

**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, November 3, 2005, in the West Annex Meeting Room at Torrance City Hall.

**2. ROLL CALL:**

Present: Commissioners Basile, Chim, Minter, Persaud, Reilly, Watson,  
and Chairperson McCabe.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Environmental Services Administrator Cessna and  
Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones.

**3. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson McCabe.

**4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Minter, 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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Minter moved for the approval of the August 4, 2005 Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission meeting minutes as submitted. Commissioner Reilly seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (with Commissioner Persaud abstaining).

**MOTION:** Commissioner Minter moved for the approval of the September 1, 2005 Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission meeting minutes as submitted. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (with Commissioner Reilly abstaining).

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

**6. SIGN HEARINGS**

Deborah Schaffer  
Recording Secretary

Environmental Quality and Energy  
Conservation Commission  
November 3, 2005

**6A. SNP05-00008: TESHIMA & COMPANY – 2215 190<sup>TH</sup> STREET**

- Request:**
- 1) One 2'5" high x 25'1" internally illuminated individual channel letter wall sign. Blue copy, "Teshima & Company". Located on the south elevation.  
60.7 square feet
  - 2) One 2' high x 22'5" internally illuminated channel letter wall sign. Blue copy, website address, "accountonus.com". Located on the east elevation.  
44.8 square feet

**TOTAL REQUEST: 105.5 SQUARE FEET**

**Recommendation:**

The Environmental Division staff recommends approval of the wall sign for the south elevation and denial of the business website address on the east elevation. Staff suggests a sign stating the business name replace the website address.

With the aid of slides, Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones introduced the request. She noted that the request for the sign on the south elevation adheres to the sign program that was established for the business park and was previously approved by the Commission. Referring to the request for the wall sign on the east elevation, she stated that the City Attorney has advised that an on-premise sign should be one that advertises the services rendered by the on-site business and that the name on the sign should be the same as the name of the business located at the physical site.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna discussed the previous request by Sunbelt Business Sales & Acquisitions and [www.SUNBELTSOCAL.com](http://www.SUNBELTSOCAL.com), noting that in this case the website address contained the company name. She noted that in the request under consideration this evening, the website name is completely different than the company name. She added that staff would recommend placing the website address on a window sign or smaller kind of signage and not the main sign on the building.

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones provided clarification that the website address, "www.accountonus.com", opens up to "Teshima Company C.P.A. Accounting Services.'

**MOTION:** At 7:10 p.m. Chairperson McCabe, seconded by Commissioner Chim, moved to open the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Ken Teshima, West 190<sup>th</sup> Street, stated that he has been a C.P.A. in the City for 24 years, that this was his third location in the City, and that the website was created five years ago. He distributed copies of the opening page of the website and noted that the business that owns the building is [www.foryourmoney.com](http://www.foryourmoney.com). He stated that the fact that the sign request does not represent the name of the business that he operates was a logistical triviality. He stated that his company recently launched a payroll service and had the ability to name it Accountonus Services or Accountonus.com Payroll Services

and would therefore be meeting the letter of the law. He noted that the City has set a precedent by approving another sign in the business park which references a website.

Dave Flynn, Flynn Signs and Graphics, Inc., stated that the City has legally set a precedent by allowing another company to put its website address on its on-site business location, that the City Attorney's off-site sign premise was incorrect, and that the Commission did not have the constitutional right to limit content on signs. He discussed a Supreme Court ruling on the issue and contended that the fact that a website address does not match the name of the business was irrelevant, noting that website names are often limited to what is available.

Responding to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry, Mr. Teshima provided clarification that signage at his last locations stated Teshima & Company.

In response to Commissioner Chim's inquiry regarding the possibility of using "teshima.com" as his website address, Mr. Teshima stated that he spent a lot of money developing his website and that all of the company's literature stated "accountonus.com". He stated that, rather than change his website address, he would prefer to change the name of his new payroll service to "accountonus.com" and file for a business license with the City.

Commissioner Watson noted that two signs with two different names on the same building suggests two different companies.

At Chairperson McCabe's request, Environmental Services Administrator Cessna clarified that the City Attorney stated that the name on a sign should be the same as the name of the business located at the physical site. She stated that if the dba and business license was under the name "accountonus.com" that would be the name of the business and the sign would be approved.

Mr. Teshima stated that if he needed to file for a business license, it would be for **www.accountonus.com,LLC**.

Commissioner Minter stated his opinion that the one of the Commission's goals was to maintain uniformity and that one occupant in one section of a building should have one title to avoid confusion.

Mr. Flynn pointed out that the City previously approved the exact same request in the exact same business park.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna advised that at this point the Commission might as well approve the present request rather than have "www" in front of "accountonus.com".

