



Staff Liaison
Christina Leard | (510) 215-4338
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AGENDA

REGULAR MEETING OF THE Environmental Quality Committee

Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers
10890 San Pablo Avenue

This Meeting Place is Wheelchair Accessible

7:00 p.m. CONVENE REGULAR MEETING

1. **ROLL CALL** – Chair Howdy Goudey; Vice-Chair Simrun Dhoot; Members Buddy Akacić, Pamela Austin, Fred Bialy, Heather Hayashi, Mark Miner, Sean O'Connor, Seth Shonkoff, Sheila Tarbet, Rose Vekony
2. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC** *(Estimated time: 5 minutes)*
Remarks are typically limited to three minutes per person and may be on anything within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body. Remarks on non-agenda items will be heard first, as well as introduction by individuals interested in serving on the advisory body. Remarks on agenda items will be heard at the time the item is discussed.
3. **COUNCIL/STAFF LIAISONS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS** *(5 min.)*
Staff and/or Council Liaison Carolyn Wysinger may report on policies, priorities, and actions taken by the City Council, and/or on matters of general interest to the EQC.
4. **PUBLIC DRAFT CLIMATE ACTION AND ADAPTATION PLAN (CAAP)** *(95 min.)*
Receive a presentation from Cascadia Consulting Group, participate in discussion and consider a motion recommending City Council adopt the draft Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, with modifications based on feedback heard in the public outreach process.
 - **Please spend 30 minutes reviewing these materials before the meeting:**
 - [Link to public comment of draft CAAP](https://elcerritocaap.konveio.com) (elcerritocaap.konveio.com)
 - [Draft implementation plan](#) (Appendix K)
5. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES** *(5 min.)*
Consider a motion adopting the minutes of the EQC meeting held on February 15, 2024.
6. **EQC BUDGET AND CALENDAR OF EVENTS** *(5 min.)*
Hear updates, participate in discussion, and consider possible action items regarding planning, logistics, and expenditures for the EQC calendar of events, including:
 - Green Team 2024 Cleanups / Broom Pulls:
 - March 16, Saturday, Broom pull w/ Trail Trekkers, HNA Madera Open Space
 - March 24, Sunday, El Cerrito Plaza Bart Station cleanup
 - April 6, Saturday, Broom pull w/ Trail Trekkers. Location TBD
 - April 20, Saturday, Earth Day TBD
 - May 19, Sunday, Broom pull w/ Trail Trekkers. Location TBD
 - June 2, Sunday, Baxter Creek Park cleanup (w/ Baxter volunteers)
 - Aug. 11, Sunday. Northern Gateways Park cleanup
 - Sept. 21, Saturday, Coastal Cleanup Day, Baxter Creek Park (TBD)
 - Oct. 12, Saturday, Northern San Pablo Ave. cleanup
 - Dec. 1, Sunday, Baxter Creek Park (w/ Baxter volunteers)
 - Arbor Week – March 7-14
 - **Earth Day** - April 20, 2024
 - Hillside Festival – May 4 & 5

- Bike to Work Day – May 15

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS (5 min.)

Hear committee member announcements and suggestions for future EQC agenda items. Potentially engage in discussion and make decisions regarding logistics of EQC consideration of items including:

- Elections for Chair and Vice-chair (April 9 meeting)
- Local Road Safety Plan Presentation from City Staff (April 9 meeting)
- Hillside Natural Area (HNA) Fire Resilience and Forest Conservation Management Plan (Joint meeting with UFC – tentatively July)
- An EC Drive Electric Event

8. ADJOURNMENT

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Staff Liaison, Christina Leard, at (510) 215-4338. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title I). Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the members regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at the El Cerrito Recycling + Environmental Resource Center (7501 Schmidt Lane) during normal business hours.



