

May 5, 2005

**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 7:02 p.m. on Thursday, May 5, 2005, in the West Annex Meeting Room at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL

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

Absent: None.

Also Present: Planning Assistant Naughton, Sr. Planning Associate Chun, Sr. Environmental Quality Officer Jones and Environmental Division Administrator Cessna.

3. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson McCabe.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Chim, seconded by Commissioner Watson, moved to accept and file the report of the secretary on the posting of the agenda for this meeting; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Minter moved for the approval of the March 3, 2005 Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Reilly and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Chairperson McCabe explained the policies and procedures of the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to the City Council.

6. SIGN HEARINGS

6A. SNP05-00002: THE BANK OF EAST ASIA

Request: 1) One 5' high x 33'10" internally illuminated channel letter wall sign on a raceway with two lines of copy. To be located on north-facing building wall.

169.2 square feet
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- 2) One 3' high x 19' 5" internally illuminated channel letter wall sign on a raceway with two lines of copy. To be located on the south-facing building wall.

58.3 square feet

TOTAL REQUEST: 227.5 SQUARE FEET

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the request with the following conditions:

- 1) That the sign on the north elevation shall be reduced to not more than 4' high for both lines of copy.
- 2) That no raceway shall be allowed on the north elevation, the signage must be flush with the building.
- 3) The Chinese script shall not be more than half of the sign.

With the aid of slides, Sr. Environmental Quality Officer Jones reviewed the request and discussed staff's recommendation. She advised that staff was recommending that the second line of copy be limited to the name of the bank.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Sr. Environmental Quality Officer Jones reported that the "Live Office" sign on this building is approximately 5' high x 20'; that the building has approximately 16 tenants and certain tenants are allowed to have exterior signage based on the size of their leasehold; and that management has indicated that unless a new tenant replaces a large leasehold, there will be no new signage allowed on the exterior.

Commissioner Chim expressed concerns that reducing the size of the sign would make it less readable.

Submitting revised plans to illustrate, Mr. Terry To, Signs Express Manufacturing Co., stated that reducing the height of the sign from 5' to 4' would require the second line of copy to be reduced from 10½" to 8," making it very difficult to read. He pointed out that the 5' height conforms to the height of the existing "Live Office" sign on the north elevation and would provide for a more uniform appearance. He reported that the first line of copy on the north elevation can be flush-mounted, however, a raceway is needed for the second line because it is below the parapet and a raceway is the only way to get power to the sign other than using exposed conduit. He explained that the raceway would not be visible as it would be only 2" thick and painted to match the building.

Mr. Joe Teo, representing The Bank of East Asia, advised that the second line of copy cannot be altered because it is a registered trademark and offered documents to confirm this claim. He explained that the bank is a Hong Kong-based global bank and the first line of copy [logo, "BEA" and corresponding Chinese characters] is universal for The Bank of East Asia throughout the world and the second line [The Bank of East Asia (U.S.A.) N.A. and corresponding Chinese characters] indicates that it is a national bank, locally chartered and FDIC insured, as opposed to a foreign bank doing business in the United States. He noted that the Chinese script is approximately 50% of the sign as currently proposed.

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Administrator Cessna noted that it is a Code requirement that the Chinese script be limited to not more than half of the sign.

Commissioner Watson suggested that the sign would look more balanced if both lines were of similar length rather than having the second line extend so far beyond the first.

Mr. Teo reported that the City of Alhambra had similar concerns but ultimately approved the sign after they were provided with documentation concerning the registered trademark.

In response to Commissioner Chim's inquiry, Mr. Teo reported that the bank, which is based in Alhambra, has three branches in California – Temple City, City of Industry and Torrance – and one in New York, and the signage at these locations is exactly the same as being proposed.

Administrator Cessna indicated that the applicant's proposal to use a raceway for the second line of copy on the north elevation was acceptable to staff as long as the raceway as thin as possible and painted to match the building.

