



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 18, 2018

The Environmental Commission convened in a public meeting on Wednesday, July 18, 2018 at City Hall in Council Chambers at 301 W. 2nd Street, Austin, Texas 78701.

Commissioners in Attendance:

**Brian Smith
Andrew Creel
Pam Thompson
Peggy Maceo
Hank Smith
Linda Guerrero
Wendy Gordon**

Commissioners Absent:

**Katie Coyne
Mary Ann Neely
Marisa Perales**

Staff in Attendance:

**Heather Chaffin
Kaela Champlin
Jameson Courtney
Sara Hartley
Chris Herrington
Scott Hiers
Matt Hollon
Jose Guerrero
Nick Kincaid
Chuck Lesniak
Lynne Lightsey
Karl McArthur
Mike McDougal
Mike Personett
Atha Phillips
Sherri Sirwaitis**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Guerrero called the meeting to order at 6:05 P.M.

2. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

Speakers should sign up to speak prior to the meeting being called to order; you will receive a three-minute allotment to discuss topics not posted on the agenda.

Speakers

**William Nalle
Christie Nalle**

Roy Waley

3. EDUCATION

- a. None

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND ACTION

- a. Approve the minutes of the regular Environmental Commission meeting of June 20, 2018
(5 minutes)

The minutes of the regular Environmental Commission meeting of June 20, 2018 were approved on Commissioner H. Smith's motion, Commissioner Creel's second on a 7-0 vote. Commissioners Perales, Neely and Coyne were absent.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICER'S UPDATE ON PAST COMMISSION ACTIONS AND REPORT ON ITEMS OF INTEREST

- a. Final Thoughts

Item conducted as posted. No action taken.

Chuck Lesniak – Final Remarks to the Environmental Commission, July 18, 2018

So tonight is my last Environmental Commission meeting as Environmental Officer and executive liaison to the Commission.

In many ways, this job has been my dream job, and what I've worked towards most of my professional life, whether I knew it or not. When you're early in your career you're just glad to have a job in your chosen field, or at least that was the case for me. I wasn't thinking much about 20 years down the road.

Working with the commission has been one of the best things about my job. Environmental activism and engagement is why I went into this field to begin with and you guys, as volunteers, represent that activism, engagement, and public service. I get paid to be here, y'all do this on your time and I hope you know how much I appreciate the sacrifice of yours and your family's time.

As I go out the door, I want to offer some thoughts for y'all to consider. As Environmental Officer, my charge in the City Code is to ensure that environmental protection is given the highest priority in public and private development. As I see it, that is very much the charge of the Environmental Commission as well.

I believe that role for the Commission is more important than it's been in many years, maybe ever. Until recently, on almost any issue one of the first, if not the first, thing out of anyone's mouth when any issue came up, was, "What are the environmental ramifications of that policy/issue/project, etc."

But things seemed to have changed a bit. Many of the old environmental guard isn't around anymore and we've got so many new folks in town. There seems to be an assumption that, in terms of environmental quality, Austin has always been this way and always will be this way. I think many of those new residents may not understand the work, the blood, sweat, and tears that it took over the last 30 to 40 years to preserve Austin's environment and make Austin what it is today.

Today, it seems the first concerns for people and policymakers are "affordability" or "density" or "neighborhood preservation". And I understand why, the regular folks, the musicians, service workers, students, city employees and others have been priced out of the City because of the demand to live in Austin. But the one of the primary reasons people want to live in Austin is its natural beauty.

So our challenge, as environmental advocates, is to be more proactive and make sure that the policymakers continue to prioritize environmental protection. Y'all can do and say things that we, as staff, sometimes can't. And probably for good reason.

Historically, the Environmental Commission has been a key advocate for developing new and better environmental policies and regulations. The Water Treatment Plant 4 Environmental Commissioning concept came from the Environmental Board. The Board advocated for the City to go all in on opposing the Longhorn Pipeline. And there have been many other environmental initiatives that started right here, with this Board.

I encourage you, as Commissioners, to get more engaged with your Council members, their staff, and your districts. Don't let them forget that we could easily lose what we have and once an environment is degraded it's very difficult to ever get it back. Yes, we need affordable housing and more density, but it has to happen in an environmentally sustainable way. Ask hard questions of your Council and of staff. We need you to do that, even if it may make us a bit crazy from time to time.