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DRAFT MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF THE Environmental Quality Committee

Thursday, February 15, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers
10890 San Pablo Avenue

This Meeting Place is Wheelchair Accessible

CONVENE REGULAR MEETING Chair Goudey called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

1. **ROLL CALL** – Chair Howdy Goudey; Members Buddy Akacić, Pamela Austin, Fred Bialy, Mark Miner, Sean O'Connor, Sheila Tarbet, Rose Vekony **Absent:** Simrun Dhoot, Paloma Pavel **Also Present:** Christina Leard, Staff Liaison
2. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**
There were no communications from the public.
3. **COUNCIL/STAFF LIAISONS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS**
Staff Liaison Leard announced that the City's new Environmental Specialist, Carlos Hernandez, starts his first day with the City on 2/20/24.
4. **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**
Consider a motion adopting the minutes of the EQC meeting held on January 9, 2024.
Move/Second: O'Connor/Vekony **Action:** Passed a motion to adopt the Minutes of the January 9, 2024 EQC meeting. **Ayes:** unanimous **Noes:** None
5. **COLLABORATION WITH THE URBAN FOREST COMMITTEE**
Urban Forest Committee Member Robin Mitchell gave updates from the recent Urban Forest Committee meeting, including Arbor Week activities.
6. **EQC BUDGET AND CALENDAR OF EVENTS**
Staff and Committee members provided updates on recent events the EQC has supported and discussed plans for future events in 2024, including:
 - Green Team 2024 Cleanups / Broom Pulls:
 - Jan. 20, Saturday, 10am, Broom pull w/ Trail Trekkers, HNA (Debrief)
 - Feb. 17, Saturday, 10am, Broom pull w/ Trail Trekkers, HNA Madera Open Space
 - March 16, Saturday, Broom pull w/ Trail Trekkers. Location TBD
 - ~~March 24~~ **March 17**, Sunday, El Cerrito Plaza Bart Station cleanup (**Date change**)
 - April 6, Saturday, Broom pull w/ Trail Trekkers. Location TBD
 - April 20, Saturday, Earth Day TBD
 - May 19, Sunday, Broom pull w/ Trail Trekkers. Location TBD
 - June 2, Sunday, Baxter Creek Park cleanup (w/ Baxter volunteers)
 - Aug. 11, Sunday. Northern Gateways Park cleanup
 - Sept. 21, Saturday, Coastal Cleanup Day, Baxter Creek Park (TBD)
 - Oct. 12, Saturday, Northern San Pablo Ave. cleanup
 - Dec. 1, Sunday, Baxter Creek Park (w/ Baxter volunteers)
 - Arbor Week – March 7-14
 - **Earth Day** - April 20, 2024; Work parties
 - Member Miner volunteered to assist City with tool distribution & collection at Corp Yard
 - Member Austin is tentative to assist
 - Public Comment: Robin Mitchell agreed to do a plant giveaway with the Garden Network
 - Hillside Festival – May 4 & 5

- Bike to Work Day – May 15
- El Cerrito Ride Electric & Alternative Transportation Event (fall 2024?)
 - Partner with EC/RA Walk & Roll
 - Possible to partner with City? Best time? Upcoming events? Liaison Leard to check with Public Works Director and report back.

7. EQC MEMBER APPOINTMENT PROCESS

EQC members participated in discussion and considered possible action items regarding interviewing and recommending for appointment members to the EQC.

Move/Second: Members Tarbet/O'Connor **Action:** Passed a motion to recommend to City Council that Sean O'Connor, Fred Bialy, Simrun Dhoot, Seth Shonkoff, and Heather Hayashi be appointed to the EQC. **Ayes:** Unanimous **Noes:** None

Members Akacić and Tarbet agreed to interview member Pavel once application submitted.

8. COLLABORATION WITH THE EL CERRITO HIGH SCHOOL ECO CLUB

EQC members heard updates from Member Bialy, participated in discussion and considered possible action items regarding collaborating with the El Cerrito High School Eco Club. Member Bialy provided a summary report to the committee (attached).

