



**Staff Liaison**  
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**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE**  
**Urban Forest Committee**  
**Monday May 10, 2021, 7:00 p.m.**  
**VIA TELECONFERENCE**

<https://zoom.us/j/92408988668?pwd=THdoS3ITWlIBbGFKUGwxNGhQRitJZz09>

**Meeting ID: 924 0898 8668 Passcode: 127531**  
**or Dial in: 1-408-638-0968**

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**CONVENE REGULAR MEETING:** Chair Mitchell called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL:**

Present: Chair Robin Mitchell, Vice Chair Mary Torrusio; Members, Cathy Bleier, Robert Hrubes, Jennifer Kaczor, Yan Linhart.  
Also present: Staff Liaison Stephen Prée, members of the public: Sue Duncan, Cassie Hughes, Laura Lent.

**2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC:**

Sue Duncan informed the Committee that several Redwood trees appear to be in decline at Cerrito Vista Park and other City locations.

**3. COMMITTEE MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS /CHANGES TO THE MEETING AGENDA:**

- A. Cathy Bleier attended the El Cerrito City Council Concurrent Budget Workshop on May 8 and encouraged the UFC to get involved with this community engagement process as budget items being discussed include street tree maintenance, and fire department expenses.
- B. Vice Chair Torrusio announced that this meeting would be her last as she and her family are moving out of the region. Committee members thanked Ms. Torrusio for her exceptional service as a UFC member and chair. Prée recommended a change to the agenda to elect a Vice Chair to replace Ms. Torrusio's vacancy.
- C. Chair Mitchell recommended a book by Suzanne Simard: Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest.

**4. COUNCIL / STAFF LIAISONS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS-**

Staff Liaison Prée, informed the UFC of the recent tree failures on three Chinese Elm trees in 2 days; the City has solicited Requests for Proposals for a routine and hazard tree work contract in the amount of \$30,000 including the removal of several dead City trees and reported on recently completed vegetation management work in the Potrero Ave. corridor natural areas. Prée asked the Committee for support for a volunteer day spreading mulch around drought stressed trees in Memorial Grove on June 27. Chair Mitchell said she would assist and contact the EC Garden Club. Prée recommended that the UFC hear a presentation at the June meeting from Amos White, founder of 100K Trees for Humanity.

Cathy Bleier asked Prée if the City prunes trees during nesting season (based on public comment from April meeting). He said that whenever possible, the City plans pruning activities outside of nesting season, but certain public safety issues may necessitate pruning during nesting season. In this case, trees are inspected for active nests which if present, stop the pruning activities.

## **5. ACTION ITEMS-**

- A. Motion to adopt the minutes from the April 12 UFC meeting with corrected typographic error: Hrubes; 2<sup>nd</sup>: Bleier; unanimous.
- B. Election of Vice Chair: Ms. Bleier nominated Yan Linhart who declined, then Jen Kaczor who also declined, then Robert Hrubes, who accepted the nomination. Motion to elect Mr. Hrubes as Vice Chair: Bleier; 2<sup>nd</sup>: Linhart; unanimous.
- C. Vice Chair Hrubes recommended that the UFC issue a resolution to acknowledge Mary Torrusio' s contributions to the UFC: "Be it resolved on the occasion of Mary Torrusio' s final Urban Forest Committee meeting, the remaining members wish to acknowledge with great appreciation Mary's lengthy and highly valued service as a UFC member, including her leadership as Committee Chair during 2020 and 2021. Ashville's gain is El Cerrito's loss." All were in favor.

## **6. PRESENTATION- Forest Stewardship Council: An Introductory Overview –**

Vice Chair Robert Hrubes elaborated on the history, purpose, and mechanics of the various FSC certifications, its staffing, divisions, and global scope (presentation attached). Question from Bleier regarding potential urban forestry program certification. Hrubes hopes to advance a certification that municipalities could seek. Discussion of government agency's practical ability to secure certification vs. municipal urban forestry contractor's ability. Linhart asked if FSC certification accounted for the displacement of native species and the introduction of wildings from forest plantations. Hrubes said that the provenance of plant stock is considered but certification does not require perfection.

## **7. DISCUSSION- Tree Board University-** After a brief review of the El Cerrito Urban Forest Management Plan Goals, Mitchell said that the mandate is useful, so that all understand what the UFC is here to do; Linhart said the Committee needs to focus more on connecting with schools, students and parents. Mitchell suggested recruitment of teachers; Bleier said that TBU offers a process to determine how well the UFC is structured to meet its goals. Mitchell led a review of TBU's Sample Organizational Assessment noting relevant items. She commented that the UFC needs buy-in from the larger community by making a point of discussing program progress annually and there should be a standing section in the Green Happenings newsletter. Torrusio said the UFC could be a hub for urban forestry grant opportunities. The discussion turned to fund raising. Bleier said the committee needs to improve its understanding of how the City's urban forestry program budget works. Kaczor asked how the TBU organizational assessment fits in with the UFC work plan and what the schedule is for a work plan update.

Mitchell noted that the allotted UFC meeting time was nearly over; the Committee then agreed to proceed to the next chapter of TBU for the June meeting.

Mitchell agreed to take over the El Cerrito Trees Instagram account that Torrusio had initiated.

**8. URBAN FOREST COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES, CALENDAR AND WORK PLAN UPDATE:**

- A. Earth Day 2021 – deferred.
- B. Grant Funding / Tree Fund- deferred
- C. Hillside Natural Area Planning- deferred

**9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- Presentation: 100K Trees for Humanity
- Recommend to Council the appointment of Cassie Hughes to the UFC
- Tree Board University Chapter Two
- Earth Day 2021
- Grant Funding / Tree Fund
- HNA Planning

**10. NEXT MONTH'S CITY COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE ASSIGNMENTS**

- EQC meeting – June 8: Robin Mitchell
- PRC meeting – June 23: Jennifer Kaczor

**11. ADJOURNMENT-** Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 9:10 p.m.

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Robin Mitchell, Chair or Robert Hrubes, Vice Chair

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the regular Urban Forest Committee meeting of May 10, 2021 as approved by the Urban Forest Committee.

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Stephen Prée, Staff Liaison