

**MINUTES**  
**NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**  
**March 22, 2016**

**Roll Call** – The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. Present were Commissioners Nancy Wilms, Kay Findley, Al Benzoni, William Kelly, Noah Puni (arriving at 7:11p.m.), and Vice-Chair Scott Kuhn. Absent was Commissioner Stephen Leider. Present were Council Liaison Robert Joe, Student Commissioner Emily Ng and Staff Liaisons Lucy Demirjian and Amber Duran.

**Minutes** – Minutes from January 26, 2016 were approved (Benzoni, Wilms 5-0). Amended Minutes from December 22, 2015 were approved (Benzoni, Wilms 5-0)

**Public Comments and Suggestions** – Susan Hoskins and Lisa Novick presented a series they produced as an educational platform on landscaping for resilience. The series informs residents on methods of incorporating native plants into their space to reduce water use and preserve native wildlife. For a minimal fee of the producers' hourly wages, the presenters offered to incorporate the South Pasadena City logo into the series. The series could then be posted in the City's social media platforms for the education of residents.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-q5gdpHqRxx5aOHWuQxVtA>

- 1. West Coast Arborists' Presentation** – Pat Mahoney, President of West Coast Arborists (WCA), presented to the commission on WCA's recent adoptions of a labor union and a prevailing wage for employees starting July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. The change in wage will affect the contract between WCA and the City of South Pasadena. Councilmember Schneider congratulated West Coast Arborists for increasing the prevailing wage and providing responsible compensation to their arborists for performing the second most dangerous job in the United States. Councilmember Schneider implored the Commission to utilize a read only access to WCA software for oversight of the City trees. Commissioners Benzoni and Leider were assigned to the subcommittee and were assured by Toor that they would be provided read-only access to West Coast Arborists' software for better oversight of the City's urban forest. Benzoni asked how staff checks on WCA's work. Mahoney responded that employees input information into a tablet that becomes an invoice. The City arborist checks the work before City staff pays the invoice. Benzoni asked if there was a process for the tree planting plan that ensures the correct tree is selected for the right place. Toor stated that Public Works Operations Manager, Kristine Courdy and staff are working on the tree plan and will provide the plan to the NREC. Councilmember Schneider asked who selects the new trees to be planted. Mahoney responded that WCA has staff that gathers healthy trees for their own nursery. Toor stated that ultimately the City Arborist, Gonzalo Maravilla, gives a final inspection of the trees before and after they're planted. Benzoni requested software from WCA that allows residents to report empty wells or tree problems. Toor stated that a reporting system is available through the City website. Schneider reiterated the importance of the commission to have access to the WCA's software to perform their duties. Toor

updated the Commission on the decline of the urban forest due to the drought, disease, and lack of funding. City tree maintenance and plantings are mostly funded through the Lighting and Landscape District which has not increased since 1997. When the Lighting and Landscape fund is drained the tree budget uses money from the City's General Fund. Toor reported that of the 11,000 trees in the city 900 trees have been marked for replacement due to age or disease and 30 to 50 new trees are planted yearly. The Natural Resources and Environmental Commission recommends that the City Council and City staff commission a study of the Lighting and Landscape District to increase the assessment as justified by the study. In addition the study should emphasize tree care and evaluate how to back out subsidization from the General Fund (Kelly, Benzoni 6-0). Commissioners discussed concern for how much of the Lighting and Landscape Fund will go toward the urban forest. Toor will report back to the commission on what percentage of the Lighting and Landscape District has historically gone into City forestry.

2. **City's Urban Forest Update** – Findley wanted clarity as to the Commission's role. Toor stated the commissioners are welcome to attend neighborhood meetings about specific issues in the community but not to decide which trees are planted in each well. Findley asked for confirmation that the commission will be provided with the tree planting list. Demirjian reminded the commission that it was determined at a previous meeting that the commission will be given quarterly updates. Courdy presented commission with the City's Urban Forest Update. Courdy reported that planting of 55 trees will start April 23rd. Findley inquired where the unspent tree funds go. Toor reported that the unspent tree funds go back to the General Fund. Toor said we have 900 empty trees wells but many trees need to be removed due to aging or disease. Direction to staff is to maintain the amount of trees by replacing those that are removed. Courdy will present to the commission again next quarter.
3. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair** – Due to no other nominations, William Kelly was voted and approved as Chair (Benzoni, Wilms 5-0). Scott Kuhn was voted and approved as Vice Chair (Wilms, Findley 5-0).
4. **Water Conservation and Drought Actions** – Duran reported that the February 2016 conservation amount was 19% compared to February 2013.
5. **Water Conservation Programs** – Duran presented to the commission the Spring 2016 Environmental Newsletter, an outreach flier to inform residents of the changes in the rebates for water conservation devices and other environmental issues in the city.
6. **Styrofoam Ban** – Puni asked that Josephine Miller be invited to the next meeting to present on Santa Monica's experience with the Styrofoam ban and be placed first on the agenda. Puni, Wilms (6-0) Demirjian suggested an hour be given to this discussion and that the Chamber of Commerce board be invited to hear the presentation since they are an