9. CLIMATE ACTION AND ADAPTATION PLAN (CAAP)

Staff Liaison Leard reported that the Draft CAAP is planned to be released for public comment in early March, with a presentation provided at the March 12 EQC meeting. She noted that comments will be provided using the online Konveio platform, and that the City is aiming to bring the CAAP for Council consideration in late May.

10. HILLSIDE NATURAL AREA FIRE RESILIENCE AND FOREST CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORT

EQC members received an update from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Hillside Natural Area Fire Resilience And Forest Conservation Management Plan, participated in discussion, and considered possible action items. Member Bialy provided a summary report to the committee (attached).

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Staff and Committee members made announcements and suggestions for future EQC agenda items including:

- Draft CAAP (March 12 meeting)
- Elections for Chair and Vice-chair (April 9 meeting)
- Local Road Safety Plan Presentation from City Staff (April 9 meeting)
- CPUC – Fixed Electric Rate charged by income; AB 1999 (April 9 meeting)
- Hillside Natural Area (HNA) Fire Resilience and Forest Conservation Management Plan (Joint meeting with UFC - July)

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Howdy Goudey, Chair

This is to clarify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Regular Environmental Quality Committee meeting of February 15, 2024 as approved by the Environmental Quality Committee.

Christina Leard, Staff Liaison

El Cerrito High School Eco Club Visit by Fred Bialy

Monday, January 22, I finally had a chance to visit the Eco Club at ECHS. The club meets during their lunch break, between 11:45 and 12:18. I needed to be escorted to the room by Neel Chandran who met me at the school office. We arrived at 11:55.

From the school website:

Eco Club Mission: To learn about animals and their habitats, as well as how to protect them. At each meeting, we plan on discussing prominent issues surrounding animals, and ways to raise awareness or funds to benefit wildlife, through organizations or volunteer work. Our meetings are going to be engaging, and we hope to benefit our community and wildlife.

Club Email: echswildlifewelfareclub@gmail.com

Instagram Handle: @echswildlifewelfareclub

Teacher Sponsor: Ms. Serenity Krieger, Social Sciences (skrieger@wccusd.net)

There were more than 20 students, who were sitting in small groups eating their lunches and talking. Neel introduced me and asked me to talk about the EQC and what is going on in EC presently. I hadn't put together a formal PowerPoint presentation.

I gave a brief history of the EQC's formation, mentioned some general things that we do and more specifically the work that is ongoing right now on the CAAP update and the EC Hillside Natural Area Management Plan development and the EQC's participation in these processes. I talked also about opportunities for participation in clean-ups, broom pulls and the upcoming Bio Blitzes to catalog plant and animal species in the HNA.

I asked the group whether they were involved in any projects and someone mentioned some fundraising they did for helping victims of a recent earthquake. Neel and another female student named Sam were the only ones to interact with me. Eleanor Pilling Chappellear, one of the two students who gave the Climate presentation to the EQC a year ago is a member of the club but was not there that day.

I was there just 20 minutes and was escorted back to the front door of the school by Sam.

I'll append here what I sent to Neel about upcoming volunteer activities. I'll contact Neel with reminders as opportunities approach.

I think that the Bio Blitz events may be of particular interest to the Eco Club. I wonder whether we can facilitate a presentation to the club about these events and an introduction to the iNaturalist application.

