



**Staff Liaison**  
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**MINUTES**  
**REGULAR MEETING OF THE**  
**Urban Forest Committee**  
**Monday August 9, 2021, 7:00 p.m.**  
**VIA TELECONFERENCE**  
<https://zoom.us/j/97043572002?pwd=a2N5UURTSDFEK2F2NzMxMGNmakhCUT09>  
**Meeting ID: 970 4357 2002 Passcode 195250**  
**or dial in: 1-408-638-0968**

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**CONVENE REGULAR MEETING:** Chair Mitchell called the meeting to order at 7:09 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL:**

Present: Chair Robin Mitchell, Vice Chair Robert Hrubes; Members, Cathy Bleier, Cassie Hughes, Jennifer Kaczor.

Also present: Staff Liaison Stephen Prée, members of the public: Jim Cunradi, Melissa Feudi, Susan Kuchinskas, Sue Duncan.

Absent: Yan Linhart. Also absent: Mayor Pro Tem Quinto.

**2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC:** Sue Duncan clarified that her previous comments questioning the value of the City planting new trees was related to City budget constraints and layoffs. She also reported that residents had met with City Management, ECFD and others to explore fire hazard reduction grants and are writing to Representative Skinner and Supervisor Gioia regarding formation of a JPA for wildfire preparedness. Cassie Hughes inquired about Make El Cerrito Fire Safe.

**3. COMMITTEE MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS /CHANGES TO THE MEETING AGENDA:**

Chair Mitchell reported on her attendance to the Santa Clara County Regional Urban Forest Collaboration webinar. Cathy Bleier reported that she had attended the July 20 El Cerrito City Council meeting presentation on wildfire prevention.

**4. COUNCIL / STAFF LIAISONS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS-**

Staff Liaison Prée summarized recent progress with City tree pruning contracts including hazard tree removal, fire fuel reduction and routine pruning.

**5. ACTION ITEMS-** Motion to adopt the minutes from the July 9 UFC meeting: Vice Chair Hrubes; 2<sup>nd</sup>: Bleier, with revision to include HNA vegetation management discussion. Ayes: unanimous; Noes: none, Abstentions: none

**6. PRESENTATION: Tree City USA Growth Awards Program -** Staff Liaison Prée reviewed the Tree City USA Growth Award requirements from the TCUSA [website](#).

## 7. URBAN FOREST COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES, CALENDAR AND WORK PLAN UPDATE:

- A. **UFC applicants discuss individual backgrounds, skills and what they hope to do for and with the Committee:** Susan Kuchinskas described her work in professional writing, content strategy and website redesign. She is a practicing beekeeper, humanist, and has interest in global charity. She wishes to increase habitat for pollinators, provide education to homeowners, and work to protect private heritage trees, she wants to increase education and outreach. Melissa Feudi, relayed to the UFC her training and professional work in branding and graphic design, photography, and video editing. Her interests include local ecology and native plants; she wishes to weave together these interests to serve the UFC and rally people together in community engagement and ecological restoration.
- B. **Urban Forestry Grants-** Ad-hoc committee members Hrubes, Kaczor and Mitchell presented an outline of potential objectives, next steps, brainstorming ideas, and grant opportunities. Discussion followed regarding relevance to UFC work plan, and prioritizing grant goals, especially to identify and develop feasible project objectives. Ads-hoc will meet again and present more on this for discussion in future meetings.
- C. **Tree Board University- Course Three: Engaging in the Political Process.** Chair Mitchell recognized the value of understanding what actions other agencies and advisory bodies are taking, e.g., Alliance for Community Trees and has started a list of similar UF agencies. Cathy Bleier talked about the need to understand the El Cerrito city budget process and to form relationships with City Council members to work locally toward UF goals. Mitchell expressed interest in the role of the City's UF manager in relation to master plans and budgets and thinks the UFC could have more influence. The Committee recognized the need to develop an "an elevator pitch" to describe what the UFC does and why it is important to the community. Bleier cited City plans that the UFC has influenced in the past.
- D. **Update Work Plan-** Jennifer Kaczor recommended developing an elevator pitch and to capitalize on TCUSA and TCUSA Growth Awards. Discussion: collaborate with other agencies, keep goals specific and realistic. Vice Chair Hrubes volunteered to attend the City of Richmond Urban Forest Advisory Committee.

## 8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Brown Act training
- Grant funding
- HNA Planning

- Tree City USA Growth Awards
- Tree Board University

**9. NEXT MONTH'S CITY COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE ASSIGNMENTS**

- EQC meeting – no discussion
- PRC meeting – no discussion

**10. ADJOURNMENT-** Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

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Robin Mitchell, 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 9, 2021, as approved by the Urban Forest Committee.

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Stephen Prée, Staff Liaison