

July 2, 2009

**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, July 2, 2009 in the West Annex meeting room at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Commissioners Chim, Gobble, Griffiths,
Watson*, and Chairperson McCabe.

Absent: Commissioner Reilly.

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

*Commissioner Watson arrived at 7:12 p.m.

3. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Chim.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Griffiths, 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.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MAY 7, 2009

MOTION: Commissioner Gobble moved for the approval of the May 7, 2009 meeting minutes as submitted. Commissioner Chim seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Reilly).

7. ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

7A. MANDATORY SPAY NEUTER

Deputy Director Cessna presented staff concerns and four options that the Commission could consider in going forward with the proposal to legislate mandatory spay/neuter. She noted that Animal Control officers recommend deferring further action due to concerns regarding enforcement, staffing levels, budgetary issues, and defraying costs of a spay/neuter program. She stated that staff recommends option 4, to explore possibilities for education and outreach and hold any further action, with the possibility of re-examining the issue at such time as Animal Control has sufficient staffing and budget to implement a mandatory spay/neuter program. She added that increasing the differential in licensing fees for altered and unaltered animals and licensing of cats are other possibilities that could be considered.

Don Clouch, West 238th Street, stated that he is not in favor of using tax payer dollars to subsidize a mandatory spay/neuter program except for low-income residents. He suggested raising licensing fees to pay for the program.

Debra Corwin, Purrfect Partners, West Bulova Street, distributed information about Clinico in the City of San Pedro that offers low cost spay/neuter. She stated that Actors and Others and other organizations would assist with funding, that she is in favor of licensing cats, and suggested getting Neighborhood Watch involved in monitoring stray animals. She mentioned that there is State legislation for mandatory spay/neuter that may pass and that funding will not be available.

Dr. Lisa Pierson, Palos Verdes Drive North, Lomita, expressed concern that the City is not passing a necessary law only because of lack of ability to enforce it, noted that it is very expensive to impound and euthanize an animal, and maintained that responsibility cannot be subsidized.

Peter Deberri, Via el Chico, proposed that enforcement only needs to be for those activities that Animal Control is already called out for another infraction.

Nina Deberri, Via el Chico, stated that the City should be humane to animals and serve as a model, adding that some people will never take action unless they are held accountable.

Commissioner Gobble stated that he would like to see cats licensed, to enforce the limit of cats allowed per residence, have a similar licensing fee structure for cats as for dogs, gradually increase licensing fees each year, determine how many cats there are in the City, research licensing fees in neighboring communities, and wait to mandate spay/neuter until education and outreach has been implemented.

Commissioner Griffiths recommended increasing licensing fees for unaltered dogs and gathering more information about cat licensing and microchipping. In response to his inquiry, staff advised that some cities including Lomita have cat licensing programs.

Commissioner Watson suggested establishing a cat licensing program as a good first step after researching other cities regarding license fee structures. She received clarification from staff that license fees go to Animal Control and that currently there is a shortfall in the City budget.

Commissioner Chim stated that she is in favor of licensing cats and passing a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance.

Deputy Director Cessna explained that Animal Control is concerned about enforcement expectations that cannot be met, fear of unintended consequences, and their need to have a plan in place before implementation.

Commissioner Chim responded that this is an important issue and suggested enforcing the ordinance as best as possible until funding and staffing becomes available.

In response to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry, staff advised that Animal Control officers have not been very successful in catching people dumping cats.

Responding to Commissioner Gobble's inquiry, Deputy Director Cessna stated that currently the law allows a residence to have three of one species and four total animals and that it is enforced on a case-by-case basis as complaints are received.

When Commissioner Watson questioned if Animal Control is planning to have a plan, Deputy Director Cessna stated that they are researching mandatory spay/neuter due to the possibility of State legislation being passed.

Chairperson McCabe stated his opinion that recommending legislation is the not the solution and that the City needs to be more proactive in trap/neuter/release and funding low cost spay neuter clinics.

Deputy Director Cessna stated that she felt uncomfortable speaking for Animal Control and recommended deferring further discussion until Officers can attend a Commission meeting; in the meantime, staff would research some of the questions raised at this meeting.

