



# ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 4, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.  
Arrillaga Family Gymnasium  
600 Alma Street, Menlo Park

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The meeting was called to order by Chair Slomiak at 6:32 p.m.

## ROLL CALL:

Present: Kristin Kuntz-Duriseti (arrived at 6:40 p.m.), Adina Levin, Scott Marshall, Mitchel Slomiak (Chair), Christina Smolke (Vice Chair)

Absent: Chris DeCardy and Douglas Scott

## A. PUBLIC COMMENT: None

## B. REGULAR BUSINESS

B1. Approve February 1, 2012 ([Attachment](#)) and March 7, 2012 ([Attachment](#)) Minutes

There were no comments on the modified February minutes or the March minutes.

**ACTION No. 1:** Motion and Second (Levin/Slomiak) to approve the February 1, 2012 minutes passes unanimous.

**ACTION No. 2:** Motion and Second (Slomiak/Marshall) to approve the March 7, 2012 minutes passes unanimous.

B2. Informational Report by City Arborist on Street Tree Management for Fourth Quarter of 2011 and First Quarter of 2012 ([PowerPoint](#))

Staff presentation regarding street tree management for a six month period covering October 1, 2011 through March 31, 2012 was presented by Brian Henry, City Arborist.

Commissioners directed questions to Brian Henry during the presentation.

Kristin Kuntz-Duriseti indicated that it would be valuable to have Brian Henry, or an intern under his direction, educate the public about drought tolerant tree options when considering replacement and planting of trees. Current information provided is around no wire and under water trees, but does not provide information on drought resistance (or native vs. non-native).

Christina Smolke clarified the process of permits for heritage tree removal when it is related to planning construction. In that case, the city arborist is not the final person to give the okay, the arborist may indicate their decision on the request, but it ultimately is decided upon by the City's Planning Department.

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Mitch Slomiak indicated that it would be valuable to have follow up on the planting of replacement trees for a heritage tree removal, right now there is no follow up or enforcement of replacement as part of the city arborist's responsibilities.

Rebecca Fotu clarified that the replacement of a heritage tree is tied to the final building permit. So, it is not required until the final construction is complete.

Scott Marshall indicated that the follow up on tree replacement for heritage tree removal was an issue the Heritage Tree Subcommittee was aware of and would be looking at. Being able to place a monetary value on a tree would be useful in terms of considering tree removal requests. While the tree benefits calculator gives an annual estimate, there is a need to also consider how that translates to the lifetime of a given tree. This type of information should be considered when issuing fines for tree removal without a permit or issuing permits in general. Finally, it is important when replacing trees in a neighborhood to consider whether a variety of trees should be replanted versus keeping them the same throughout the neighborhood.

**ACTION:** There was no formal action.

### **B3. Discuss and Determine Next Steps to Address City Council's Concerns/Questions Regarding a Community Greenhouse Gas Reduction Target**

Rebecca Fotu and Mitch Slomiak gave a brief summary of the City Council response at the study section on greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction target.

During the study session, background of forecasted GHG levels and possible community-wide GHG reduction goals were discussed. Some Council members inquired about the difference in estimated cost between the 17% and 27% reduction target options and were interested in how the more substantial reduction initiatives might be funded. One Council Member expressed concern around balancing other city priorities with any reduction goal that was taken, and whether it would impact economic development. All of the Council members agreed that the city needed to adopt a community-wide GHG reduction goal. Within the Council it appeared that there were two firm supporters of 27%, one lukewarm supporter of 27%, one supporter of 17%, and one member whose support was not clear. For the latter two Council members, the issue is one of money and where the resources will come from to support any reduction goal taken by the city.

The EQC identified that it will be important to work with Commissioner Chris DeCardy due to his professional expertise to develop a strategy around gaining access to resources to support any reduction goal taken by the city. Funding strategies including a combination of private and public funding and an increase in the utility users' tax have been discussed. Chris DeCardy has a knowledge-base in public-private partnerships that the EQC should take advantage of. Rebecca Fotu will follow up with Chris DeCardy before the next EQC meeting about ideas for resources to fund GHG reduction target to address Council concerns and ask Chris DeCardy to present ideas at the next EQC meeting.

#### **Commissioner Comments:**

Kristin Kuntz-Duriseti indicated that funding of these initiatives should be integral to the way the City does business, so that they are not viewed as luxuries that get cut in the face of budgetary constraints (for example, incorporate costs of adopting these policies into fees that the city assesses).

