



MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, March 10, 2009, 7:00 p.m.

El Cerrito City Hall

City Council Chambers

10890 San Pablo Avenue

This Meeting Place Is Wheelchair Accessible

Chair Eggherman called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Roll Call

Present: Committee Members Brown-Lechner, Eggherman, Rome, Miner and Weinstein

Absent: Member Samkian

Also Present: Council Liaison Janet Abelson and Environmental Services Manager Melanie Mintz (alternate Staff Liaison). Absent: Garth Schultz, Staff Liaison.

1. Comments from the Public on non-Agenda Items – 7:05

(Each speaker is limited to a maximum of 2 minutes for comment on non-agenda items. Comments regarding items on the agenda may be brought during discussion of those items and are subject to same time limits. Please let the Chair know if you have a comment on a particular agenda item.)

2. Approval of Minutes – 7:10

Member Miner moved approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting on February 10, 2009, seconded by member Brown-Lechner. Committee voted unanimously to approve the Minutes.

3. Special Staff Report – 7:15

Item was moved to the beginning of meeting by Chair Eggherman upon request of the Assistant City Manager.

Karen Pinkos, Assistant City Manager, described the difference between Boards, Commissions and Committees and the process by which members are appointed to each body. She apologized for any confusion arising from the process. For the EQC, the original members were interviewed by Council. After the original seven were appointed, responsibility for recommending additional members (up to 15 total) belongs to the Committee. The City Council will consider and make all final appointments upon a formal majority vote and recommendation by the Committee.

Pinkos recommended placing “Committee Membership” as a standing item on the EQC agenda. A prerequisite for being recommended to the Council is previous meeting attendance. As a working body, the EQC will make recommendations based upon a prospective member being a good fit for the Committee and its current activities.

COMMUNICATION ACCESS INFORMATION

To request a meeting agenda in large print, Braille, or on cassette, or to request a sign language interpreter for the meeting, call Garth Schultz, Staff Liaison at 215-4354 (voice) at least FIVE (5) WORKING DAYS NOTICE PRIOR TO THE MEETING to ensure availability.

At the next meeting, EQC members will consider appointment of Sam Krueger.

The City Clerk and Assistant City Manager will soon be releasing a formalized Committee membership procedure which will be posted to the City's website and the EQC's web page.

4. Public Comment– 7:35

Sam Krueger introduced himself with interest in being appointed to the Committee. He is a 12-year resident who heard about the committee through Staff Liaison Schultz and Chair Eggherman. He has an interest in general environmental issues and has studied environmental management. He is excited that El Cerrito's environmentalism is evolving and that there is an opportunity for it to have such impact.

Mari Gilmore asked how to participate in subcommittees. After discussion, the EQC agreed that resident participation in subcommittees is definitely encouraged and appreciated. One important aspect of the EQC is public involvement in environmental projects and issues. Subcommittee membership, however, is limited to committee members.

5. Sub-Committee Reports – 7:45

Subcommittee Report #1: Energy Efficiency. Member Weinstein distributed a Progress Report from the Energy Efficiency subcommittee. He discussed AB 811, which gives cities and counties the authority to create benefit assessment districts to help property owners finance energy upgrades and cooperative buying programs. Per Weinstein cooperative buying may provide a more feasible opportunity in the short-term for El Cerrito to incentivize residents to pursue energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades. Thorny issues still to be discussed include whether energy efficiency or renewable energy projects should be prioritized; and whether and how to incorporate an energy efficiency audit requirement. Next steps for the subcommittee will be to develop and distribute a questionnaire for Earth Day. The committee will continue to research the programs and issues.

A follow up discussion about programs currently available to residents for minor energy efficiency upgrades ensued. The ESD will work to compile a listing of available programs

Subcommittee Report #2: Incentivize local businesses to provide recyclable take-out containers and reduce non-biodegradable packaging. Member Brown-Lechner reported that the committee is still in the fact finding process and will be interviewing El Cerrito businesses. Council member Abelson mentioned seeing signs in Santa Clara County encouraging people to bring their own packaging. Resident Krueger asked why this effort was selected over other more comprehensive green business efforts. This question introduced the next subcommittee report.

