

MINUTES
NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
September 29, 2015

Roll Call - The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. Present were Commissioners Scott Kuhn, Kay Findley, Stephen Leider, Al Benzoni, Noah Puni, Student Commissioner Emily Ng, and Chair Kim Hughes. Commissioner Nancy Wilms was absent. Council Liaison Michael Cacciotti was present. Staff Liaison Debby Figoni was present.

Minutes – Minutes from July 2015 were approved (Kuhn, Puni, 6-0).

Public Comments and Suggestions – n/a

1. Tree Removal Request at Cedar Crest & Mockingbird Lane – The Commission reviewed a tree removal request for the development of a new, two-unit home located at Cedar Crest and Mockingbird Lane. The vacant piece of land is an unusual size, is very steep and has a number of trees, including oak trees, which need to be removed in order to build. When the project was approved by the Planning Commission, they deferred the tree removal issue to the Natural Resources and Environmental Commission (NREC) since it falls under their purview.

The project architect, Elizabeth Herron, provided development details and explained that the building had been modified several times per the Planning Commission's request. Tracy Large, a nearby resident, attended the NREC meeting and explained that several people on the street were unhappy with the development because they considered it their local park and did not want the trees to be removed. A letter was emailed to staff by local resident Kurt Graf who was unable to attend. He also requested the oak trees be saved due to their size and offering of green space.

City Arborist Gonzalo Maravilla inspected the trees, as did Tim Crothers of West Coast Arborists and the developer's personal arborist. After discussion, it was agreed that the developer would be allowed to remove two unhealthy oak trees, both located on the lower portion/Mockingbird Lane side of the property. In addition, there were four pepper trees that would also need to be removed, but they were basically dead and not in good condition. The oak tree located on the upper portion/Cedar Crest side of the property in question for removal is to remain, but will be trimmed. All of the oak and pepper trees that will be removed will be replaced using the City's tree replacement formula provided by Public Works. The priority re-planting location is at the property, taking safety and mature tree size into consideration.

The Commissioners provided recommendations for the landscape plan and parking. (1) The Commissioners approved the removal of the two lower oak trees facing Mockingbird Lane and the trimming of the higher oak tree facing Cedar Crest (Findley, Leider 6-0).

Note: The condition regarding removing a guest parking space in order to maintain a tree was removed as removal of parking does not fall within the NREC's purview. The recommendation would provide for more green space and space to accommodate replacement trees.

2. **City's Urban Forest Update** – City Arborist Gonzalo Maravilla presented and stated that no trees were removed or planted in August or September, but that he was going to remove and replant 20 dead trees in October. He also responded to the list of tree questions created by the Commissioners, stating that he is watching about 401 trees in the City and supplementing them with water from the City's water truck when possible; that the City will be removing and replacing a couple dozen trees this fall, and that the Commissioners can continue to keep him informed of tree issues throughout the City. It was shared that the watering tree is equipped with GPS, so we can track watering. West Coast Arborist's (WCA) manager Tim Crothers also attended and replied to the Commissioner's questions. He stated that WCA's main tree trimming goal is safety followed by grid pruning; that trees planted by WCA are on a two year maintenance and watering contract. The plan covers that when trees die during the two years; they are replaced and begin their two year cycle all over. WCA maintains new trees according to the International Society of Arboriculture's best management practices; and, that WCA plants new trees per City staff direction. WCA shared that there is a "cloud based" tree inventory program. The NREC members asked if they could get access to this data base, even if just for view only.

3. **West Coast Arborists' Update** –No updated on the contract.

4. **NREC Annual Report** – Commissioner Wilms made a few changes to the report sent out by Figoni. This version of the report was approved (Findley, Hughes, 6-0).

5. **Styrofoam Ban** – Figoni provided a spreadsheet detailing which local food providers were using Styrofoam products. She will work with Laurie Wheeler at the Chamber to communication with the various food establishments and grocery stores.

6. **Water Conservation and Drought Actions** – Figoni stated that she was working with the Finance Department on Global Water's monthly reports. She stated that 10 water conservation signs had been installed on City medians educating residents on the drought. She stated that the City's average water reduction was almost 30% over the past four months.

7. **Water Conservation Programs** – Figoni continues to get a plethora of calls, emails and visits from residents and businesses regarding the various rebate programs. At the August 19, 2015 City Council meeting, Council approved \$175,000 of water use efficiency funds for water audits, turf removal rebate program, toilets, washing machines, and irrigation devices. Figoni continues to do landscape and water audits, rebate program assistance, and is creating new water wise landscaping workshops. Figoni is working on a fall 2015 Environmental Newsletter to be sent via U.S. mail.

8. **Greywater** – No update.

9. **Charging Stations** – Public works received bids on installing an electric vehicle charging station all of which were much higher than anticipated. The Commission discussed other location options at public parking lots.

10. **Upcoming Events** – The Water Conservation Event at Descanso Gardens on September 13, 2015 was a huge success. There were a dozen residents at the water wise landscaping presentation at Police Department's Open House event on September 20, 2015. The Dumpster and Donation Day is October 17, 2015. Fioni will staff the event. There are two new workshops for October and November focusing on Efficient Irrigation and Rain Water Infiltration.

11. **Renewable Energy Council** – The Renewable Energy Council (REC) is to hold their first meeting on October 19, 2015.

Chair Communications – Chair Hughes discussed articles on how much water some vegetable gardens consume, how Metropolitan Water District may be sending W9's to all of their turf rebate recipients, and tree care.

Commissioner Communications – Findley provided an article on not banning artificial turf, water wars in the central valley and the un-greening of Los Angeles.

Council Liaison Communications – n/a

Staff Liaison Communications – n/a

Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 11:07 p.m. (Noah, Kuhn 6-0).

NEXT MEETING - The next regular meeting of the Natural Resources and Environmental Commission will be held on Tuesday, October 27, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers.


Kimberley Hughes, Chair