



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

February 7, 2007

Burgess Recreation Center
700 Alma Street, Menlo Park

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 6:36 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Doug Scott (Chair), Bob Swezey, Dan Kocher, Martin Engel, Jeanne Durnford, Rick Stevens; Jeff Jahnke

Commissioners Absent: None

Staff present: Dianne Dryer, Environmental Programs Coordinator
Ruben Nino, Assistant Director of Public Works
Kent Steffens, Public Works Director (through Item B-1)
Juan Alvarez, City Arborist

Public present: 14 residents, including Councilmember Heyward Robinson and Mr. & Mrs. Stan Ogren

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None (except under Agenda Item B-1)

B. BUSINESS ITEMS

- 1. Council Goal of Environmental Stewardship:** Dianne Dryer and Kent Steffens gave the background on the City Council's request that the Commission discuss and provide input on the Council's goal on Environmental Stewardship and a letter from Mayor Ferguson and Councilmember Robinson dated January 18, 2007. The letter proposed that the City Council pass a resolution to join the "Cool Cities" effort to reduce greenhouse gas reductions by a targeted percentage and to establish a "Green Ribbon Advisory Task Force" to advise and to develop a climate protection plan. Chairperson Doug Scott then asked for public comment on the subject. Tom Forrest suggested the City start with strong education to all residents and businesses, especially children. Tom Kabat supports the adoption of the resolution and establishing a task force, saying that efforts will pay dividends over the long run. He also hopes the City will evaluate risks due to its location next to the bay and a creek, as well as its low elevation, before sea levels begin to rise. Kirsten Keith, Chairperson of the Planning Commission, supports the proposal and wants the City to institute incentives for developers to incorporate green building features (e.g. fast track permits). Rich Mintz, representing Eco Design Resources which offers products and design for green buildings, supports the proposal and cited many actions cities, residents and businesses can take to help begin "global cooling" with changes to buildings, energy consumption, and use of vehicles. He

mentioned that PG&E had offered a program for a group discount to customers who committed to installation of solar equipment in Portola Valley. Councilmember Heyward Robinson thanked the Commission and the audience for discussing the proposal and giving feedback to the Council, acknowledging the Commission's efforts on reforestation and heritage tree preservation, which help cool the community. Dave Johnson suggested that the City publish maps showing parts of Menlo Park that would be under water at various future stages of global warming. Laurie Laprais, of the Bicycle Commission, thinks that the City can do a lot more to facilitate and promote bicycling and walking. That Commission is working on "Safe Routes to Schools" program to encourage children to bike or walk to school and reduce automobile traffic. Michael Myer of the Transportation Commission said they are looking for ways for vehicles to get around safely. There was continued discussion of many actions that can be done by the City, businesses and individuals. Commissioner Jeanne Durnford stated that she is in full support of the proposal from Mayor Ferguson and Councilmember Robinson, and that there are several other cities taking the same initiative. Commissioner Dan Kocher supports the proposal and thinks that maintenance of the urban forest is important to the effort to reduce greenhouse gas --- in fact it can have an immediate effect. He recommends expanding the City's reforestation efforts. He also noted the importance of increasing recycling and working on air pollution prevention (especially from wood smoke). Commission Chairperson Doug Scott explained the City's recent efforts on a pilot reforestation project, where residents in one neighborhood were asked to sacrifice short-term aesthetics for long-term tree canopy benefits when selected large, declining street trees were removed and young trees were planted. He also suggested that more parking areas for carpoolers be located near freeways. He noted that there may be conflicts between the desire for heritage tree preservation and solar equipment. Councilmember Robinson responded that there are ways to allow both: pruning the tree and locating solar panels in places where not too much shade is cast by the tree. Commissioner Jeff Jahnke thinks the proposal is a good idea, but is concerned about the bureaucracy, cost, and the possibility that the efforts could take the focus off other important issues the City is facing. He thinks people should take personal responsibility for these kinds of efforts. Commissioner Rick Stevens said that it's a long-term problem and that education is the key. A motion was made and seconded by Stevens/Jahnke to endorse the initiative proposed in the letter from Mayor Ferguson and Councilmember Robinson (Attachment Item B-1) and advise that the Council give special consideration to the immediate benefits of reforestation and heritage tree preservation.

