

Environmental Quality Commission



REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Date: 1/20/2021

Time: 5:00 p.m.

Regular Meeting Location: [Zoom.us/join](https://zoom.us/join) – ID# 915 4675 0502

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS, COVID-19, EMERGENCY ADVISORY NOTICE

On March 19, 2020, the Governor ordered a statewide stay-at-home order calling on all individuals living in the State of California to stay at home or at their place of residence to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Additionally, the Governor has temporarily suspended certain requirements of the Brown Act. For the duration of the shelter in place order, the following public meeting protocols will apply.

Teleconference meeting: All members of the Environmental Quality Commission, city staff, applicants, and members of the public will be participating by teleconference. To promote social distancing while allowing essential governmental functions to continue, the Governor has temporarily waived portions of the open meetings act and rules pertaining to teleconference meetings. This meeting is conducted in compliance with the Governor Executive Order N-25-20 issued March 12, 2020, and supplemental Executive Order N-29-20 issued March 17, 2020.

- How to participate in the meeting:
 - Access the regular meeting real-time online at:
[Zoom.us/join](https://zoom.us/join) – Regular Meeting ID 915 4675 0502

Subject to Change: Given the current public health emergency and the rapidly evolving federal, state, county and local orders, the format of this meeting may be altered or the meeting may be canceled. You may check on the status of the meeting by visiting the City's website www.menlopark.org. The instructions for logging on to the Zoom webinar and/or the access code is subject to change. If you have difficulty accessing the Zoom webinar, please check the latest online edition of the posted agenda for updated information (<https://www.menlopark.org/AgendaCenter/Environmental-Quality-Commission-4>).

Regular Session ([Zoom.us/join](https://zoom.us/join) – ID# 915 4675 0502)

A. Call To Order

B. Roll Call – Elkins, Gaillard, Kabat, London, Martin, Payne, Price

C. Public Comment

The public may address the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) on any subject not listed on the agenda. Each speaker can make public comment for a limit of three minutes once. The EQC cannot act on items not listed on the agenda other than to provide general information.

D. Regular Business

- D1. Review and receive information regarding the state of the urban forest ([Staff Report #21-001-EQC](#))

D2. Review and discuss the draft two-year commission work plan prepared by a subcommittee of the Environmental Quality Commission ([Attachment](#))

D3. Review and discuss appointments to ad hoc subcommittees to implement the Environmental Quality Commission's two-year work plan

E. Reports and Announcements

E1. Reports and Announcements from staff and commissioners

F. Adjournment

At every Regular Meeting of the Commission, in addition to the Public Comment period where the public shall have the right to address the Commission on any matters of public interest not listed on the agenda, members of the public have the right to directly address the Commission on any item listed on the agenda at a time designated by the Chair, either before or during the Commission's consideration of the item.

At every Special Meeting of the Commission, members of the public have the right to directly address the Commission on any item listed on the agenda at a time designated by the Chair, either before or during consideration of the item.

For appeal hearings, appellant and applicant shall each have 10 minutes for presentations.

If you challenge any of the items listed on this agenda in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City of Menlo Park at, or prior to, the public hearing.

Any writing that is distributed to a majority of the Commission by any person in connection with an agenda item is a public record (subject to any exemption under the Public Records Act) and is available by request by emailing the city clerk at jaherren@menlopark.org. Persons with disabilities, who require auxiliary aids or services in attending or participating in Commission meetings, may call the City Clerk's Office at 650-330-6620.

Agendas are posted in accordance with Government Code §54954.2(a) or §54956. Members of the public can view electronic agendas and staff reports by accessing the City website at menlopark.org/agenda and can receive email notification of agenda and staff report postings by subscribing to the "Notify Me" service at menlopark.org/notifyme. Agendas and staff reports may also be obtained by contacting City Clerk at 650-330-6620. (Posted:01/15/2021)



STAFF REPORT

Environmental Quality Commission

Meeting Date: 1/20/2021

Staff Report Number: 21-001-EQC

Informational Item: Review State of the Urban Forest

Recommendation

Informational item. No action is required.

Policy Issues

The Environmental Quality Commission reviews the state of the urban forest on an annual basis. The Environmental Quality Commission is charged with advising the City Council on preserving heritage trees, maintaining the urban canopy, making determinations on appeals of heritage tree removal permits and organizing an annual Arbor Day tree planting event.

Background

Beginning in 2011 the City Arborist has presented annually to the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) on the state of the urban forest. The intent of the presentation is to provide updates to the EQC on the maintenance operations as it relates to City maintained trees, the administration of the Heritage Tree Ordinance, and other aspects of the City's urban forestry programs.