So I'll wrap up simply by saying thank you for your service and allowing me to serve you. It's been one of the great honors of my career. Now let's get back to work!

6. STAFF BRIEFINGS*

- a. None

7. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

- a. Presentation on the Circuit of the Americas Planned Unit Development Assessment (CD-2018-0004)—Sherri Sirwaitis, Planner, Planning and Zoning Department and Chuck Lesniak, Environmental Officer, Watershed Protection Department

Item conducted as posted. No action taken.

- b. Presentation on the 218 South Lamar Planned Unit Development Assessment (CD-2018-0003)—Heather Chaffin, Planner, Planning and Zoning Department and Chuck Lesniak, Environmental Officer, Watershed Protection Department

Item conducted as posted. No action taken.

8. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND POSSIBLE ACTION

- a. Discuss and consider amendments to Title 25 of the City Code to modify the floodplain regulations based on the National Weather Service's Atlas 14 rainfall intensity study—Kevin Shunk, Watershed Engineering Division Manager, Watershed Protection Department

Item conducted as posted. No action taken.

Speakers

Craig Nazer

Roy Waley

- b. **Name:** 1300 Dittmar (SP-2016-0330C) (D-5)

Applicant: Gabe Bruehl, PE, KBGE

Location: 1322 W Dittmar Road, Austin, TX 78745

Staff: Mike McDougal, Environmental Program Coordinator, Development Services Department, City of Austin

Watershed: South Boggy Creek and Williamson Creek

Request: Variance request is as follows: 1. A variance to allow the construction of a private drive across the Critical Water Quality Zone (LDC 25-8-261)

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends approval with conditions

Reasons for Recommendation: The findings of fact have been met.

A motion to close the public hearing was approved on Commissioner H. Smith's motion, Commissioner Creel's second on a 7-0 vote. Commissioners Perales, Neely and Coyne were absent.

A motion to approve the variance request for construction of a private drive across a critical water quality zone was approved with conditions on Commissioner H. Smith's motion, Commissioner Thompson's second on a 7-0 vote. Commissioners Perales, Neely and Coyne were absent.

9. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. Urban Growth Policy and Water Quality Protection Committee – Marisa Perales, Pam Thompson, Hank Smith, Linda Guerrero, and Wendy Gordon
- b. Development Committee – Marisa Perales, Pam Thompson, Hank Smith, Katie Coyne, and Wendy Gordon
- c. Air Quality Committee – Mary Ann Neely, Pam Thompson, and Wendy Gordon
- d. Urban Forestry Committee – Peggy Maceo, Pam Thompson, Linda Guerrero, Mary Ann Neely, and Wendy Gordon
- e. Drainage Infrastructure and Flood Mitigation Committee – Marisa Perales, Pam Thompson, Mary Ann Neely, Hank Smith, and Brian Smith
Commissioner Guerrero gave an update on the Drainage Infrastructure and Flood Mitigation Committee.
- i. Report on the Joint Sustainability Committee – Katie Coyne
- j. Report from Mary Ann Neely on the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan Citizen's Advisory Committee
- k. Report on the Joint Committee of the Environmental Commission and Parks and Recreation Board – Mary Ann Neely, Peggy Maceo, Linda Guerrero, and Pam Thompson
- l. Report on the South Central Waterfront Advisory Board – Linda Guerrero
- m. Other reports from Commissioners

10. NEW BUSINESS – Future agenda items

- a. Update on administrative removal of trees
- b. Request for a briefing on information about the Shoal Creek landslide
- c. Request for information about slopes
- d. Erosion control issues in neighborhoods

11. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Guerrero adjourned the meeting at 8:06 PM

The City of Austin is committed to compliance with the American with Disabilities Act. Reasonable modifications and equal access to communications will be provided upon request. Meeting locations are planned with wheelchair access. If requiring Sign Language Interpreters or alternative formats, please give notice at least 2 days before the meeting date. For additional information, please call **Kaela Champlin**, Watershed Protection Department, at (512) 974-3443; TTY users route through Relay Texas at 711. For more information on the Environmental Commission, please contact **Kaela Champlin**, Watershed Protection Department, at (512) 974-3443.

** A member of the public may not address a board or commission at a meeting on an item posted as a briefing, per City Code Sec-144(E).*