Volunteer/Participation opportunities:

1. Green Team / Broom Pulls
 - February 17, Saturday, 10 AM Broom Pull
 - March 24, Sunday, El Cerrito Plaza BART cleanup
 - April 20, Saturday, TBD
 - June 2, Sunday, Baxter Creek Park cleanup
 - August 11, Sunday, Northern Gateways Park cleanup
 - Sept. 21, Saturday, Coastal Cleanup & Baxter Creek Park
 - Oct. 12, Saturday, Northern San Pablo Ave. cleanup
 - Dec. 1, Sunday, Baxter Creek Park cleanup
2. “Bio Blitz” – documentation of native species in the Hillside Natural Area to help efforts to protect native habitats and species. Guided.
 - Led by EC Trail Trekkers (<https://www.ectrailtrekkers.org/>) using iNaturalist (iNat) app (<https://www.inaturalist.org/>)
 - Sometime in February/March
 - April 27-28 to coincide with City Nature Challenge (<https://www.citynaturechallenge.org/>)
3. Earth Day, April 20
4. Hillside Festival, May 4-5

Green Happenings (newsletter): go to E-Newsletter archive (<https://www.el-cerrito.org/1202/E-Newsletter-Archive>) click on latest Green Happenings in El Cerrito (January, 2024) and at top there will be a button to “Join Our Email List”.

Hillside Management Plan Ad Hoc Committee Report

Mission: To study the 2017 El Cerrito Kensington Wildfire Action Plan (2017 Plan), an appendix to the Contra Costa Countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), and extract lessons to help inform development of the Hillside Natural Area Management Plan and specific EQC involvement in its implementation.

Ad Hoc Committee Members: Pamela Austin, Fred Bialy, Mark Miner

Communicated by email and met by Zoom on February 10, 2024

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/637666524e88c826676ef6a3/t/63faa23d44153e5afc882076/1677369938017/CWPP+-+El+Cerrito+Kensington+Wildfire+Action+Plan+2017.pdf>

The goal of the 2017 Plan is “to reduce hazard through increased information and education about wildfires, hazardous fuels reduction, actions to reduce structure ignitability and other recommendations to assist emergency preparedness and fire suppression efforts. Most important, it facilitates a coordinated effort between the various stakeholders.”

After the Executive Summary, an Introduction and a description of the Scope and Purpose, the 2017 Plan is divided into sections:

1. El Cerrito – Kensington information: overview of the two cities and the Plan’s planning process and involved stakeholders
2. Wildfire Hazard and Risk in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI):
 - Wildfire Environment
 - Wildland Urban Interface Risk & Hazard Assessments
 - Strategies for Reducing Risk within the WUI
3. Recommended Action Plan
 - Priorities Selection
 - Information, Education and Collaborative Planning Priorities
 - Suppression and Emergency Preparedness Priorities
4. Prioritizing Hazardous Fuel Reduction Treatments
 - Hazardous Fuels Management
 - Fuel Reduction Treatments & Geographically Based Projects
 - Fuel Reduction Treatments – Related Priorities
 - Environmental Review and Permitting
5. Prioritizing Treatment of Structure Ignitability
 - Structure Ignitability
 - Key Ignition Resistance Factors
 - Improving Structure Survivability in the WUI
 - Retrofitting an Existing Structure for Survivability

6. Sustaining the Plan

- Updates
- Monitoring, Evaluating and Adapting Strategies related to Information, Education, Collaborative Planning, Suppression Capability, Emergency Preparedness, Fuel Reduction and Reducing Structure Ignitability

The 2017 Plan was specifically meant to be a living document to be amended over time as new knowledge and priorities are developed. The HNA Management plan should be similar with annual appendices approved through the EQC and City Council.

NOTE: El Cerrito websites devoted to Fire Hazard Mitigation/Vegetation Management has not been updated since 2020. It's also unclear whether the 2017 plan has been updated/added to since it was written.

Thoughts and actions for the future (Mark Miner):

Priority Action overviews are provided for four of priority activities in the 2017 Plan (from the Executive Summary):

- Support year-round community efforts with education programs regarding wildfire safety and ignition prevention. These should identify inexpensive things a homeowner, contractors and others can do.
- Collaborate with partners (CERT, Neighborhood Watch, Red Cross) to assist community groups in developing neighborhood evacuation plans so residents know what to do in the event of a wildfire.
- Showcase successful treatments of private and public properties for reducing potential for ignition and spread of wildfire.
- Education on home ignitions and training related to retrofit of existing homes and structures to improve their survivability. Identify what can be done without major remodel. Evaluate new technologies, materials and products that are available for retrofit and the pros and cons.

