

**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 7:03 p.m. on Thursday, December 1, 2005, in the West Annex Meeting Room at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL:

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

Absent: Commissioner Chim.

Also Present: Environmental Services Administrator Cessna and Environmental Quality Officer Tedford.

MOTION: Commissioner Persaud moved to grant Commissioner Chim an excused absence for this meeting. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

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 Persaud, 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 (absent Commissioner Chim).

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Watson moved for the approval of the November 3, 2005 Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission meeting minutes as submitted. Commissioner Reilly seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Chim).

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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 City Council.

6. SIGN HEARINGS

6A. SNP05-00009: MILANO LUXERY RENTALS, 20900 ANZA AVENUE

Request: To maintain six, 20' high flag poles with 5' high x 2.5" purple flags with white copy and graphics. Located in the public right-of-way on the west elevation in front of the apartment complex.

TOTAL REQUEST: 75.0 SQUARE FEET

Recommendation:

The Environmental Division staff recommends the following:

- 1) Limit the maximum number of flag poles to (5) per Torrance Code 88.6.6;
- 2) Remove the copy and graphics from the flags;
- 3) Relocate the flag poles onto private property;
- 4) Replace the flags as they become worn and deteriorated.

With the aid of slides, Environmental Quality Officer Tedford introduced the request. She showed photographs of the flags looking to the north, a view of the flags from the south facing elevation, an aerial photograph of staff's recommended placement on private property, and a recent photograph showing a bent flag pole at the location.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna noted that a nearby apartment building has three similar flags but with no text. She expressed concern that granting the request for flags containing text would set a precedent that is not appropriate in a residential area.

In response to Commissioner Reilly's inquiry, she stated that car dealerships are the only uses allowed copy on their flags per Torrance Code and clarified that there were no residential uses that have flags containing text except for temporary leasing signs.

MOTION: Commissioner Reilly, seconded by Commissioner Minter, moved to open the public hearing at 7:11 p.m.; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Chim).

Brad Morales, Anza Avenue, stated that the flag pole in the photograph was bent because a truck hit it and that preparations have been made to relocate the flag poles onto private property. He noted that their signs have been at the location for over a year and that to date only a few properties have flag poles. He stated that the property covered almost a city block and that they offered corporate housing and furnished accommodations that were always available. He distributed photographs of condominium complexes in the City that have similar flag poles with graphics. He stated that they would like to continue to advertise the amenities offered in the complex and that no other property in the area offered the same amenities. He noted that the flags were made of a durable vinyl material and were stationary.

Responding to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry, he stated that the applicant has agreed to relocate the flag poles onto private property and to replace them as they become worn and deteriorated. He noted that six flag poles were requested to keep it balanced, with three on each side of the entrance that is in the middle of the property.

In response to Commissioner Minter's inquiry, Mr. Morales stated that there has been a significant increase in occupancy since the installation of the flag poles as determined by comments received by residents.

Gerri Rude, property manager, stated that she was responsible for tracking marketing and that occupancy has increased significantly as a direct result of the flags.

Commissioner Minter noted that the property was nicely landscaped and that the flags detracted from the beauty of the complex. He suggested that another signing alternative be considered to advertise the amenities.

Ms. Rude stated that there were two 6' x 6' monument signs on each corner but that they were not visible to cars driving by due to cars parked along Anza Avenue. She explained that they were not aware that a sign permit was required because there have been flags in existence at the property for many years.

MOTION: At 7:28 p.m., Commissioner Reilly moved to close the public hearing. Commissioner Persaud seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Chim).

Commissioner Watson noted that trees would block visibility of the signs when relocated onto the private property and suggested "popsicle" signs as an alternative.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna stated that six different signs that each advertise a different aspect of the amenities was overkill and not acceptable to staff. She stated that two temporary wooden signs listing the amenities on either side of the entrance could be a possibility.

Commissioner Reilly noted that the area was largely residential and the flags were out of character in the community. She suggested that a smaller sign be installed at the red light intersection.

Commissioner Basile concurred with Commissioner Reilly that the flags seem out of place in the neighborhood.

MOTION: Commissioner Watson moved to reopen the public hearing at 7:37 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Reilly; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Chim).

When Commissioner Minter suggested the installation of a permanent ground sign that incorporated the amenities, Ms. Rude stated that in this particular industry ground signs were considered dated and tacky and that a sign by the entrance would not be visible to passing cars.

Mr. Morales stated that the current monument signs were not strategically placed. He reiterated that the flags were tasteful, easy to see, not distracting, and did not take away from the property or landscaping.

Commissioner Persaud stated that she drives by the property every day and offered her opinion that the flags were not pleasing.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna expressed a willingness to work with the applicant to develop an alternative that would be acceptable to both sides.

MOTION: Commissioner Reilly moved to delay a decision on SNP05-00009 pending additional discussion between staff and applicant, that the bent flag pole be repaired immediately, and that a resolution or staff recommendation be brought back to the February 2, 2006 Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission meeting. Commissioner Minter seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Chim).