2. Appeal of Denial of Permit to Remove Heritage Tree at 1359 Delfino Way:

Dianne Dryer stated that Stan Ogren, who owns the property, had been denied a permit to remove a heritage redwood tree by the City Arborist because the tree is in good condition, does not pose any danger to the foundation of the garage, and pruning will alleviate the problem of falling branches. The area next to the garage had been excavated to reveal only small roots from the tree trunk twelve feet away. Mr. Ogren stated that he believes the roots will damage the foundation. He reported that the trunk above 12 feet is a secondary stem and so it cannot nourish

the limbs properly, so branches up to three inches in diameter have fallen. He thinks the tree is unsafe. Commissioners discussed the various problems with the tree. Commissioner Kocher pointed out that the problems were addressable and that the tree has significant value to the neighborhood. It was moved and seconded (Stevens/Swezey) to overturn the permit denial and permit the tree to be removed (all in favor except Kocher).

3. **Citywide Reforestation Planning:** Commissioners discussed ideas for moving forward with citywide street tree reforestation after the completion of the Pilot Project. Commissioner Scott said the City should plant in as many vacant spots as possible to show that we are reforesting, not just removing trees. City Arborist Juan Alvarez noted that there are many spots where young trees have been planted, but the resident doesn't water them and they die. Some people don't want a tree in front of their property. Commissioner Scott also suggested that the City should remove a minimal number per block of only the worst condition trees. He asked that staff determine how many can be removed per year and at what cost. Commissioner Swezey stated that he thinks the street trees should not be subject to the Heritage Tree Ordinance because it involves too much public involvement in the removal decision, taking up a lot of time and resources. The City Arborist should simply post the tree with an explanation of why it is being removed and the date for removal. Commissioner Durnford stated that only the Cotton Street residents were contentious and that we should have proposed fewer removals in the Pilot Project area. Commissioner Kocher agreed that filling in the vacant spots should be a priority and that no more than one removal should be done in a two block area at the same time. Commissioner Stevens thought that there are enough "Priority One" trees throughout the city so that removals should start as soon as possible. Commissioner Engel said that removals of the worst street trees should be spread out throughout the city so that people aren't impacted too much. Ruben Nino (Assistant Public Works Director) suggested that the City mail letters to residents in areas with the three problematic species, asking for residents to volunteer to have "their" street tree removed. Removals would be prioritized from those that respond. Commissioner Kocher stated that the removals should be prioritized before contacting residents, because only the worst trees should be removed. Commissioner Stevens said that asking for volunteers raises expectations on the part of residents and we would have to refuse those whose tree is in good condition. Commissioner Scott felt that we would rouse the residents unnecessarily if we sent letters to all. Dianne Dryer offered an alternate plan in which City tree crews and West Coast Arborist crews would pro-actively gather addresses for Priority One trees they find while working on street trees in neighborhoods throughout the city. That information would be put into the street tree database and a list of removals would be generated. Property owners adjacent to the trees would be notified with reasons for the removal and a date. If the tree is heritage-sized, notification would be sent to residents within 100 feet of the tree, and appeals would be negotiated by staff and, if necessary, brought to the Commission. The schedule of removals would be set so that no more than one tree per block would be removed in a 12 month period. Commissioner Scott commented that the costs of any plan should be analyzed, so that the Commission

can make a recommendation for additional funds in next fiscal year's budget. The Commission agreed to continue the discussion at its March meeting.

4. **Approval of Minutes of January 3, 2007:** Approved unanimously.