



MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, May 12, 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 7:02 PM.

Roll Call

Present: Members Brown-Lechner, Eggherman, Miner, Weinstein, Krueger

Absent: Samkian, Rome

Also Present: Garth Schultz (Staff Liaison), Janet Abelson (Council Liaison)

1. Comments from the Public on non-Agenda Items

None.

2. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the Minutes from the Regular Committee meeting on April 14, 2009 made by Mindy Brown-Lechner and seconded by Dave Weinstein was approved unanimously.

3. Membership

Ellen Spitalnik expressed interest in being a member of the Committee, has attended more than three meetings, and has submitted her application and resume for Committee review. Ms. Spitalnik is an environmental lawyer by training who worked for the EPA and the Forest Service and is interested in getting involved in environmental issues at the local level.

Natasha Benjamin expressed interest in being a member of the Committee, has attended three meetings, and has submitted her application and resume to the Committee for review. Ms. Benjamin is a marine biologist and has experience with the Ocean Film Festival in San Francisco. She is specifically interested in consumer outreach programs, sea-food issues, and the Committee's film series.

Mari Gilmore expressed interest in being a member of the Committee, has attended three meetings, and will submit her application and resume to the Committee for review before the next meeting. Ms. Gilmore is an environmental consultant and is working on her LEED AP certification. She is interested in many issues including bay-friendly landscaping.

Frank Wong expressed interest in being a member of the Committee, has attended three meetings, and has submitted an application and resume for review.

The Committee briefly re-discussed the membership recommendation process. Mark Miner presented, Dave Weinstein seconded, and the Committee unanimously approved a motion to clarify the process as follows:

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.

Interested members of the public who have attended at least three Committee meetings (consecutively or otherwise) may seek the Committee's recommendation for membership by announcing said interest to the Committee during the appropriate time of a regularly scheduled Committee meeting and submitting a resume and application (available online at http://www.el-cerrito.org/gov/pdf/application_bcc.pdf) to the Staff Liaison for distribution to the Committee for review. At a subsequent regular Committee meeting, the Committee may choose to decide, by majority vote, whether to recommend that the Council appoint the applicant to the Committee.

4. Sub-Committee Reports

Subcommittee Report #1: Increase incentives for solar panel installation and energy efficiency measures for homes and businesses. Mr. Weinstein summarized that the sub-committee, having done its research and setting up the plans, has handed the project off to the City of El Cerrito Environmental Services Division. The project is highly technical and involved. The Committee will have opportunities to review and advise staff and help with community outreach as the City's efforts to support and initiate energy efficiency programs and renewable funding mechanisms are developed over the course of the coming several months.

Subcommittee Report #2: Incentivize local businesses to provide recyclable take-out containers and reduce non-biodegradable packaging. Ms. Brown-Lechner reported that the sub-committee is working on a grant application to support the Committee's work on this project.

Subcommittee Report #3: Green Business and Residential Recognition program: Mr. Miner reported that he is continuing to work on the commercial recognition program and that Ms. Rome is working on criteria for the residential program.

Subcommittee Report #4: Quarterly Movie Series: Members of this sub-committee reported that there has been no progress on this item since the last meeting, mostly due to uncertainty about the future of the Cerrito Theater. Members briefly discussed proceeding anyway and dealing with a potential change of venue as needed. Ms. Spitalnik suggested a potential partnership with a group she works with in Berkeley, and has given this information to Staff Liaison Schultz in case the Committee decides to go this route.

Subcommittee Report #5: Earth Day: Members of the Committee and the public shared feedback about the El Cerrito Earth Day Event on April 25. Ms. Gilmore posited that there was more turn out than she had seen in the past. Mr. Weinstein re-introduced the idea of doing more volunteer projects throughout the year and possibly organizing teams of people to work on regular projects with the main goal of facilitating community action. The Committee and staff expressed support for this idea. Mr. Weinstein offered to lead a new sub-committee to develop this idea further. Ms. Benjamin, Mr. Wong, Ms. Spitalnik, and Mr. Schultz all volunteered to help.

5. Discussion of Food Security, Sustainability, and the City Municipal Code

Chair Eggherman introduced Linda Schneider who spoke to the Committee about her recent experiences as an El Cerrito resident raising chickens and her understanding that raising egg-laying chickens or a size that allows for normal sized eggs is not allowed per the Municipal Code (see <http://ordlink.com/codes/elcerrito/> Title 7 – Animals). Ms. Schneider discussed the many benefits of raising chickens for food security and sustainability and expressed a desire to have the Municipal Code changed in order to allow egg-laying chickens like hers and furthermore expressed her interest in having the City involved in local and global sustainability issues like this one.

Ms. Brown-Lechner, Mr. Eggherman, Mr. Krueger, and several members of the public audience all expressed interest in such a change. Ms. Abelson offered that initiating the process that could result in such a change is one of the things that the Council had in mind when it created the Committee, and suggested that this issue could be an ideal way for the Committee to broach its involvement in these types of activities. Chair Eggherman asked that staff investigate what steps would be necessary to initiate such a change to the Municipal Code, and what the procedure would be, so that the Committee may decide whether to pursue changes during the July meeting. Both Mr. Eggherman and Mr. Krueger offered their assistance as staff

investigates the Committee's options. Ms. Schneider offered that one potential concern that the Committee may want to address is nuisance abatement, and suggested a mediation approach. Ms. Spitalnik suggested preparing a summary of counter arguments in order to prepare a response to those arguments.

6. Fall Event Date 10/17

Mr. Weinstein made a motion to hold the Committee's previously discussed fall event on October 17, 2009. Mr. Krueger seconded, Mr. Miner abstained, all others voted to hold the fall event on the aforementioned date.

7. Committee and Liaison Announcements and Future Agenda Items

Ms. Abelson made announcements about recent Council activity, including the coming Cerrito Theater changer of operator, the City Budget, the State Budget crisis, and AB744 (HOT lanes project for I-80).

Mr. Schultz announced that the El Cerrito Recycling Center is now accepting clean, white, block Styrofoam (#6 – EPS) for Recycling via drop-off at the El Cerrito Recycling Center Offices. Mr. Schultz also announced upcoming events including Bike to Work Day on May 14, Bike Safety Day on May 16, the Citywide Garage Sale on May 23, the Electronic Waste Collection Events on June 6 and June 7, and the Green Section at the 4th of July event, which will include the Environmental Services Division and the Committee.

Mr. Weinstein announced that EBMUD is considering building an additional dam for water storage, and is interested in whether the City can or will express a position or comment on the issue.

Ms. Gilmore announced Green Albany day, in Albany, on Saturday May 16 and suggested that Committee members and staff consider attending in order to learn more about what could be offered during the Committee's fall event.

Mr. Eggherman announced that he issued a report to the Council about the Committee's work in on April 20, and that the Committee thanked the Council for its work.

8. Adjournment

Chair Eggherman adjourned the meeting 8:54 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 Recycling Center Offices at 7501 Schmidt Ln., El Cerrito, Monday – Thursday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.