7. INFORMATION MATTERS

7A. "SMOKE FREE TORRANCE BEACH" PRESENTATION BY JOAN WADDELL, PROJECT COORDINATOR – NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM & DRUG DEPENDENCE / SOUTH BAY

Joan Waddell, Project Coordinator, National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence/South Bay, Post Avenue, reported that she has received a grant from Los Angeles County to encourage City Council to sign an ordinance making Torrance Beach smoke free. Referring to the map in the agenda material, she noted that the majority of Los Angeles County beaches have already become smoke free, with ordinances passed in the last 18 months. She stated that cigarette butts are the primary source of litter on beaches, that they take 15 years to disintegrate, pose a choking and burning hazard to visitors, and are dangerous to marine animals and sea birds.

Dr. William Abril, cardiologist, Torrance Memorial Hospital, Lomita Boulevard, reported that smoking is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States and discussed the harmful effects of secondhand smoke. He urged the Commission to recommend that City Council prohibit smoking on public beaches within the City limits.

In response to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry, Ms. Waddell stated that cities have the right to pass ordinances prohibiting smoking on Los Angeles County beaches.

Commissioner Reilly received clarification that the Coastal Commission has no regulation over beaches and that Los Angeles County lifeguards call Torrance Police Department to enforce laws on beaches.

Commissioner Watson initiated a brief discussion on the smoke free beach ordinance that was passed in the City of Santa Monica and the small area where smoking is allowed on Santa Monica Pier.

Commissioner Persaud stated that she would be interested in seeing data on beach cleanups before and after an ordinance has been passed.

When Chairperson McCabe stated that before the Commission could make a recommendation it would need public and staff input, Environmental Services Administrator Cessna advised that this was an informational item and that the Parks and Recreation Commission would take the lead in making a recommendation.

Dr. Richard Merrick, Kaiser Permanente, discussed the Stop Smoking program at Kaiser Permanente. He stated that he has found that anything that discourages people from smoking ends up with people making the decision to stop and that most people are compliant in following laws.

Commissioner Minter initiated a brief discussion on means of enforcing a smoking ban.

Janet Payne, Engracia Avenue, stated that City Commissions often overlap and that the Parks and Recreation Commission would appreciate knowing the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission's opinion on this issue. She noted that Torrance was a leader in the South Bay communities and that it should join the rest of the beach communities in banning smoking on public beaches.

In response to Commissioner McCabe's inquiry, Ms. Waddell explained why the Redondo Beach City Council declined to pass an ordinance to ban smoking on their beaches.

Chairperson McCabe asked that results of petitions and surveys be provided to the Commission after the item is presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Commissioner Reilly suggested an overall communication plan involving the Daily Breeze and homeowners associations.

Ms. Waddell invited Commissioners to participate in a Torrance Beach clean up on December 10, 2005 from 9:00 a.m. to 11 a.m.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna provided information on the second meeting of the green building local coalition on December 1, 2005.

She reported that that staff was still holding the canopy item because they were adding a few more cleanup items that include parkway trees.

A brief discussion centered on the choice of trees planted in the City by the Streetscape Department.

Commissioner Basile shared information about Sanyo's new program that is shifting their focus from electronics to products that are environmentally safe.

When Commissioner Watson requested a current cell phone list for communication purposes, Environmental Services Administrator Cessna stated that she needed to discuss the legal parameters with the Legal Department before providing one.

Chairperson McCabe reported that he and Commissioner Minter met with staff on December 1, 2005 to discuss how to best implement the Commission's new direction. He stated that the meeting was productive and that there would be a Commission workshop in February 2006 to prepare a specific work plan.

Chairperson McCabe thanked Commissioner Minter for attending the meeting with staff today as well as tonight's Commission meeting as it is his anniversary.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Persaud provided a summary of the California Air Resources Board study on leaf blowers. She discussed their findings on exhaust emissions, dust emissions, and noise pollution involved with the use of leaf blowers and the more stringent standards that have been developed since 2002 to reduce emissions. She described the emission reduction credits offered by South Coast Air Quality Management District. She concluded her report with her recommendation that the City should not regulate the use of leaf blowers because the new standards and equipment will address most of the concerns.

10. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

10A. Commissioner Basile stated that she attended the Old Torrance Neighborhood Association meeting last month and that there was an informative presentation by Marilyn Lyons on energy conservation.

10B. Commissioner Minter wished fellow Commissioners and staff a happy holiday season.

10C. Commissioner Watson distributed copies of the book Garbage Land to Commissioners and thanked staff for their support of the Commission.

10D. Chairperson McCabe stated that he was very happy to have served on the Commission the last several months.

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 8:55 p.m. Commissioner Minter, seconded by Commissioner Watson, moved to adjourn the meeting to Thursday, February 2, 2006 at 7:00 p.m.; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Approved as Submitted February 2, 2006 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