A brief discussion ensued regarding possible ways to make the two lines of copy appear more balanced, including the elimination of the six Chinese characters at the end of the second line or moving them down and creating a third line.

Mr. Teo stated that he would be glad to look into the possibility of eliminating the six Chinese characters, however, it was not his decision.

Administrator Cessna explained that staff recommended a reduction in the size of the sign because they would like the signage to be limited to the same amount as the previous bank that occupied this space. She proposed that the sign be confined to the rectangular envelope created by the elimination of the six Chinese characters at the end of the second line and allowing the applicant to arrange the verbiage however they choose within this envelope.

Mr. Teo agreed to this proposal.

MOTION: Commissioner Minter, seconded by Commissioner Chim, moved to close the public hearing; voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

MOTION: Commissioner Minter moved for the approval of SNP05-00002, as submitted, with the following conditions:

- 1) That the Chinese characters shall be eliminated at the end of the second line on both signs and denied without prejudice;
- 2) That no additional exterior signs shall be permitted on this building without the removal of an existing tenant sign;
- 3) That a raceway not to exceed 2 inches thick shall be permitted for the second line of copy on the north elevation.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Reilly and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

7. GENERAL PLAN CONSERVATION ELEMENT WORKSHOP – DISCUSSION OF GREEN BUILDING PROGRAMS

With the aid of slides, Planning Assistance Naughton provided background information about green buildings, also known as sustainable buildings. She explained that green buildings are high performance buildings that save money and natural resources; create a healthier atmosphere in which to live and work; and have a significantly lower impact on the environment. She discussed the genesis of the green building concept; reviewed the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building rating system, a voluntary rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council; and outlined the benefits of green buildings. She stressed the importance of preserving the Earth's resources for future generations and noted the many governmental and non-profit agencies involved in the promotion of green buildings.

The Commission viewed a video of the Toyota campus in Torrance, which utilizes green building technology.

Administrator Cessna briefly reviewed some of the green building programs that have been implemented in cities throughout California, noting that they range from simply providing information and encouraging green buildings to requiring that every building constructed within the city meet certain standards based on either the LEED rating system or Title 24. She reported that many cities have developed their own rating system based on the LEED system, adding areas of concern for their particular city, and some offer cash incentives for obtaining LEED certification. She advised that newly constructed State buildings must meet LEED Silver (Silver, Gold, Platinum) standards and that several cities have implemented similar requirements. She cautioned that obtaining certification can be difficult and expensive and administering a green building program would require additional staff.

Administrator Cessna facilitated a brainstorming session on the following topics: 1) Opportunities/benefits of instituting a Green Building program; 2) Constraints that would affect a Green Building program; and 3) Short-term and long-term goals.

The issues mentioned under the discussion of the opportunities/benefits of a Green Building program included the following:

- Conservation/recycling of resources
- Improving health by creating healthier environments
- Saving money on utilities
- Sustainability, looking to the future
- Reducing reliance on oil
- Attracting new businesses to Torrance
- Harmony with the environment
- Elevating the City's image
- Creating more efficient buildings
- Better use of natural assets
- Reducing waste in landfills
- Reducing cost of energy efficient items due to bulk buying
- Climate of support for environmental issues in California

- Requiring large residential developments to meet certain green building standards: more units = higher standards

Commissioners discussed the increasing availability of recycled products and emerging technology, which could make green buildings more feasible and cost-effective for businesses, as well as homeowners, in the future. It was suggested that the City could help promote recycled materials available for residential use by having information about them on the City's website. Commissioners stressed the need to take advantage of the local climate when designing buildings, i.e. installing functional windows in office buildings so cooling breezes could provide a natural form of air conditioning. It was also suggested that the City of Torrance, if not already doing so, make it a practice to use environment-friendly cleaning agents and fumigants and Xeriscape landscaping. A tiered approach for implementing standards was suggested, i.e. standards would first be applied to governmental agencies, then to business and industry, and finally to residences.