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Adina Levin expressed belief that we can discuss potential funding resources, but won't have clear answers or paths in the required timeframe. It was suggested that the EQC present this more as an inspirational goal, where the EQC will examine funding questions over a longer timeframe, and discuss this specifically with Council Members that have concerns about funding sources. Levin believes that if the EQC cannot take this approach, options are to 1) step back to a lower reduction goal with an option to increase once research is completed, or 2) refrain from setting a goal until complete research. Adina Levin believes that there may be an opportunity to leverage funding in Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and redirect it to attack the largest sources of GHG emission.

Scott Marshall expressed belief that Council Members see this reduction goal as a luxury/option versus a requirement. There is not a sense of urgency around this from the Council, and the Council seems to want to have a clear plan in place for where the funding will come from. The EQC should look at what other cities have done to implement similar reduction goals.

Mitch Slomiak indicated that it would be useful to have a member of the EQC discuss these issues with the concerned Council Members and reach out to the City Manager to determine his interests/concerns. With a better understanding of the objections the EQC can better try to address them in our report. The EQC can highlight that there are different funding sources that can be pursued (e.g., user tax, grant options, public-private partnerships). The report should highlight that this reduction strategy is an 8-year goal [through 2020], whereas staff and EQC have identified 4-5 years of initiatives that will be in the CIP.

Rebecca Fotu indicated that many projects that were to be completed next year through the Climate Action Plan have been removed due to lack of revenue, such that the City will likely be in a similar position next year. This is due to the City's utility users' tax being low and it might be reasonable to look at increasing the rate, and that going through the General Plan is a slow process (potentially five years or more).

**ACTION:** The Chair continued the item to the May meeting.

**B4. Discuss and Update the EQC's Two Year Work Plan Including Changes, Modifications, or Disbandment of Subcommittees ([Attachment](#))**

Mitch Slomiak provided a brief introduction that once a year the EQC updates its work plan. Reviewed the EQC mission statement, and all commissioners agreed with the current mission statement.

**1. Develop a communitywide environmental sustainability policy with metrics to measure and evaluate progress.**

Adina Levin provided an overview of a meeting between herself, Chris DeCardy, and Kristin Kuntz-Duriseti. The group proposed to look at the city's core planning processes and how they can be leveraged for environmental sustainability.

Summary of presentation given by Adina Levin: Biggest source of GHG emissions is transportation (approximately 62%). Menlo Park uses practices that are very conventional; e.g., adding vehicle lanes when vehicle trips get above an acceptable level. The City can consider alternative programs and metrics that would encourage alternative modes of transportation and GHG reduction (case studies of Stanford and Mountain View were cited). The planning process is the lever: need to influence the planning process to examine balance of housing and jobs, metrics for transportation, and how the City sets goals. When they met together, all three EQC

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members (Levin, Kuntz-Duriseti, DeCardy) indicated interest in serving on a subcommittee focused on GHG reduction from the transportation sector.

Adina Levin expressed belief that one might use the upcoming M2 zoning plan review to pilot more advanced techniques (such as those implemented by Stanford or Mountain View). There is an accounting issue since 30% of trips are not taken in cars, and the City does not currently account for them in the budget. Further indicated that the subcommittee could focus on sustainability as it relates to transportation or sustainability as it relates to the planning process.

Kristin Kuntz-Duriseti indicated that the subcommittee should be focused on integrating sustainability criteria into day-to-day work processes of the City. Transportation is an example, in which the City is using public funds to subsidize car travel. Indicated preference for the subcommittee to have the broader task (sustainability as it is related to the planning process).

Mitch Slomiak indicated the CAP subcommittee is specifically tasked with advancing the CAP and reduction of GHG targets, the sustainable building subcommittee is tasked with looking at emissions coming from buildings, and this potential new subcommittee (Sustainable Transportation Subcommittee) would be tasked with looking at ways to leverage the City's planning processes and best practices.

Rebecca Fotu indicated that if the EQC wanted to go forward with this, the commissioners might want to collaborate with other commissions that focus on transportation.

Mitch Slomiak proposed to change the work plan priority 1 to 'look at City core planning processes and see how those processes can be leveraged for environmental sustainability' and further constitute a Sustainable Transportation Subcommittee consisting of Chris DeCardy, Kristin Kuntz-Duriseti, and Adina Levin.

Kristin Kuntz-Duriseti requested the addition of 'developing criteria and metrics to evaluate process'

Adina Levin requested the addition of 'focus on opportunities to inform the City's core planning processes (General Plan, Specific Plan, and component elements)'.

**ACTION:** Motion and Second (Kuntz-Duriseti/Levin) to change priority 1 to look at City core planning processes and see how they can be leveraged for environmental sustainability and develop criteria and metrics to evaluate process; and further constitute a Sustainable Transportation Subcommittee consisting of Chris DeCardy, Kristin Kuntz-Duriseti, and Adina Levin, passes unanimously.