Analysis

Urban Forest Overview - There are currently approximately 19,130 public trees in Menlo Park with an estimated value of roughly \$67.4 million based on the City tree inventory.

Species composition - The makeup of tree species growing in the urban forest can be used as an important tool to analyze the sustainability of the resource. In general, greater species diversity is considered to increase the resilience of the urban forest to stressors, such as the introduction of pest, diseases and changes in the climate conditions. A historically accepted benchmark for management of urban forests diversity is the 10-20-30 standard, which aims for the composition not exceed 10% of any botanical species, 20% of any genus, nor 30% of any family. While some have recently questioned the efficacy of this particular metric, it is still considered a relevant benchmark in the industry. Menlo Park meets all of the criteria when using the 10-20-30 metric with the exception of 1 species, coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), which currently comprises approximately 12% of the total species composition of all public trees.

While the coast live oak is likely the most common naturally occurring tree species in the region and its historical composition may have exceeded the 10% threshold, it is important to consider that the current urban ecosystem is vastly altered from its natural state. Human activity and development impose significant stresses on urban trees that do not exist in natural growing conditions. While the coast live oak is a valuable large canopy shade tree adapted to the historic climate while providing many ecosystem services, it is also susceptible to climatic changes and newly discovered pathogens, such as sudden oak death. The heat

tolerance of the tree, which naturally grows in environments moderated by coastal influence, is also in question. Therefore, the wide use of this species is currently being avoided to encourage greater diversity and capacity for adaptation with the urban forest.

Size and age class distribution – Tree size can be used as a rough approximation of age, with larger trees typically being more mature and younger trees falling in the smaller size classes. However, caution must be taken when correlating the metrics of tree size and tree age, especially when species composition is taken into account. Small canopy ornamental trees, which provide significantly reduced ecosystem services than large canopy trees, can skew this correlation. For instance, the crape myrtle (*Lagerstromia x fauriei*) in Menlo Park comprises over 2.5 percent of the total species makeup. Yet, a long lived mature crape myrtle typically reaches a maximum diameter (DBH) of 10-12 inches and height of approximately 25 feet. Size and age class distribution can also be used as a tool to evaluate urban forest health and resilience. Similar to species composition, a diverse distribution of tree size and age is considered to be a good indicator of sustainability in the overall urban forest. A small/young tree distribution may limit current canopy cover, yet at the same time a developing tree population is less vulnerable to inevitable decline of mature trees in the short term. In order to avoid the even aged senescence of wide component of the urban forest, a mix of size and age class is desirable.

In Menlo Park approximately two-thirds of all the public trees are in the small (0-6" DBH) and medium (7-18" DBH) size class range while the remainder (4,550) are considered large (>18" DBH). This distribution can be interpreted as relatively young urban forest with a significant component being mature or overmature. There are several examples of neighborhoods and streets, where a relative monoculture of even aged mature and overmature trees exists, such as: Hedge Road in Suburban Park; Willow Road and Laurel Street in Linfield Oaks; and Cotton Street in Central Menlo Park. These areas are vulnerable to a significant decline in canopy cover as individual trees are removed in a relative short period of time due to decline and increased likelihood of limb and tree failure, which cannot be mitigated. In order to effectively identify and manage such challenging conditions and to encourage a more sustainable urban forest, further analysis is recommended to develop and adopt city policy, such as urban forest canopy cover goals and objectives and a tree risk policy, as the basis for the establishment and enhancement of current urban forest management plans.

Tree stocking levels – In addition to the roughly 19,000 public trees, the current tree inventory identifies 3,032 vacant tree locations, or a roughly 85% stocking level. This number of vacant sites is likely an underestimate as many tree removals go unreported and are not updated until routine maintenance takes place on a 5-year cycle (see City Tree Maintenance section below). The identification of vacant sites was also limited to viable sites with no trees that could accommodate tree planting at the time City tree inventory data was collected, approximately 20 years ago. Other potential tree planting locations, such as where a planting strip between the sidewalk and the curb was previously paved over, are not included in tally of potential planting sites. Vacant sites are distributed throughout the City with higher concentrations in the Willows and Belle Haven Neighborhoods. Since 2010-2011 fiscal year the City has consistently planted a greater number of public trees than the City has removed. However, there has also been a gradual decline in the total number of City maintained trees during the same period of time. While the true cause of this decline is unknown, it is likely a combination of factors including unreported and unauthorized public tree removal. A more comprehensive analysis of the distribution of vacant sites, potential planting sites, and the capacity of specific areas and the City as a whole to sustain optimum stocking levels and canopy cover is recommended to guide policy and management of Menlo Park's urban forest.