interested party. Demirjian suggested that the Styrofoam ban be given an hour for Miller's presentation and discussion. Kelly expressed concern for the stalls in moving the Styrofoam ban forward and feels that the commission should come to a conclusion and make a recommendation for staff in the next few months.

7. **Graywater** – Benzoni would like to research implemented graywater ordinances from nearby cities and report back to Duran on any further recommendations for staff by next month. Kelly asked for clarification on why it would be required install a stub out and not the entire system. Benzoni explained that the stub out is a first step and low cost implementation that would give the homeowner the option to create the more complicated parts of the system such as the water storage and irrigation.
8. **Golf Course subcommittee** – Nothing new to update since subcommittees last meeting didn't have quorum.
9. **Upcoming events-** Duran reported the CoolCalifornia Challenge, a competition between 22 participating California Cities to raise awareness and create action to reduce greenhouse gases. The competition ends March 30<sup>th</sup>. Points generated by resident participation and action taken to conserve will earn the City a percentage of \$150,000 to go toward sustainability programs. The Compost and Mulch Giveaway Event is being coordinated by Duran to provide residents with compost from Athens Services to create permeable soil and mulch from Landcare to reduce evaporation. A date is not yet finalized.
10. **Renewable Energy Council** – The Wilson reservoir and City Hall roof have been evaluated by solar companies for information on the possibility of installing solar panels. The REC is still evaluating the costs/benefits based on that information. REC is also researching whether it would make sense for the City to invest in more solar capacity and consolidate meters under that system. Another item the REC is looking into is a program called "Community Solar" that would collaborate with the school district and businesses to create a larger solar network. The REC hopes to have their final report completed this summer. The REC would also like to add a solar component to the 2016 Clean Air Car Show, a City hosted event promoting and informing residents of alternative fuel vehicle options. Demirjian reported that a grant was received for the installation of an electric car charging station at the Hope and Mound parking lot but there has been a delay because bids were higher than expected. New sites for the charging stations are being considered. AQMD has a rebate program available for residential electric car charging stations that the City is working to promote through a newsletter and social media. Kelly reported that there are programs through California Public Utilities Commission to allow utility companies to install stations. Kelly suggested that staff look into the possibility of having Edison provide the City with charging stations at Edison's expense or other independent companies.

**11. Evaluation of NREC's Mission Statement and 2016 Goals** – Kelly would like to make the goals a 2 year plan with progress reviews every 6 months. Discussion took place about how historically, staff would come to commission for input for strategic planning to have a goal setting meeting with the council. This year a new approach was generated through a budget forum for the public that was executed on March 12<sup>th</sup> to provide as guidance to City Council. Benzoni would like staff to review the municipal code for the NREC and revise the mission statement to reflect it. The NREC's current mission statement reads, "The mission of the Natural Resources & Environmental Commission (NREC) is to administer the City's tree ordinance and to help develop and support environmental and sustainable programs for the City, its residents and businesses." Findley asked that staff provide the 3 strategic goals that were submitted from the NREC for the last 2 years. Each commissioner will send their priorities for the NREC to Duran by Friday, April 8<sup>th</sup> and will be organized by Kelly and discussed at the next meeting.

**Chair Communications-** N/A

**Commissioner Communications-** Findley reported that the Stable subcommittee has not had a meeting and has nothing new to report. Findley reported that artificial turf isn't addressed in South Pasadena's Landscape Maintenance Code section 9.80. Findley found that the City Forum was an interesting activity. Findley was very happy that the School District rejected The Mission Place Project development. Benzoni informed commission that his landscape was featured on the news.

**Council Liaison Communications-** N/A

**Staff Liaison Communications-** N/A

**Adjournment** - The meeting adjourned at 10:04 p.m. (Benzoni, Puni 6-0).

**NEXT MEETING** – The next regular meeting of the Natural Resources and Environmental Commission will be held on Tuesday, April 26, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

  
William Kelly, Chair