



THE CITY OF

EL CERRITO

Public Works Department

Staff Liaison

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**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE
Urban Forest Committee**

August 12, 2019

Hillside Room
El Cerrito City Hall
10890 San Pablo Avenue
El Cerrito, CA 94530

This Meeting Place is Wheelchair Accessible

CONVENE REGULAR MEETING: Vice Chair Hrubes called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

1. **ROLL CALL – Present:** Vice-Chair Robert Hrubes; Members Cathy Bleier, Yan Linhart, Steve Price, Michael Srago. Also present: Council Liaison Gabriel Quinto, Staff Liaison Stephen Prée members of the public, Sue Duncan, Robin Mitchell, Mark Mendell, Amy Rakley. **Absent:** Chair Mary Torrusio.

2. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS** – Amy Rakley said that she would like to be a member of a volunteer squad to care for City street trees; many young City trees need help with stake removal and pruning. The City needs to inventory trees and focus on tree conditions. A neighbor of hers cut down two City street trees without a permit and she hopes that the City will hold them responsible for street tree replacement.

Sue Duncan, representing El Cerrito Fire Safe, asked if the UFC was aware of the City’s project in the HNA to remove dead and dying oaks and eucalyptus trees. She reported two dead trees at Arlington Park and inquired about the schedule to remove them. Ms Duncan distributed to the UFC a list of “Fire-Prone Plants” from Fire Safe Marin, she requested that the City create a similar list and better enforce fire hazard abatement standards. She asked how Measure V funds will be allocated for fire fuels reduction work in the Hillside Natural Area.

3. **COMMITTEE MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS-** Steve Price voiced his appreciation for the article that Prée emailed to the UFC: “Exploring Volunteer Tree Committees in Massachusetts” (ISA Arborists News August 2019).

4. **COUNCIL / STAFF LIAISONS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS** - Council Liaison Quinto reported that BART would be hosting a series of public meetings regarding potential Transit Oriented Development (TODs) projects which may include a public library that may be built on their parking lot property at the El Cerrito Plaza station. Vice Chair Hrubes asked what the nexus is with the UFC. Councilman Quinto responded that the City would be able to plant more trees with increased affordable housing units and increased property tax revenue. Quinto announced that the Council has approved a Special Election for the November 5,

2019 ballot that would renew the Measure H special tax to fund parks and recreation facilities maintenance and enhancement including the swimming pool, the Hillside Natural Area as described in the Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan. He noted that the measure is endorsed by the Sierra Club and is *not* opposed by the Contra Costa County Taxpayers Association.

Vice Chair Hrubes asked Councilman Quinto if a Fire related ordinance is on the horizon for the City, considering that Cal Fire has designated parts of El Cerrito as being a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Mr Quinto responded that the El Cerrito Fire and Public Works departments are working together on Hillside Natural Area management and the El Cerrito Police Department is refining evacuation routes and will be hosting an evacuation drill soon.

Hrubes- Regarding tree removal and vegetation management, Mill Valley has adopted a vegetation ordinance, is El Cerrito doing something similar and could the UFC be instrumental in collaboration on such efforts?

Discussion- regarding measures that the City *could* take such as private vegetation management guidelines, prohibited plant lists, Fire Wise community groups; measures that the City *is* taking: RFP for Hillside Natural Area Management Plan, ECFD hazard abatement citations, ongoing contracting for removal of HNA fire fuels.

Price- This is important work that the UFC may be just part of, what additional boards, committees and commissions could also be responsive? Fire prevention information resources should be available on the City website.

Quinto- Council is working with PG&E on fire hazard reduction. As a small town with limited resources we can apply for grants.

Discussion- Eucalyptus vs. Oak tree management. Street trees are overgrown in Orinda, Lafayette, Oakland and Berkeley.

Prée reported briefly on recent urban forest activities in El Cerrito including work along the Moeser Lane electrical transmission corridor. PG&E removed approximately 60 mature Eucalyptus trees and they plan to remove over 30 large diameter, mature native Oak trees which had been maintained by the utility by clearance pruning for several years. Prée is currently coordinating fire fuel reduction work in the Hillside Natural Areas to be completed this fall with a \$30,000 budget designated by City Council. He also reported on 4 City street tree limb failures over the period that required emergency contractor response.

5. ACTION ITEMS

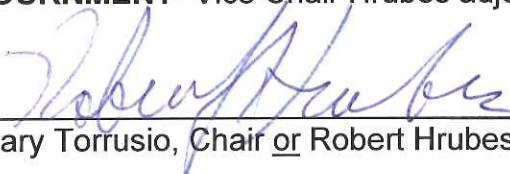
- Approval of the July 8, 2019 meeting minutes: **Moved / Second:** Price / Bleier; unanimous.
- Recommend to City Council the appointment of Robin Mitchell to the UFC: **Moved / Second:** Price / Bleier; unanimous.

6. URBAN FOREST COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES, CALENDAR AND WORK PLAN UPDATE- discussion: how to prioritize tree planting opportunities, develop a tree care corps, organize the work plan form. Cathy Bleier volunteered to draft a work plan discussion summary and to send it to Prée for distribution.

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- 2019/2021 Work Plan refinement
- Possible actions to address community wildfire concerns
- Development of a volunteer corps
- Tree inventory with students
- Tree City USA application
- Tree care presentation (Prée)

8. ADJOURNMENT- Vice Chair Hrubes adjourned the meeting at 9:05 p.m.



Mary Torrusio, Chair or Robert Hrubes, Vice Chair

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the regular Urban Forest Committee meeting of August 12, 2019 as approved by the Urban Forest Committee



Stephen Prée, Staff Liaison