Heritage Tree Ordinance – The primary components of the revised City Heritage Tree Ordinance adopted in December 2019 were implemented July 1, 2020. As part of the implementation the City has successfully created and adopted Administrative Guidelines for the ordinance, created a list of pre-approved consulting

arborists, and created a permitting database with public access to permitting information. Due to budget restrictions at the time of implementation, the enforcement and reporting components of the ordinance revisions were held until further notice.

City Tree Maintenance Overview – There are 16 tree maintenance districts in the City of Menlo Park. Maintenance is coordinated by district so that all City trees are maintained on a routine 5 year pruning cycle. Maintenance activity includes the following: public noticing of scheduled maintenance; a Level 1 assessment of tree condition; pruning as needed to clean, raise, and address any major structural defects identified at time of assessment or as directed by the City Arborist; and updating the City tree inventory. The majority of the routine pruning work is performed by the current City tree maintenance contractor, West Coast Arborists. Other tree maintenance activities, such as service request pruning, emergency response, tree planting, young tree structural pruning, mulching, re-staking, and advanced tree assessments are performed primarily by the City tree crew and the City Arborist.

Maintenance operations were temporarily suspended in spring of 2020 due to the Covid-19 restrictions but resumed shortly thereafter as tree maintenance was determined to be an essential service for protecting the health and safety of residents.

Tree City USA Award – In 2019 the City of Menlo Park was awarded the Arbor Day Foundation’s Tree City USA award for the 21th year in a row. A subsequent application for the award has been submitted for the year 2020. In addition, a Growth Award application was also submitted for 2020, which the City has been awarded four times previously. The Growth Award tree city recognizes communities with higher levels of tree care and community engagement.

Impact on City Resources

None.

Environmental Review

Not required for an informational report.

Public Notice

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with the agenda items being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Attachments

None.

Report prepared by:
Christian Bonner, City Arborist



Commission work plan guidelines

- Step 1** Review purpose of Commission as defined by Menlo Park City Council Policy 3-13-01.
- Step 2** Develop a mission statement that reflects that purpose.
- Step 3** Discuss and outline any priorities established by City Council.
- Step 4** Brainstorm goals, projects, or priorities of the Commission and determine the following:
- A. Identify priorities, goals, projects, ideas, etc.
 - B. Determine benefit, if project or item is completed
 - C. Is it mandated by State or local law or by City Council direction?
 - D. Would the task or item require a policy change at City Council level?
 - E. Resources needed for completion? (Support staff, creation of subcommittees, etc.)
 - F. Completion time? (1-year, 2-year, or longer term?)
 - G. Measurement criteria? (How will you know you are on track? Is it effective? Etc.)
- Step 5** Prioritize projects from urgent to low priority.
- Step 6** Prepare final work plan for submission to City Council for review and approval in the following order:
- Work plan cover sheet, listing of members, priority list, work plan worksheet – Steps 1 through 8.
- Step 7** Use your “approved” work plan throughout the term of the plan as a guide to focus in on the work at hand.
- Step 8** Report out on work plan priorities to the City Council, which should include:
- A. List of “approved” priorities or goals
 - B. Status of each item, including any additional resources required in order to complete
 - C. If an item that was on the list is not finished, then indicate why it didn’t occur and list out any additional time and/or resources that will be needed in order to complete



Environmental Quality Commission

Mission Statement

The Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) is committed to helping the City of Menlo Park to be a leading sustainable city that is well positioned to manage present and future environmental impacts, including the grave threat of climate change. The Environmental Quality Commission is charged primarily with advising the City Council on matters involving environmental protection, environmental improvement, sustainability and climate change.

Environmental Quality Commission
Work Plan for 2021-2022



**Environmental Quality Commission
2021-2022**

Commission members listing

Commissioner (Chair) Ryann Price

Commissioner (Vice Chair) Janelle London

Commissioner Leah Elkins

Commissioner Josie Gaillard

Commissioner Tom Kabat

Commissioner Deborah Martin

Commissioner James Payne



Environmental Commission Priority List

The Environmental Quality Commission has identified the following priorities during 2021-2022:

