

*DRAFT MINUTES OF THE JOINT SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
SUBCOMMITTEE, PLANNING COMMISSION, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION &
URBAN FOREST ADVISORY COMMITTEE – NATIVE PLANT POLICY
TUESDAY, MAY 31, 2022 – 6:00 P.M.
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM*

1. CALL TO ORDER

City Council Subcommittee Member Joy Lyndes called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

2. ROLL CALL

City Council Subcommittee Members Present: Joy Lyndes

City Council Subcommittee Members Absent: Kellie Hinze

City of Encinitas Staff Present: Anna Colamussi, Carter Brown, Crystal Najera, David Norgard, and Erik Steenblock

Environmental Commission Members Present: Ari Novy (Chair), Carol Parker, Katie Cramer, Robert Switzler (joined after roll call was taken), and William Morrison

Environmental Commission Members Absent: Christian Adams (Vice-Chair), Mark O'Connor

Planning Commission Members Present: Kevin Doyle (Vice-Chair) and Susan Sherod

Planning Commission Members Absent: Chris Ryan, Stephen Dalton

Urban Forest Advisory Committee (UFAC) Members Present: Carol Parker, Carol Wolf, and Tony Gurnoe

Urban Forest Advisory Committee (UFAC) Members Absent: Brian Bishop and Mark Jenne (Chair)

3. AGENDA ITEM

3A. DISCUSSION ON A NATIVE PLANT POLICY

City Council Subcommittee Member Lyndes presented a power point presentation that summarized the main discussion points from the first joint special meeting and outlined the task level goals that the Subcommittee hopes to achieve.

TASK #1: Identify “what are natives?” Do we want to include a secondary plant palette?

Chair Novy suggested referencing or using lists that already exist to help define a native plant policy. Novy highlighted the California Native Plant Society and the San Diego Native Plant Atlas as curated lists from reputable organizations that would be good resources. Novy suggested using a broad geographic range to define native, such as allowing San Diego County natives rather than limiting the range to just Encinitas.

UFAC Member Gurnoe suggested that it may be beneficial to include a secondary plant palette that includes preferred plants that are not considered native to San Diego County but can perform well in a place like Encinitas.

Commissioner Sherod voiced concern over catering to plants that are not native with a secondary palette. Sherod emphasized the importance of preserving existing natives and requiring natives to be planted with new developments.

Commissioner Cramer suggested including drought tolerant plant species in conjunction with natives.

Chair Novy encouraged using San Diego County as the geographic basis for defining a native plant within Encinitas for simplicity’s sake.

TASK #2: Stewardship → Maintenance of plants, chemicals, integrated pest management, implementation, and installation

Chair Novy suggested that it might be easiest to focus on an outcome-based strategy. This could mean making sure that new developments stick to their approved plans in the months to years after initial development. This would best ensure that the community sees the benefits of a growing native plant landscape. Novy highlighted a document produced by the San Diego County Water Authority titled Sustainable Landscape Guidelines. Their guidelines offer a glimpse into how management practices could be implemented.

Commissioner Sherod argued that we should not limit any stewardship timelines, but rather have them enforced in perpetuity.

Council Member Lyndes provided insight into how a landscape architect is typically responsible for monitoring implementation up until installation. After that, many developments have varied contract lengths with contractors who maintain the landscape. Lyndes questioned if the City has enforcement potential beyond installation and an initial period.

City Staff Colamussi responded that there is some precedent for the City being able to enforce sustained implementation with developments or projects that go through a review process.

TASK #3: Rainwater harvesting, storm water capture, recreating and restoring natural ecosystems to benefit plants

Commissioner Morrison suggested that a native plant policy could be tied into the City's storm water ordinance to benefit the goals of both.

City Staff Steenblock provided background on the City's storm water ordinance for new developments and agreed with Commissioner Morrison that it could be valuable to tie policy together.

Commissioner/UFAC Member Parker agreed that there is a good opportunity to benefit storm water best management practices (BMPs) such as water retention basins by including native plants in their design.

TASK #4: Objective permitting, fees, existing codes that need updating, and the City's role in a native plant policy

Vice-Chair Doyle suggested that this task should be discussed at a later meeting once more direction is provided. Doyle mentioned that there are currently not many places in the City's municipal code that state, "native plants."

Commissioner Morrison provided an anecdote of the difficulty for both developers and City staff in reviewing plans to ensure requirements are met.