## 2. Sustainable building subcommittee

Christina Smolke indicated that the subcommittee members (DeCardy, Slomiak, Smolke) determined priorities: 1) engage with City on implementation of phase I and support phase II of green building code; 2) research best practices in terms of sustainable building (ultimately feed into general plan). As part of point 2, the subcommittee would look into incentives and initiatives, potentially engage in public outreach and outreach to specific parties, and potentially engage with a Planning Commission representative.

Adina Levin indicated that some cities integrate an open data policy into their initiatives and programs.

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Mitch Slomiak indicated that the current priorities of the subcommittee are in line with the description on the work plan and no changes need to be made.

### 3. Maximize urban canopy

Scott Marshall indicated he had spoken with City Arborist Brian Henry and provided a summary of main points: 1) good resources exist for tracking where trees are located in neighborhoods and types of species; 2) new watering program allowing better monitoring of trees and increased survival rate (~99%); 3) there needs to be a way to assess the value of a tree when considering removal permit and appeals; 4) consider changes to the Heritage Tree Ordinance that address replacement of trees, including situations where there is no space to plant another tree on the property and 5) consider changes to the heritage tree removal permitting process that allow the EQC to work with the Planning Department before a plan is approved to flag concerns around heritage trees on property.

Kristin Kuntz-Duriseti indicated that the EQC currently seems secondary in the process versus having the commission decision be a core consideration.

Mitch Slomiak indicated the subcommittee should alert the commission in advance when they have something ready to bring to the EQC for consideration. The new priorities fit within the existing plan and thus no change is needed to the work plan. It was recommended that Marshall and Smolke get together with Commissioner Scott to discuss long standing issues and challenges during his remaining term on the EQC.

### 4. Climate Action Plan

Mitch Slomiak indicated that the existing plan still holds, but the Climate Action Plan Subcommittee needs to work with the City Council to adopt a GHG reduction target and identify new initiatives and resources to meet the target that Council adopts. The subcommittee should review City staff's annual updates on emissions in the city and their source, review inventory as available, and recommend a course of action as appropriate.

**ACTION:** Motion and Second (Slomiak/Levin) that the two items be added to the EQC work plan under the Climate Action Plan: 1) work with City Council to adopt GHG reduction target and identify initiatives and resources to meet the adopted target, 2) review City staff's annual updates on City emissions and sources, review inventory, and recommend course of action passes unanimously.

### 5. Resource conservation and pollution prevention programs/policies

Rebecca Fotu indicated that we don't have a current commissioner who is point person or a subcommittee formed on this item. Staff is handling the polystyrene food service ware ordinance and single use carryout bag policy. It might be worth calling out water conservation, water management, and a grey water city plan.

Kristin Kuntz-Duriseti indicated that it was okay that there is not a subcommittee on this topic and still keeping it as a work priority for the commission. It was proposed that the integrated pest management (IPM) component be removed and management program be added. A subcommittee can be formed in the future as needed.

Adina Levin expressed concern that there might be tension on the water management topics, where some people in the city are looking to generate savings and infrastructure in a way that does not go along with water conservation and management. Adina Levin expressed that the EQC can be doing more on water conversation and water management. The Commission may

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want to keep the IPM component on the work plan, as it may be possible to adopt some best practices from the county level.

Mitch Slomiak indicated that the EQC could keep the IPM component on the work plan to indicate that it is something that the EQC and the public is interested in.

**ACTION:** Motion and Second (Kuntz-Duriseti/Slomiak) to remove the IPM component as one of the areas of focus from the work plan and to add water management, and further add water management policies as one of the priority areas for the EQC passes unanimously.

### **C. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The following updates were received by commission:

#### **C1. Update on Council meetings regarding environmental topics**

The GHG reduction target and polystyrene food service ware policy will return to the Council in July or August, after more data has been gathered. There is a county-wide effort to develop an EIR on a single use bag policy; information will be posted on the website.

#### **C2. Update on staff action regarding Nealon Park Well proposal**

It is unknown whether staff will bring this topic to Council, but if it is taken to the Council it will be several months from now.

Adina Levin indicated that at the most recent meeting at Jack Lyle Park with city staff and the neighborhood, the majority of comments were focused on water supply and conservation, with a smaller fraction directed to site location.

#### **C3. Discuss potential future agenda items**

- Discuss second quarter report for Council
- Potential funding discussion for GHG reduction targets
- Possible heritage tree appeal
- Well project: will need to discuss if we want a commissioner to make a presentation in front of Council if the project goes back to Council
- EQC commissioner involvement on Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan (with Transportation Commission); delegate EQC commissioner for participation in this activity

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Meeting minutes prepared by Vice Chair Commissioner Smolke