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| 1. | <p>Climate Action Plan (CAP) – Continue to recommend/advise on implementation of the City’s adopted 2030 Climate Action Plan initiatives to achieve or surpass the City’s greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction target, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of an existing building electrification policy (Action #1) • Promotion of City goals for increasing EVs and decreasing gasoline sales (Action #2) • Implementation of a program or policy to expand access to EV charging for multi-family and commercial properties (Action #3) • Reduction of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 25% or an amount recommended by the Complete Streets Commission (Action #4) • Elimination of fossil fuels from municipal operations, including fleet vehicles, gardening equipment, furnaces, water heaters, pool heaters, etc. (Action #5) • Development of a climate adaptation plan to protect the community from sea level rise and flooding (Action #6) |
| 2. | <p>Urban Canopy Preservation – Continue to recommend/advise development of a comprehensive urban canopy strategy for Menlo Park, which includes monitoring the effectiveness of the City’s Heritage Tree Ordinance, hearing heritage tree appeals and consider establishing an urban canopy inventory.</p> |
| 3. | <p>Green and Sustainable Initiatives – Support sustainability initiatives, as needs arise, which may include but not be limited to habitat protection, healthy ecology, environmental health protection, healthy air, surface water runoff quality, water conservation and waste reduction.</p> |



Environmental Quality Commission Work Plan

Step 1

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| <p>Review purpose of Commission as defined by Menlo Park City Council Policy 3-13-01</p> | <p>The Environmental Quality Commission is charged with advising the City Council on the following matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigating climate change by reducing community-wide greenhouse gas emissions to zero as rapidly as possible and inspiring other cities to follow, • Preparing the community for the effects of climate change, especially the threat of sea level rise, flooding and drought, • Preserving heritage trees, maintaining the urban canopy, making determinations on appeals of heritage tree removal permits and organizing an annual Arbor Day tree planting event, • Advising on programs and policies related to all other areas of environmental sustainability, including protection of natural areas, recycling and solid waste reduction, environmentally sustainable practices, air and water pollution prevention, and water and energy conservation. |
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Step 2

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| <p>Develop or review a mission statement that reflects that purpose</p> | <p>The Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) is committed to helping the City of Menlo Park to be a leading sustainable city that is well positioned to manage present and future environmental impacts, including the grave threat of climate change. The Environmental Quality Commission is charged primarily with advising the City Council on matters involving environmental protection, environmental improvement, sustainability and climate change.</p> |
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Step 3

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| <p>Discuss any priorities already established by City Council</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make gains on our Climate Action Plan |
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Step 4 *The goals and priorities identified below are not listed in order of magnitude.

| *Brainstorm goals, projects or priorities of the Commission | Benefit, if completed | Mandated by State/local law or by City Council direction? | Required policy change at City Council level? | Resources needed for completion? Staff or creation of subcommittees? | Estimated completion time | Measurement criteria How will we know how we are doing? |
|---|--|---|---|---|---------------------------|--|
| <p>Climate Action Plan (CAP) – Continue to recommend/advise on implementation of the City’s adopted 2030 Climate Action Plan initiatives to achieve or surpass the City’s greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction target, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action #1: Review and recommend/advise on a policy to phase out the use of fossil fuels of existing buildings • Action #2: Advise on whether to work with BGI for promoting citywide goals of increasing EVs and decreasing gasoline sales • Action #3: Review and recommend/advise on policies and programs to increase access to EV charging for multifamily and commercial properties • Action #4: Recommend that Council request CAP action #4 be included on Complete Streets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other cities inspired to join us in adopting bold climate action, as happened with City’s all-electric Reach Code • Reduced GHG emissions • Reduced air pollution • Reduced traffic congestion • Improved public health • Increased community engagement for emissions reductions • Reduced risk of stranding fossil fuel assets • Increased equity and environmental justice • Increased preparedness for sea level rise and other climate threats • Demonstrated environmental leadership • Improved transparency on city goals and activities to meet GHG targets | <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p> | <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittees • Possible partnerships with organizations, businesses, other commissions • Staff time • Consultants/contractors | <p>2 years</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. City reports progress on CAP metrics such as gasoline sales, EV registrations, natural gas sales, water heater replacements, etc. 2. City adopts policy for phasing out the use of fossil fuels in existing buildings 3. City launches program to assist multi-family and commercial building owners to install EV charging 4. Complete Streets proposes a VMT reduction goal 5. City makes progress on developing a climate adaptation plan 6. Other cities copy Menlo Park’s climate policies and programs |

