



Public Works Department

# MINUTES

## REGULAR MEETING OF THE URBAN FOREST COMMITTEE

**Monday March 11, 2019 7:00 p.m.**  
**El Cerrito City Hall**  
Hillside Conference Room  
10890 San Pablo Avenue

### 1. Roll Call :

**Present:** Chair Steve Price, Vice Chair Mary Torrusio, Members, Cathy Bleier Robert Hrubes, Yan Linhart, Mike Srago.

Also present; City Council Liaison Gabriel Quinto; members of the public Paul Duncan, Sandra Sprague, Mark Mandell; Staff Liaison, Stephen Prée.

**2. Committee Member Announcements and changes to the agenda:** Vice Chair Mary Torrusio announced an El Cerrito Historical Society event “El Cerrito’s Urban Forest, Past, Present and Future” a presentation by Ralph Boniello on March 31, in the Arlington Park Clubhouse. Chair Price thanked the Vice Chair, he and Ms. Bleier commented that prior notification from either the Historic Society or from Mr. Boniello, directly to the UFC, would have been appropriate.

**3. Comments from the Public on non-agenda items:** Paul Duncan reported that “Make El Cerrito Fire Safe” has been active coordinating with similar groups in Kensington, Berkeley and EBRPD; they have spoken with County Supervisor John Gioia and have met with the El Cerrito Fire Department to try to maximize fire prevention funding from California state government in Sacramento. A discussion followed in which Robert Hrubes asked Mr. Duncan to name the top actions that he would like to see: Duncan- reduce fuel loads in the Quarry Hill Eucalyptus Grove; discussion regarding 100’ residential buffer zone, Delta Crew work, burn piles; removal of all Eucalyptus with native tree species replacements; Chair Price requested that the El Cerrito Fire Department come speak to the UFC at the next opportunity. The UFC agreed that a course of action may be warranted after learning more from ECFD and others.

**4. Council / Staff Liaisons announcements and reports:** City Council Liaison Quinto introduced himself as an El Cerrito native, with a beloved native Oak tree in his yard. He described his history as a board member of the Sierra Club local chapter and his discussions with various legislators in Sacramento to ensure fire safety in El Cerrito. Councilman Quinto described himself as an advocate for urban forestry, he encouraged the UFC to plant more trees and relayed his favorable experience with the California Urban Forest Council, he said that the UFC needs the support of Cal Fire. He thanked Mr. Duncan for attending and speaking at the meeting and said that he is making fire safety a top priority as he participates in the League of Cities and the Contra Costa Mayors Association. The Councilman expressed his regret that the Arbor Week Proclamation was not given its due during the February 19 City Council meeting but noted that the cause was the over flowing public attendance and comment

period for a tenant's rights ordinance reading. The UFC and Mr. Quinto discussed the professional expertise required to prune trees and the need for additional City resources to address this; the management of non-native species in Canyon Trail and other parks; the false claim of reduced insurance coverage for "high fire risk areas", and the excellent work that ECFD does to help El Cerrito remain compliant with fuel reduction standards.

Liaison Prée announced that he would not be able to attend the regularly scheduled UFC meeting on April 8 due to a personal matter and he requested that the meeting be rescheduled to April 15; Hrubes made a motion to reschedule, 2<sup>nd</sup> Srago, unanimous.

**5. Action Items-** A motion to adopt the minutes from the February 11, 2019 meeting was made by Yan Linhart; 2<sup>nd</sup> Mike Srago, motion passed unanimously.

**6. Urban Forest Committee activities, calendar and work plan update—**

- A. Arbor Week 2019 – Chair Price reported that both events: March 9 in the Quarry Hill Eucalyptus Grove, and March 10 in Poinsett Park, were cancelled due to rain. The Committee agreed to reschedule the Quarry Hill work day to the City's Earth Day celebration on April 13, and the Poinsett Park Tree planting to March 24. Cathy Bleier asked the members of Make El Cerrito Fire Safe that were present if they could get involved with the April 13 Quarry Hill Work Day- Paul Duncan indicated affirmatively that they would. Ms. Bleier and Ms. Torrusio discussed writing a brief summary of the Arbor Week events for release to the public. Prée said that he would be planting a tree with the Madera afterschool kindergarten program on March 13, in recognition of Arbor Week.
- B. 2019/2021 Work Plan- Prée distributed copies of the 2016-2018 Work Plan. The Committee discussed the completion of various goals and objectives and potential work for the next term, including tree planting, grant applications, community outreach, educational component in UFC meetings, fire safety education, etc.. Ms. Bleier volunteered to draft a new work plan for UFC review.

**7. Future agenda items-**

- El Cerrito Fire Department Presentation
- Ordinance Review
- Friends of El Cerrito Trees- Ann Thrupp
- Recruitment Strategies

**8. Old/New Business – none**

**Adjournment- 9:10**