees.

In response to Commissioners' inquiries, she discussed proper maintenance of bees and pointed out that Los Angeles has larger colonies of feral bees because of the weather and exotic foliage, noting that all pollinators are endangered due to loss of habitat, development, and pesticides.

Julian Chasin, Via Los Miradores, voiced his support for passing a beekeeping ordinance and discussed the importance of achieving sustainability and producing locally grown food.

Mr. Stuver stated that he is an exotic fruit grower and is interested in keeping bees to encourage pollination. He recommended including language in the ordinance to address complaints.

Rosalee Foxwood, Kent Avenue, asked that her name be added to the petition in the material of record and expressed hope that both ordinances would be adopted. She

indicated that the food she grows is reliant on pollinators, that chickens contribute to soil enrichment and produce eggs, and that the local sustainable home farmer movement is in line with the City's green endeavors.

Jim Montgomery, Via El Chico, stated that he is excited about the positive ramifications of both ordinances and that he would like to keep both bees and chickens.

Alden Salazar, Placentia, stated that he keeps bees in Long Beach and has captured 15 swarms in Torrance in the past year. He pointed out that managed hives prevent swarming and encouraged the Commission to pass the beekeeping ordinance.

The Commission was in recess from 8:27 to 8:39 p.m.

Commissioners expressed appreciation to audience members for coming forward and educating them about chickens and beekeeping.

Commissioner Robbins expressed concern that there has not been enough outreach to the community and that he would like more professional opinions. He commented that he would like to see hens treated the same as pigeons and doves.

Commissioner Gobble stated that he would like to have more input from both sides, from Torrance Unified School District, and hear information about neighboring areas and set back requirements.

Commissioner DeWitt stated that this meeting is a great start but that he would like to see more outreach. He suggested getting further definition about set back requirements and barriers from the Planning Department.

Commissioner Martin received clarification that there are no permitted beehives in the City's commercial areas and that Los Angeles County Department of Agriculture wants all beekeepers to register with them so they can track any bee diseases.

Commissioner Deemer stated that he would like to know about ordinances in larger cities such as Santa Monica and suggested that residents expand beekeeping into industrial areas where it is already permitted.

Commissioner Chim voiced support for more research, outreach, and dialogue. She stated that people against keeping bees and hens should have a voice and recommended getting more than 44 signatures on the petition. She expressed concern that Ms. Ko only has 30 days to remove her chickens and suggested that she try to get a stay while the issue is being addressed.

Mr. Montgomery encouraged staff to look at what other cities are doing and offered his assistance in organizing the petition effort.

In response to Commissioner Chim's inquiry, Environmental Quality Officer Travers stated that the intent behind the ordinance allowing pigeons and doves was because in the 1940's and 1950's people raised them as a hobby.

Ms. Ko stated that, if there is more outreach, instead of 20 to 1 it would be 40 to 2 in favor of keeping chickens and bees.

Commissioner Gobble stated that it is the Commission's duty to hear from as many residents as possible, adding that he hopes there will be more media attention.

Chairperson Griffiths concurred that it is too small of a sample to make an informed, permanent decision. He voiced support for more outreach and information about setbacks, enforcement, and what constitutes a nuisance.

Ms. Rudnicki discussed how Africanized bees reached California and stated that they are manageable, disease and pest resistant, and are good honey producers.

Mr. Stuver stated that people are going to have chickens whether there is an ordinance or not and urged the City to be forward thinking in sustainability and making a better community.

In response to Ms. Mattie's inquiry, staff explained how the City does outreach through homeowners associations, schools, meetings, and the Environmental Fair.

Ms. Kato stated that she would like to participate in outreach at the Environmental Fair, adding that in Long Beach coops are allowed up to the property line.

MOTION: Commissioner Gobble moved to direct staff to conduct further research and outreach in the areas of allowing the keeping of hens and bees in residential properties and to bring the item back to the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission. Commissioner Robbins seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

8.9. NEW BUSINESS / ORAL COMMUNICATION

Harry Stuver, Towers Street, stated that a public nuisance exists in West Torrance with an open firing range and expressed hope that one day the children would be safe from lead.

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 9:28 p.m., Commissioner Gobble moved to adjourn the meeting to November 7, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex meeting room. Commissioner Deemer seconded the motion and, hearing no objection, Chairperson Griffiths so ordered.

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Approved as submitted November 7, 2013 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