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| <p>Commission Work Plan (reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 25% or an amount recommended by the Complete Streets Commission)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action #5: Continue to advise/recommend ways to electrify municipal buildings, fleet and landscaping equipment • Action #6: Continue to advise/recommend a climate adaptation plan to protect the community from sea level rise and flooding • Recommend 2021-22 Climate Action for Council Adoption • Advise/recommend Council support for State adoption of impactful impactful CALGreen and energy reach codes for the 2022 building code update • Continue to provide recommendations/advice that improves communication with the community about the Climate Action Plan • Recommend City strategy for sharing our policies and analysis with other cities to inspire and help others adopt bold climate action | | | | | | |
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| <p>Urban canopy preservation – Continue to recommend/ advise development of a comprehensive urban canopy strategy for Menlo Park, which includes monitoring the effectiveness of the new Heritage Tree Ordinance, hearing heritage tree appeals, and consider establishing an urban canopy inventory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive update on implementation and operation of the Heritage Tree Ordinance and recommend adjustments as needed • Research ways other cities measure health of urban forest and make a recommendation to Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved public awareness and satisfaction with Heritage Tree policies • Efficient functioning of the Heritage Tree policies | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcommittee • Staff time budgeted | Ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in the number of healthy trees removed • Increase in the diversity and quality of trees within the entire urban canopy • Improved coordination with the planning process • Deliver recommendation on conducting inventory and catalogue of urban tree canopy |
| <p>Green and sustainable initiatives – Support sustainability initiatives, as needs arise, which may include but not be limited to habitat protection, healthy ecology, environmental health protection, healthy air, surface water runoff quality, water conservation and waste reduction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop recommendation for pesticide posting ordinance • Support initiatives improving air and water quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced cases of asthma • Clean air • Clean water • Reduced environmental impacts on health • Reduced exposure to pollutants • More efficient water usage • Critical habitat preserved • Less waste generated | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Subcommittee, if needed | Ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council and community view Commission as responsive to environmental concerns |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support initiatives protecting environmental health• Support initiatives that reduce waste• Support initiatives that conserve water• Support initiatives that improve the quality of water runoff in the City | | | | | | |
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Step 5

| List identified goals, priorities and/or tasks for the Commission | **Prioritize tasks by their significance | | | |
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| | 1 Urgent | 2 1-year | 3 2-year | 4 Long term |
| <p>Climate Action Plan (CAP) – Continue to recommend/advise on implementation of the City’s adopted 2030 Climate Action Plan initiatives to achieve or surpass the City’s greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction target.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action #1: Review and recommend/advise on policies to phase out the use of fossil fuels of existing buildings Action #2: Advise on whether to work with BGI to promote citywide goals of increasing EVs and decreasing gasoline sales Action #4: Recommend that Council request CAP action #4 be included on Complete Streets Commission Work Plan (reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 25% or an amount recommended by the Complete Streets Commission) Recommend 2021-22 Climate Action for Council Adoption | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action #3: Review and recommend/advise on policies and/or programs to increase access to EV charging for multi family and commercial properties Action #5: Continue to provide recommendations/advise to electrify municipal buildings, fleet and landscaping equipment Advise/recommend Council support for State adoption of impactful CALGreen and energy reach codes for the 2022 building code update | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action #6: Continue to provide recommendations/advise in developing a climate adaptation plan to protect the community from sea level rise and flooding Continue to provide recommendations/advise on new climate actions to be adopted by Council in 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide recommendations/advise that improves communication with the community about the Climate Action Plan Recommend City strategy for sharing our policies and analysis with other cities to inspire and help others adopt bold climate action |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive update on operation and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research ways other cities measure health of | |

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| <p>Urban canopy preservation – Continue to recommend/ advise development of a comprehensive urban canopy strategy for Menlo Park, which includes monitoring the effectiveness of the new Heritage Tree Ordinance, hearing heritage tree appeals, and consider establishing an urban canopy inventory.</p> | | <p>implementation of the Heritage Tree Ordinance and recommend adjustments as needed</p> | <p>urban forest and make a recommendation to Council</p> | |
| <p>Green and sustainable initiatives – Support sustainability initiatives, as needs arise, which may include but not be limited to habitat protection, healthy ecology, environmental health protection, healthy air, surface water runoff quality, water conservation and waste reduction.</p> | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop recommendation for pesticide posting ordinance • Support initiatives improving air and water quality • Support initiatives protecting environmental health • Support initiatives that reduce waste • Support initiatives that conserve water • Support initiatives that improve the quality of water runoff in the City |

Step 6 Prepare final work plan for submission to the City Council for review, possible direction and approval and attach the Worksheets used to determine priorities, resources and time lines.

Step 7 Once approved; use this plan as a tool to help guide you in your work as an advisory body.

Step 8 Report out on status of items completed. Provide any information needed regarding additional resources needed or And to indicate items that will need additional time in order to complete.