Council Member Lyndes suggested looking into providing incentives.

TASK #5: Preservation

UFAC Member Gurnoe shared a story about a resident who did not realize they had the federally endangered Del Mar Manzanita growing in their backyard. Gurnoe suggested using outreach as part of a native plant policy to help people that are already stewarding native species in their landscapes. Gurnoe mentioned that the City could set up an iNaturalist initiative project as an outreach method. This could spread awareness that would encourage the preservation of existing native plants.

TASK #6: Public Property → Policy recommendations for roads, parks, public facilities, City owned open space areas, and HOA's with open space easements

Commissioner Cramer presented a power point for this task. The presentation highlighted major issues and several recommendations. Relevant municipal codes were brought up that

might require updating or changing to help facilitate a native plant policy. Cramer suggested a policy that considers the different types of public land separately.

UFAC Member Gurnoe agrees that a policy should be clear about the different land types and how they might be managed. Gurnoe also highlighted that by adopting the Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP), some of the goals that a native plant policy might achieve would likely be met.

Council Member Lyndes provided background on what a MHCP is, and what it is meant to do.

TASK #7: Design → Where do native plants do well and where are they key to creating wildlife benefits? Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP)

Commissioner Cramer presented a power point for this task. The presentation emphasized utilizing priority areas that are already identified in MHCP. Cramer recommended that the SanGIS database could help determine which native plant species are most appropriate for different areas of Encinitas. Cramer also highlighted that MHCP could be used to help determine some priority areas where native plants are needed and could thrive.

City Staff Colamussi shared the City's current process for using existing data and maps in the discretionary review process.

TASK #8: Commercial availability of native plants → identifying possible hurdles

UFAC Member Gurnoe cautioned that there is only one production for retail native plant nursery in San Diego County which is why they are advocating a broader plant palette approach. Gurnoe also mentioned that it might be valuable to bring the Nature Collective into this process. Gurnoe brought up that some of the native plants in Encinitas require a significant investment in the horticultural process which creates another hurdle for nurseries.

Commissioner/UFAC Member Parker suggested that it might be beneficial to have a representative from a local nursery be involved in the process as it moves forward.

Chair Novy brought up some of the challenges that the County had when trying to engage local nurseries in a similar native plant policy ordinance. There is a real economic concern for nurseries if they were to limit their inventory based on what plants are native or not.

Commissioner Switzler added that increasing interest in native plants through a policy might help create more of a demand that would in turn incentivize local nurseries to provide more natives.

TASK #9: Education and Outreach

Commissioner Switzler shared a detailed spreadsheet about ways that the City can get the community involved in a native plant policy through education and outreach. It detailed a rough two-year plan. Switzler suggested that it is crucial for any outreach to appeal to the average resident.

Commissioner/UFAC Member Parker mentioned that they are working with UFAC Member Wolf to think of additional outreach ideas.

TASK #10: Policy for removing natives and/or culturally significant trees → Reuse & Repurpose

Commissioner Sherod shared a presentation on this task. Sherod discussed the need for considerations for protected status, moving, reuse by transplantation and repurpose of trees. Sherod emphasized that trees and shrubs over a certain height should be prohibited or protected from removal for certain California native species.

Vice-Chair Doyle shared some local success stories of ways that wood from local trees has been repurposed within the community. Doyle also emphasized the importance of trying to keep locally grown trees within the community and repurposing as much of a removed tree as possible.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mark Wisniewski spoke about their involvement in planting the original corridor of trees along Coast Highway 101. Mark also highlighted how many of the native trees are very large (i.e., Torrey Pine) which poses an issue since many commercial and city projects don't allow for large trees. Mark cautioned that to achieve some of the City's climate action goals, there will likely need to be an allowance to plant non-native trees that fit better into certain areas such as parking lots and street right-of-ways.

Bruce Ehlers asked that the presentations from the joint special meeting be made available to the public. Bruce also pointed out a potential way to better define open space regulations and offered their availability to continue helping with research for the native plant policy.

Amy Freeman voiced some concerns regarding rules for landscaping on future developments. Amy concluded by echoing that the policy should be kept simple and doable to allow people not as familiar with natives to enter the space.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Lyndes provided a brief recap of the meeting and established the goals for the third and final meeting that will take place in approximately a month. The joint special meeting will need to narrow down their policy goals to present to City staff.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 P.M.

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