

**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, October 4, 2012 in the West Annex meeting room at Torrance City Hall.

In the absence of Chairperson Griffiths, Vice-Chairperson Watson led the meeting.

**2. ROLL CALL:**

Present: Commissioners DeWitt, Gobble, Reilly, Robbins, and Vice-Chairperson Watson.

Absent: Commissioner Chim and Chairperson Griffiths (excused).

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

**MOTION:** Commissioner Gobble moved to grant Commissioner Chim an excused absence for the October 4, 2012 Commission meeting. Commissioner Reilly seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Chairperson Griffiths).

**MOTION:** Commissioner Gobble moved to grant Commissioner Robbins an excused absence for the September 6, 2012 Commission meeting. Commissioner Reilly seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Chairperson Griffiths and Commissioner Chim).

**3. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

Commissioner Gobble led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Reilly, seconded by Commissioner Gobble, 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 (absent Chairperson Griffiths and Commissioner Chim).

**5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC - None**

**6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**6A. MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 6, 2012**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Gobble moved to approve the September 6, 2012 meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Reilly seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Chairperson Griffiths and Commissioner Chim, Commissioner Robbins abstaining).

**7. ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS**

**7A. URBAN BEEKEEPING PRESENTED BY EDGARDO GARCIA**

Edgardo Garcia, Redondo Beach, member of Backwards Beekeepers, an urban beekeeping club, introduced fellow members who took turns presenting information about beekeeping.

John Crookston, Calle de Madrid, provided a brief history and overview of beekeeping. He noted that bees are the only insects that produce food that is eaten by them and man, bees are responsible for pollinating 80% of the world's plants, and honey is the only food that does not spoil. He stated that bees also produce beeswax and royal jelly. He showed and described a modern beehive in wooden boxes called supers. He discussed some of the diseases that plague bees that include colony collapse disease that causes one colony in three to vacate each year.

Susan Rudnicki, Manhattan Beach, pointed out that Manhattan Beach has no restrictions on beekeeping in its Code and noted that there is an average of nine feral hives per square mile in Los Angeles County. She stated that the club's intent to legalize beekeeping in municipalities is to help cities manage a perceived problem and to rescue unwanted bees. She noted that beekeeping is legal in cities that include Paris, New York, Hollywood, and Chicago. She indicated that bees sting when they fear the integrity of their hives is being threatened and that bee sting mortality is very rare.

Steven Rosales, Laurette Street, described bee swarming and explained that it is a means for a colony to reproduce itself when it feels crowded or runs out of space. He demonstrated checkerboarding, one of the ways used to control most swarming, that makes bees think they have more space. He stated that most swarming occurs in the spring and that it is not dangerous.

Laura Gia, Halison Street, compared differences and similarities between European honey bees and Africanized honey bees. She explained the history of Africanized honey bees and how they reached the United States in the early 1990s. She stated that the main difference is that Africanized bees are more sensitive to disturbances, more disease resistant, and harder workers. She expressed support for awareness, education, and a healthy respect for pollinators.

Responding to Commissioner Robbins' inquiry, Deputy Director Cessna advised that the City's Code states that bees cannot be kept within 300 feet of a residentially-zoned property and that it has been there a long time ago. She noted that it is being requested that the City consider amending its current zoning Code to allow private urban beekeepers to maintain small beehives in their backyards.

Commissioner Gobble disclosed that he was once a beekeeper and, in response to his inquiry about the enforcement aspect, Deputy Director Cessna stated that most bee complaints are referred to Los Angeles County. She added that Department staff

only get involved if it is an inside structure and the property owner is not taking proper steps to ensure safety of neighbors.

Responding to Commissioner Gobble's inquiry about potential liability to the City's residents, Deputy Director Cessna stated that if the Code were amended there would probably not be an issue but that staff would verify with the City Attorney's Office.

At Commissioner Reilly's request, Mr. Garcia described the case of a gentleman who was severely stung by bees in Redondo Beach about a year ago during a professional hive removal. He stated that the incident was caused by human negligence and that the area should have been cordoned off.

Commissioner Robbins stated that bees are important for food sources, restrictions in the City's Code are arcane, and the main element that is lacking is education.

In response to Commissioner DeWitt's inquiry, Mr. Garcia described the size of hives and stated that feral hives are often found in water meters, electrical boxes, attics, and walls. He emphasized that the club is not proposing industrialized beekeeping or bringing bees in from the outside but to keep bees that are already here and rescue unwanted bees.

Vice-Chairperson Watson received clarification from staff that it was possible to remove the existing ordinance and to replace it with nothing.

Mr. Garcia pointed out that the Redondo Beach is implementing a permit process and that the Santa Monica requires reasonable steps that need to be taken by beekeepers.

Deputy Director Cessna noted that an October 2011 Mar Vista feasibility study exploring the benefits of having bees in a city was attached in agenda materials. She stated that staff would look for additional information, talk to the City Attorney's Office, and bring back recommendations.

Commissioner Gobble directed staff to explore what the cities of Redondo Beach and Santa Monica are doing and to see if there are any limitations on the number of hives allowed.

When Commissioner Robbins suggested conducting a public hearing, Deputy Director Cessna advised that any ordinance change requires a public hearing.

Vice-Chairperson Watson expressed appreciation for the informative presentation and members distributed samples of honey.

## **8. NEW BUSINESS**

**8A.** Deputy Director Cessna stated that items coming to the Commission in the next few months include leaf blowers, beekeeping, and strategies for the Climate Action Plan.

**8B.** In response to Commissioner DeWitt's inquiry, staff and Commissioners discussed recent refinery incidents.

**8C.** Deputy Director Cessna suggested scheduling a joint meeting with City Council once they have concrete and focused strategies for the Climate Action Plan. When it was pointed out that two Commissioners are terming out in January 2013, she stated that it might be possible to schedule it in December 2012.

**9. ORAL COMMUNICATION**

**9A.** Commissioner DeWitt announced the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Water Harvest Festival on October 13 in El Segundo and the Torrance Birthday Bash on October 28 at Wilson Park.

**9B.** Commissioner Robbins requested an excused absence for the November 1, 2012 Commission meeting.

**9C.** Vice-Chairperson Watson announced a Torrance Historical Society Home Tour on October 13-14.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** At 8:25 p.m., Commissioner DeWitt moved to adjourn the meeting to November 1, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex meeting room. Commissioner Robbins seconded the motion and, hearing no objection, Vice-Chairperson Watson so ordered.

Approved as Submitted February 7, 2013 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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