**MOTION:** At 7:33 p.m., Chairperson McCabe, seconded by Commissioner Minter, moved to close the public hearing and, hearing no objection, Chairperson McCabe so ordered.

Commissioner Minter stated the opinion that a business owner should select one name and that all advertising should focus on that name.

Commissioner Reilly initiated a brief discussion on the relationship between a name on a sign and service that is rendered, the use of telephone numbers on signs, and the need to support City businesses as we move into a new technological age. She suggested that they consider crafting terminology to reflect what the City wants to see, such as the nature of the business, to avoid the use of silly or offensive names.

Chairperson McCabe offered the suggestion that the City think the issue through in the context of today's application.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Chim moved for the approval of SNP05-00008, Request 1) as submitted and Request 2) based on finding of fact that applicant indicated that he would apply for a business license in the name of "[www.accountonus.com, llc](http://www.accountonus.com)" if his request for a sign "accountonus.com" was not approved. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watson and passed by a 5-2 roll call vote, with Commissioners Minter and Persaud dissenting.

**6B. SNP05-00012: TORRANCE CAR WASH – 2476 SEPULVEDA BOULEVARD**

- Request:**
- 1) Two 30' high x 7' double face, internally illuminated pole signs, with 76 ConocoPhillips logos and gas prices. Grey background, logo is orange, blue and white. Gas prices on an orange background with white copy. Located on the southeast corner of the property in a landscaped area.  
420.0 square feet
  - 2) Face change an existing 6'6" high x 7.5" double face, internally illuminated monument sign. Sign to have a white background with blue and red copy, "Torrance Hand Car Wash". Located on the southeast corner in a landscaped area.  
48.2 square feet
  - 3) Face change an existing 6' high x 6' double face, internally illuminated, monument sign. Sign to have a white background with blue and red copy, "Torrance Car Wash". Located in the planter area at the extreme east end of the property.  
36.0 square feet
  - 4) Three "76" ball logos to be located on the gas station canopies. The logos on the east and west elevations will be 3'; and a 2'9" logo on the north elevation.  
16.6 square feet

**TOTAL REQUEST: 520.8 SQUARE FEET**

**Recommendation:**

The Environmental Division staff recommends approval of the face changes to the existing monument signs and approval of the canopy logos as submitted. Staff recommends denial of the two 30' high pole signs. Staff has identified several illegal and

unpermitted signs on the site and is willing to work with the proponent to bring the property into conformance.

With the aid of slides, Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones introduced the request, reviewed the existing signage and kiosk structure at the site, and discussed staff recommendation. She noted that staff recognizes that two major businesses operate at the location and their need for advertisement, but that two additional 30' high pole signs is not in keeping with the City's policy. She advised that staff would like to work with the applicant to remove all illegal and unpermitted signage from the property and to reface or revise the existing monument signs to accommodate both tenants.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna noted that the maximum sign height allowed by Code is 25 feet and that technically only one ground sign is allowed per development and certainly no more than one ground sign within 100 feet of another.

Commissioner Watson commented on the art deco style built into the existing car wash sign and expressed concern that the new sign package would not support it. She suggested that one larger directional sign could be safer and stylistically possible and that lower signage would be more effective at this location.

**MOTION:** At 8:00 p.m., Chairperson McCabe moved to open the public hearing. Commissioner Reilly seconded the motion; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Ray Hernandez, representing Promotion Plus, Inc., Business Center Drive, Northridge, discussed the new Oasis image that ConocoPhillips is mandating upon the business owner. He stated that the site did not have enough existing signage to show gas prices, noting the lack of visibility from both Sepulveda Boulevard and Crenshaw Boulevard.

Reza Abolahrar, applicant, distributed photographs showing the difficulty of seeing what the car wash business is when driving by on Sepulveda Boulevard or Crenshaw Boulevard as well as photographs of existing competing gas stations. He stated that existing signage at his location put him at a tremendous disadvantage and that he was unable to compete with surrounding gas stations and the Madrona Car Wash.

Responding to Commissioner Chim's request, Mr. Abolahrar stated that he has owned the business for one and a half years, that he was not a franchise, and that he has made many improvements to the property.

In response to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry regarding the 30' height request, Brian Dover, Promotion Plus, Inc., Northridge, stated that there were two standard pole signs, 30' and 23'. He advised that the customer preferred signs as high as possible but would agree to a 25' height.

Mr. Abolahrar stated that the existing car wash sign was not effective and that the existing directional signs were for safety purposes and to avoid confusion. He stressed the importance of having visible gasoline prices.

Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones discussed the parameters being established for signage along the Hawthorne Boulevard corridor as well as other 76

stations that are being remodeled. She advised that staff is working with Mobil and Chevron to lower the height of their signs when they apply for modifications.

Discussion centered on options that included a double-faced V-shape sign and the possibility of placing signage on the tower kiosk.