The EQC could host a public meeting covering all four of these priorities.

Use the citizen science approach Susan described in our January meeting to inform our plan over time. I would like the plan to include specifics about how we will weed and prune.

I think there is a building consensus that Bio Blitz activities should inform the Hillside Natural Area plan; exactly how is still being worked out.

Important additional concepts (Mark):

Ecotone - Transition zone between two biological communities where they meet and integrate. Biological diversity can be found in Ecotones, for example between oak woodlands and grasslands.

Foehn Winds - called Diablo Winds in Northern California and Santa Ana Winds in Southern California, Foehn Winds is the scientific name

Ruderal Species - First to colonize disturbed land. Ruderal species can be invasive and take over preventing other plants to ever grow or they can be part of a natural progression. Our state flower, the Golden Poppy is a ruderal species

Suggested actions (Pam):

- Consult with a wildlife restoration specialists or complete extensive research of methods.
- Integrate the HNA with other parks, including a capital improvement budget for trail maintenance and improvements and restoration.
- Designate evacuation routes and implement a communication plan to inform the public.
- Formalize a plan to mobilize volunteers to complete fire prevention tasks, trail maintenance and wildlife restoration activities in the HNA.

The questions that arise (Fred):

1. What city-coordinated vegetation management programs are currently being pursued?
 - The plan recommends: Hire private contractors and CDC crews to maintain and enhance defensible space areas on public land and between natural areas and neighborhoods as funding allows. Is this being done?
 - What priorities have been set by EC public works for vegetation management? What funding opportunities are being pursued?
 - Were prioritized geographic projects undertaken/completed?
2. What volunteer vegetation management programs are currently being coordinated by Stakeholder groups?
 - Urban Forest Committee (UFC) and EQC Green teams are focused on vegetation management (Broom Pulls, anything else)?
 - Trail Trekkers
 - Friends of Five Creeks
 - Baxter Creek Volunteers

- 3 What educational efforts are being undertaken with respect to reducing fire risk from vegetation and structure's features?

Would be helpful to the EQC and residents of El Cerrito to have a mechanism for periodic reports on specific actions taken and progress in achieving the goals and priorities of the 2017 Plan and the Hillside Natural Area Fire Resilience and Forest Conservation Management Plan once it is completed and implemented. Perhaps this is already being done through Green Happenings.

Recommend that the Ad Hoc Subcommittee meet again to evaluate the draft recommendations (once completed) developed by the Management Plan team.

El Cerrito Fire Hazard Reduction Resources (website):

Fire Hazard Mitigation Updates: (focus is on properties in Very High Hazard Severity Zones)
<https://www.el-cerrito.org/1357/Fire-Hazard-Mitigation-Updates>

- Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones: <https://egis.fire.ca.gov/FHSZ/>
- Fire Hazard Reduction guidelines check list: <https://www.el-cerrito.org/DocumentCenter/View/14249/El-Cerrito-checklist>

Vegetation Management in El Cerrito: <https://www.el-cerrito.org/402/Vegetation-Management>

- Vegetation Management Standards: <https://www.el-cerrito.org/DocumentCenter/View/14250/Vegetation-Management-Standards-El-Cerrito>

A Fire Prevention Officer (currently: Traviss Crumpacker) in the El Cerrito Fire Department is responsible for code enforcement, specialized inspections, and coordination of the department's line and staff prevention duties.

Red Flag warnings: <https://www.el-cerrito.org/405/Red-Flag-Warning>. What to do in response to Red Flag warnings: <https://www.el-cerrito.org/DocumentCenter/View/282/Red-Flag-download?bidId=>