Commissioner Griffiths stated that he is opposed to more rules, regulations, and taxes and expressed concern that irresponsible pet owners would continue to break the law if it is put in place. He said that he would like staff to explore cat licensing and licensing fee structures in other cities.

Don Clouch, West 238th Street, stated that he does not see any extra burden on Animal Control officers because it requires a complaint and suggested passing an ordinance that requires licenses only for non-altered animals.

Dr. Lisa Pierson, Palos Verdes Drive North, Lomita, stated that currently Animal Control's hands are tied, they need the leverage to respond to a complaint on a case-by-case basis, and does not see licensing as an important issue except as a revenue generator.

Lynette Vandevere (no speaker card) stated that cats are considered a "throw away" pet and that licensing them may make cat owners look at them in a different light.

MOTION: Commissioner Gobble, seconded by Commissioner Watson, moved to close the public hearing; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

7B. ENVIRONMENTAL FAIR DEBRIEFING

Deputy Director Cessna reported that the June 13, 2009 Environmental Fair at Madrona Marsh Preserve was a successful event and received positive feedback. She stated that thank you notes were sent out to vendors and participants with a request for suggestions for improvement. She noted that after meeting with Nature Center Manager Drake it has been decided to move the date of next year's Fair to late April or early May.

In response to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry, she stated that the Fair probably cost \$10,000 to \$12,000, not counting staff time.

Commissioner Gobble commended staff, Commissioner Watson, and Commissioner Decker, and stated that he liked the layout and having it at the Madrona Marsh. He suggested having composting and bins at next year's Fair.

Commissioner Griffiths stated that the event was a positive experience and that he is looking forward to next year's Fair. He was informed by staff that approximately 275 signed the pledge.

Commissioner Chim received clarification that nearly 1,000 people attended the Fair.

Commissioner Watson stated that the Madrona Marsh Preserve was a great site for the event and commended staff, Environmental Priorities Network, and Nature Center Manager Drake for all their assistance.

Chairperson McCabe stated that there was positive energy and it was a successful culmination of all the Commission's recommendations.

A brief discussion centered on parking problems at the event and forming a subcommittee to plan next year's Fair after there is a full Commission.

8. ORAL COMMUNICATION

8A. Deputy Director Cessna stated that the feeding ordinance and people living in recreational vehicles would be considered by the Commission at the August 6, 2009 Commission meeting and spay/neuter in September 2009.

8B. Commissioner Gobble stated that the Southern California Edison solar information session on June 25, 2009 was well attended and generated tremendous interest.

8C. Commissioner Chim noted that a picture of Commissioner Griffiths and his son is in the YMCA summer camp brochure.

8D. Chairperson McCabe distributed a copy of Western Interiors regarding solar panels.

8E. Commissioner Watson stated that the June 27, 2009 presentation of "Are We Running Dry?" with Torrance Public Library had approximately 50 attendees and many good questions were asked.

8F. Chairperson McCabe asked that information about the City's hybrid buses, green waste recycling, goats being used to clear land, and Johnson Controls conducting an energy efficiency exam be put on greentorrance.com.

8G. Chairperson McCabe suggested giving a Green Pride award to a home on Arlington Avenue for its native garden.

8H. Chairperson McCabe initiated a brief discussion about forming subcommittees to address some of the recommendations that were made to City Council at the joint meeting.

8I. Deputy Director Cessna provided an update on the establishment of the energy baseline and plans to formulate a Climate Action Plan.

8J. Deputy Director Cessna informed Commissioners that the funeral for Commissioner Decker will be on July 11, 2009 at 2:00 p.m. at Riviera United Methodist on Palos Verdes Boulevard.

8K. Commissioner Gobble announced an Environmental Fair in Hermosa Beach on July 26, 2009.

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 9:18 p.m., Chairperson McCabe moved to adjourn the meeting in memory of Jackie Decker to August 6, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex meeting room. Commissioner Gobble seconded the motion and, hearing no objection, Chairperson McCabe so ordered.

Approved as Submitted September 3, 2009 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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