Subcommittee Report #3: Green Business and Residential Recognition program: Committee member Miner reported out that he had discovered that 25 El Cerrito companies are certified "Green Businesses" through the countywide program. Miner interviewed several El Cerrito green businesses and learned that they had overall positive experiences with the countywide program. Their main motivations for participating in the program were that it is the right thing to do and because their customers appreciate it. They felt that extra recognition from the City would be OK, but did not have a high level of interest. The take-away lesson was that the EQC program should be qualitative over quantitative and that the program could help publicize the businesses that have been certified as Green. The city of Davis' program was discussed as a model which annually gives an "Environmental Recognition Award" to businesses, residents, and non-profit

organizations. The form and criteria used by the Davis program is very straight forward. A committee similar to the EQC reviews applications. The take-away message from the Davis program is to focus on utilizing many and varied communication channels to get the word out.

Member Rome discussed the Residential Environmental Recognition program and distributed a checklist of proposed criteria for participation in the program which includes extra space for residents to describe what extra measures they take to minimize their impacts. Miner developed the checklist based upon other Ecological Footprint quizzes. Next steps for the committee would be to review the checklist, assign point values and get the word out. Key to the programs' success will be making it fun.

Discussion: Member Weinstein agreed and cautioned against being too serious. Council member Abelson agreed that the program shouldn't be too militant and should focus on cumulative actions instead of any single particular action. Brown-Lechner added that the point should be to raise awareness. Resident Gilmore asked whether the program would be about recognition or would it be a competition. The committee agreed that the residential program would likely be focused on recognition whereas the business program might be more competitive. Rome invited more discussion at the next meeting.

Subcommittee Report #4: The Movie: "Thirst". Member Brown-Lechner reported that the movie event co-sponsored with the League of Women Voters "sold out" and that the subcommittee is discussing creating an environmental movie series. The successful event was enhanced by the presence of the film makers and the dialogue with them.

6. EQC Budget Request Draft—8:00

ESD Manager Mintz presented a draft EQC budget request and distributed a Memo from staff about the request. The committee approved the \$5,000 budget request as described in the Memo with one change: shifting \$500 from Program and Committee Logo Development to a new "Program Supplies" line item, such as sample biodegradable packaging. A request was also made by Chair Egherman for up to \$5,000 for consultant assistance in developing a Cooperative Purchasing program for renewable energy and energy efficiency program. Mintz said she would return at the next meeting with a response to this request.

A request was also made by the Committee that the ESD consider becoming a member of the CEC Cooperative Community Energy. Mintz agreed to look into it.

7. Environmental Services Division Strategic Plan—8:30

EQC briefly discussed the ESD Strategic Plan outline that was distributed at the last meeting. It was determined that Mintz would distribute a Mission Statement and Objectives to be discussed at the next meeting and that the current outline was a good start in laying out the overall ESD program areas.

8. Earth Hour—8:35

Chair Egherman distributed a hand out about *Earth Hour*. The international event is scheduled to take place on March 28th. The Committee discussed what it could do to support and promote the event. It was determined that while potentially more promotion and support could occur next year; this year the event would be publicized on the City's website. The Committee also discussed utilizing its existing email list to promote such an event. ESD Manager Mintz said that none of the

current lists were set up for mailing out general events, but that Staff could begin to solicit email addresses from residents who would be interested in receiving periodic environmental updates and/or information about volunteer opportunities at events and via the City's website.

9. Chair Update to Council—8:45

Chair Egherman is scheduled to present an update of the work of the EQC to Council on April 6. The Committee discussed content, which will include: How the EQC was started; how priorities were developed; and an update on current activities.

10. Council / Staff / Liaison Updates and Upcoming Agenda Items

Councilmember Abelson reported out that the Council received a presentation on the City's current budget situation and deliberated on how to allocate Measure WW funds at its last meeting.

ESD Manager Mintz said she had received requests for presentations to made to the EQC on creek volunteerism and water catchment systems. The EQC agreed that any such presentations not specifically related to current EQC activities should be given during the Public Comment period.

11. Adjournment

Member Miner adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the Environmental Quality Committee regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at the El Cerrito Branch of the Contra Costa County Library located at 6510 Stockton Avenue, El Cerrito, during Library business hours.