Mr. Dover stated that a pole sign for a 76 station on Torrance Boulevard and Hawthorne Boulevard was approved a few months ago, but that they had to lower their request to the existing 12' pole.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna provided clarification that, as proposed, there would be four ground signs and two 30' pole signs on the property. She advised that they needed to reduce the number and size of the signs, and that uniformity in lettering would be preferable.

With the aid of slides, existing and proposed signage on the property were again reviewed.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Reilly, seconded by Commissioner Persaud, moved to close the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Commissioner Minter inquired which signs staff would recommend removing in order to approve the pole signs. Environmental Services Administrator Cessna responded that staff would prefer to have a double flag sign on a single pole such as the one that was approved at the station on Hawthorne Boulevard and Torrance Boulevard.

When Chairperson McCabe stated that the rules did not seem to be clear or equal, Senior Environmental Quality Officer Jones explained that the goal of the City was to come to an agreement with business owners and, once an agreement has been established with one type of business, to implement that policy across the board in order to be fair. She clarified that Torrance Municipal Code says that ground signs can be maximum 25' high, and that the Hawthorne Boulevard corridor specific plan says that all ground signs are to be monument signs.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna noted that most gas stations have one major ground sign and one price panel. She stated that requests were brought before the Commission when there were special circumstances, such as lack of visibility, that needed to be considered.

Commissioner Watson stated that she would recommend two 14'2" signs if all unpermitted signs were removed from the premises.

Chairperson McCabe suggested that the applicant work with staff to reach a mutual agreement and, if unable to reach an agreement, to then return the item to the Commission for a decision.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna stated that it would be helpful for the Commission to provide its maximum parameters. She noted that staff would be opposed to having three signs on the corner.

Commissioner Watson stated that an exception to code in this case would be site specific due to the frontage on an odd corner and the existence of the kiosk tower that blocks visibility.

Commissioner Reilly suggested that the price signs be placed on two sides of the existing kiosk tower instead of logos.

Mr. Hernandez noted that prices needed to be visible to people pumping gas as well face the street, so that three price signs would need to be placed on the tower. He suggested two 23' sign systems showing prices in both directions, including panels advertising the car wash.

Commissioner Watson suggested that the signs should be lower than the canopy and it was determined that the canopy extended from 16 feet to 20 feet.

**MOTION:** Chairperson McCabe moved to return SNP05-00012 to staff to work out an agreement within the parameters that the ground sign be removed, that new signs would be no higher than the existing canopy, and, if an agreement cannot be reached, to bring the item back before the Commission. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watson; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

## **7. INFORMATION MATTERS**

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna stated that information entered for the City's new website did not go through.

She announced that there would be an examination for a senior EQO position and that an applicant may be selected before the next Commission meeting.

She reminded Commissioners that traditionally the Commission is dark in January.

She provided information about the green building consortium with other local cities that will meet in December 2005 at the Gas Company's Conservation Resource Center. She stated that it would take approximately one year for the consortium to develop a program and then it would be presented to the Commission for recommendation to City Council.

She advised that the City's General Plan update has been pushed back and that draft elements would not be available until May or June 2006.

Commissioner Watson distributed information about the City of Santa Monica and suggested that the Commission tour the library.

## **9. NEW BUSINESS**

Chairperson McCabe initiated a brief discussion centered on the use of leaf blowers. Commissioner Persaud provided a report from the California EPA's Air Resources Board and offered to present a summary report at the next Commission meeting.

Chairperson McCabe requested feedback from Commissioners on the general direction the Commission has been taking. He advised that he and Commissioner Minter would be meeting with staff to come up with a blueprint for the next several months.

**9. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

**9A.** Commissioner Basile mentioned that there was a house in Los Angeles made out of recycled materials that is available for tours.

**9B.** Commissioner Persaud stated that she felt threatened and ill-prepared during consideration of Item 6A and Commissioners explained why they voted for or against the request.

Commissioner Reilly initiated a brief discussion on the procedure to remove a member of the audience who gets out of control.

Commissioner Chim brought up the possibility of suggesting an ordinance for the City that would prohibit to use of “www” in a business name.

Chairperson McCabe requested that staff clarify the City’s policy in the event that an applicant misrepresents or provides false information.

**9C.** Commissioner Minter shared information about conservation in Bob the Builder’s Big Plan.

**9D.** Responding to Commissioner Chim’s inquiry, Environmental Services Administrator Cessna advised that the canopy and encroachment ordinance would go before City Council on December 20, 2005.

**9E.** Commissioners congratulated Commissioner Minter on the birth of his daughter Tayler Marie on September 7, 2005.

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** At 9:55 p.m. Commissioner Minter, seconded by Commissioner Watson, moved to adjourn the meeting to Thursday, December 1 at 7:00 p.m.; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Approved as Submitted December 1, 2005 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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