Audience members called attention to a material made of recycled tires being used for sidewalks, which resists cracking from tree roots, and the benefits of green school buildings, which would create a healthier environment for school children. It was suggested that facilities be provided for bicyclists to shower in close proximity to bicycle paths. The need for an incremental approach to the green building concept was emphasized, as well as the need to pay more attention to the functionality of a building as opposed to its appearance.

The issues mentioned under the discussion of constraints of a Green Building program included the following:

- Cost issues – initial expense, retrofitting, and maintenance
- Perception that environment-friendly materials are more expensive
- Public resistance due to unfamiliarity with green building concept
- Negative perception associated with recycled materials
- Potential of alienating the City's industrial base
- Lack of availability of recycled materials
- Inability to see long-term benefits
- Lack of legal authority
- City budgetary constraints

The issues mentioned under short-term goals (4-5 years) included the following:

- Increase public awareness, marketing
- Use of homeowner association newsletters to disseminate information
- Outreach to school system, tying in with school curriculum
- Earth Day fairs
- Partnering with energy companies to encourage energy efficiency and provide incentives, rebates
- Encourage civic organizations that hold annual home tours to incorporate and highlight green building features/recyclable materials
- Recruit speakers to promote green building awareness at schools/ civic organizations
- Expand information available on City website

- Ensure products purchased by City of Torrance are environment friendly and its buildings are energy efficient
- Secure funding for incentives
- Provide reserved spaces in parking lots for electric vehicles
- Recognize energy efficient buildings by giving awards
- Find developer willing to build a green building/house to be raffled off
- Amend the City's Building Code to incorporate practical elements of green building standards
- Encourage local newspaper to give awards
- Invent cartoon character associated with green buildings/ environmental issues so concept is ingrained in young people

The issues mentioned under long-term goals (20 years) included the following:

- Building Code that is adaptable to new technology
- Acceptance of green buildings as the norm
- Increasing public demand for green buildings rather than relying on government regulation
- More reliance on renewable resources
- More attention to the balance of nature

Commissioners stressed the need to keep the message concise and easy to understand when designing informational booklets, etc., and discussed the use of the color "green" as an easily recognizable symbol of something that is environment friendly.

Following the brainstorming session, Commissioners and audience members were invited to rank the issues discussed in terms of importance.

Chairperson McCabe thanked audience members for their participation and encouraged their continued involvement.

.8. NEW BUSINESS

Administrator Cessna invited Commissioners to attend a green building tour on the Toyota campus in Torrance prior to next month's meeting.

Administrator Cessna noted that there will be General Plan booth at the City yard open house on Saturday, June 4, at which the public can provide input on the update of the General Plan.

9. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

9A. Commissioner Persaud requested an excused absence for next month's meeting, explaining that she will be on vacation.

9B. Commissioner Reilly also requested an excused absence next month due to vacation.

9C. Chairperson McCabe suggested that Commissioners consider touring other green buildings, and Commissioner Watson offered to share information about a green building in Santa Monica.

Administrator Cessna expressed concerns about potential violations of the Brown Act and offered to check with the City Attorney on this issue.

9D. Chairperson McCabe questioned whether an energy conservation workshop to be conducted by the South Bay Energy Savings Center has been scheduled for Torrance residents.

Administrator Cessna advised that no date has been selected for the workshop.

9E. Commissioner Watson apologized for missing last month's meeting due to a prior commitment, stating that she heard from the community that it was a very interesting meeting.

9F. Chairperson McCabe reported that many people took advantage of the opportunity to recycle electronic equipment at the event held the previous Saturday.

10. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:55 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Thursday, June 2, 2005, at 5:30 p.m. for a tour of the Toyota facility located at 19801 Western Avenue, with the regular meeting commencing at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex Commission meeting room.

Approved as Written July 7, 2005 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
