



MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, June 9, 2009, 7:00 p.m.

El Cerrito City Hall - City Council Chambers

10890 San Pablo Avenue

This Meeting Place Is Wheelchair Accessible

Vice Chair Samkian called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Roll Call

Present: Members Brown-Lechner, Samkian, Miner, Weinstein, Krueger, Rome

Absent: Egherman

Also Present: Suzanne Iarla (Community Outreach Specialist – Staff Liaison stand-in), Janet Abelson (Council Liaison), Maria Sanders (Environmental Services Analyst).

1. Introduction of new Environmental Services Analyst

(Note: this item was taken out of order)

Maria Sanders, the City's new Environmental Services Analyst introduced herself.

2. Comments from the Public on non-Agenda Items

None.

3. Approval of Minutes

Moved and seconded (Miner/Brown-Lechner) to adopt the Minutes from the Regular Committee meeting on May 12, 2009 as modified by Weinstein Minutes from the Regular Committee meeting on May 12, 2009.

Unanimous.

4. Membership

Vice Chair Samkian led a discussion on the application process, including applicant interview/introductions with the whole Committee versus sub-committee. Councilmember Abelson explained the City Council conducts interviews of board/commission applicants as a whole group; the Council holds a special meeting prior to a regular meeting and schedules the interviews at set times.

Moved and seconded (Weinstein/Miner) for the application process to include an interview with the whole Committee followed by committee discussion at a special meeting prior to a regular meeting. Unanimous.

Vice Chair Samkian reported there are four applicants who have attended EQC meetings and should be considered. Frank Wong, Natasha Benjamin, Mildred Dandridge and Ellen Spitalnik spoke. Natasha Benjamin also asked what the commitment is for appointed members. Sam Krueger mentioned candidate Rebecca Benassini has also attended three meetings and is eligible for consideration.

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.

Moved and seconded (Miner/Weinstein) to recommend the City Council appoint all five applicants and increase the number of EQC members to twelve. Unanimous. (The five applicants are Frank Wong, Natasha Benjamin, Mildred Dandridge, Ellen Spitalnik and Rebecca Benassini.)

Councilmember Abelson directed staff to request this item be on the next Council meeting for their consideration.

5. Sub-Committee Reports

Vice Chair Samkian led a discussion regarding next steps for Committee priorities and sub-committee work on current EQC programs:

Subcommittee Report #1: Increase incentives for solar panel installation and energy efficiency measures for homes and businesses. Members of this sub-committee had no new progress to report.

Subcommittee Report #2: Incentivize local businesses to provide recyclable take-out containers and reduce non-biodegradable packaging. Ms. Samkian reported that the sub-committee is working on a \$5,000 grant application to RecycleMore to incentivize both residents and local businesses to move away from non-biodegradable take out containers. The subcommittee has researched the cost and quality of 1) personal take out containers for residents to use at local restaurants and 2) bio-degradable take out containers for restaurants to offer for their customers. Funds from the grant would be used to provide residents with an El Cerrito branded take out container to build awareness about the environmental alternatives to non-biodegradable take-out packaging. The Committee and members of the public discussed the pros and cons of having the personal take-out containers be made of metal or plastic and how to get both customers and businesses engaged to ensure further action.

Subcommittee Report #3: Green Business and Residential Recognition program: Members of this sub-committee had no new progress to report.

Subcommittee Report #4: Quarterly Movie Series: Members of this sub-committee reported that there has been little progress on this item since the last meeting, mostly due to uncertainty about the future of the Cerrito Theater. However, as it looks like the theater may be up and running again.

6. Discussion of Non-Member Public Involvement in Committee Activities

Vice Chair Samkian led a discussion about non-member involvement on EQC sub-committees, volunteering at one-time as well as on-going events, discussed possibility liability issues. Staff was directed to research the liability matter and the Committee should continue the discussion at a future meeting.

7. Discussion of Opportunity to Support the Urban Forest Plan and Develop Green Teams

Vice Chair Samkian led a discussion regarding the City's Urban Forest Plan and possibly developing future neighborhood based "Green Teams". There was interest in the EQC supporting tree-plantings (mini-Earth Day events) and developing neighborhood "Green Teams"; Miner asked if there should be more people on each project/subcommittee so folks aren't spread too thin; Krueger talked about Albany's B.U.F.F. program; Weinstein said there is a lot of interest in neighborhood "Green Teams" and this project would require a lot of work but is a good way to outreach to the community, the teams could be amorphous depending on neighbors interest.

Moved and seconded (Brown-Lechner/Kruger) to continue the discussion to the next meeting. Unanimous.

Miner requested formalizing a "Green Team" subcommittee at the next meeting. Vice Chair Samkian said she would agendaize subcommittees in general so the discussion can include the status of all subcommittees, possibly forming new subcommittee(s) and subcommittee membership.

8. Fall Environmental Workshop Series

Vice Chair Samkian led a discussion regarding staff's proposed Environmental Workshop Series topics. There was discussion regarding the "low carbon diet" program and name.

Moved and seconded (Weinstein/Krueger) to approve the Environmental Workshop Series topics as recommended by staff. Motion passed 4-0-1 with Rome abstaining.

9. Committee and Liaison Announcements and Future Agenda Items

Topics for next agenda: Trees, subcommittees, Fall EQC event, Zoning Ordinance/Chickens.

Councilmember Abelson provided an update on the City's budget, participating in TALC's "car free" challenge and the State financial crisis.

Staff provided a brief update.

10. Adjournment

Vice Chair Samkian 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.