

**MINUTES**  
**Commission on the Environment**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**February 17, 2021**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioners Present: Michelle Beritzhoff-Law, Bryce Ebrahimian, Meredith Keet, Peter Wilk  
Commissioners Absent: Cathlin Atchison, Margaux Keiser  
City Staff Present: Steve Jesberg, Danielle Uharriet

**WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

None

**OTHER BUSINESS**

1. Elect Chair and Vice-Chair

Peter Wilk was unanimously elected Chair (Beritzhoff-Law/Keet)  
Meredith Keet was unanimously elected Vice-Chair (Wilk/Beritzhoff-Law)

2. 2021 Meeting Schedule

The Commission unanimously agreed to meet monthly to accomplish work plan goals, and then reduce meetings to every other month.

Proposed monthly schedule on the third Wednesday at 6:00PM

March 17, 2021

April 21, 2021

May 19, 2021

June 16, 2021

July 21, 2021

August 18, 2021

September 15, 2021

October 20, 2021

November 17, 2021

December 15, 2021

3. Work Plan

**#1 Compostable and Biodegradable Take Out Materials**

Peter Wilk stated that the Planning Commission recently approved a use permit for mobile food service at the Capitola Mall. Permit conditions require the food vendors comply with the city ordinance for environmentally acceptable packaging materials. Peter suggested the Commission continue developing an informational guide/leaflet for restaurants and food vendors about Capitola food packaging regulations.

Meredith Keet supported continuing to working on educating and informing the restaurants and food vendors about the city's ordinance and to establish enforcement guidance. Meredith suggested offering informational assistance to businesses to seek more cost-effective food packaging options.

Michelle Beritzhoff-Law stated the ordinance is a valuable tool for the city; and suggested clarifying the enforcement fee structure for implementation. She also suggested providing clear information about the proper disposal of to go containers.

Meredith Keet stated the BIA has been discussing new signage to clearly mark the appropriate container for each type of waste: trash, recycling, compostable.

## **#2 Soquel Creek/Peery Park Riparian Restoration**

Staff commented that 100% of the work permitted by Fish and Wildlife has been completed; maintenance is ongoing. Expansion of invasive species removal/riparian restoration area will require a proposal, permitting and funding.

Peter Wilk noted the Rispin Park Plan has been moving forward; and suggested expanding the invasive species removal/riparian restoration area to the lower bank of Soquel Creek below Rispin Park. He suggested using the Community Development Department Tree Fund to finance the project.

Michelle Beritzhoff-Law supported the expansion of the invasive species removal/riparian restoration area to tie into the Rispin Park project.

Steve Jesberg commented the tree fund could be used to hire George McMenamin to prepare a project proposal, but adequate funds are not available to initiate the work. There may be Regional Conservation District grants available for the work.

## **#3 Climate Action Plan (CAP)**

Peter Wilk commented there was a lot of effort by the previous Community Development Director (CDD) to identify specific reduction measures for ongoing implementation to achieve the goals of the CAP. Peter suggested staff give a presentation on the status of the CAP.

Michelle Beritzhoff-Law stated ongoing implementation of CAP reduction measures should be a priority item. Michelle inquired on the status of the Pure Water Soquel Project and the role it may play in the CAP process.

Steve Jesberg stated the Community Development Department is responsible for the implementation of the CAP. The City of Capitola has met the CAP goals through participation in the legislation that formed the Monterey Bay Community Power/Community Choice Aggregation. The Pure Water Soquel project can be incorporated into the CAP update.

Peter Wilk stated the CAP is a generalized document with goals to develop and meet reduced carbon emissions, exceed established green building plans, and create a local bike plan.

Meredith Keet suggested the Commission receive a CAP update presentation before proceeding the further plans to implement goals.

Michelle Beritzhoff-Law advocated educating the COE before adding more work items.

## **#4 Heritage Tree Investigation**

Peter Wilk provided a brief background for a new work item pertaining to the tree ordinance. He stated the existing tree ordinance mentions a Heritage Tree Fund but there is not a list of heritage trees. He suggested development of a heritage tree list could enrich the community by preserving significant trees by maintaining valuable trees in Capitola on private property. He recommended the COE review the tree ordinance and suggest modifications, including highlighting specific trees for inclusion in a heritage tree listing to the Community Development Department. Additionally, the COE could assist with the research and re-writing the tree ordinance. Peter stated that a list of heritage trees for

preservation would be a helpful tool for the Planning Commission to evaluate tree removal permits. He suggested a heritage tree list like the historic homes list.

Michelle Beritzhoff-Law inquired about the problematic nature of the existing ordinance and what existing city data is available to begin researching significant trees in Capitola. Michelle agreed to adding the item to the work plan at an investigative and information gathering stage.

Meredith Keet commented the COE could recommend guidance principals, such as species and size for consideration when listing a heritage tree.

#### #5 Composting Investigation

Meredith Keet commented there is a lack of composting opportunities for businesses and residents. Because of COVID-19, the increase of take-out business is significant and most of the compostable restaurant ware is thrown into the recycling or trash. Meredith recommended the COE explore available options and strategize about ways to encourage composting.

Steve Jesberg stated currently there is no place within Santa Cruz County to take compostable material. However, on July 1<sup>st</sup> Greenwaste, under the State mandate, will be allowing residential food waste in the green bins. Staff will inform the COE when the City Council will be reviewing the item.

Peter Wilk stated the approved use permit for the food trucks at Capitola Mall include conditions requiring all to go food ware to be compostable, but the reality is there is no place to compost. Peter supported better signage for trash and recycling bins.

Meredith Keet stated proper bin signage is not clear for users. The BIA is working on a revised signage plan for the bins.

#### Native Milkweed Campaign

Past Commission actions included developing an informational flyer, adding the information to the city website, and creating plan to distribute packets of donated native milkweed seeds.

Meredith Keet commented that the milkweed campaign should be considered a sub-work item under a larger work category. Michelle Beritzhoff-Law concurred that the Commission should consider how the milkweed campaign fits into a wider category of the environment, or potential to be incorporated into a larger work item. Peter Wilk suggested placing this item on hold until Cat Atchison is available to discuss the progress further. The Commission unanimously concurred.

#### 4. Gas Powered Leaf Blower Ban

Michelle Beritzhoff-Law stated several city's currently bans gas powered leaf blowers. Additional information is needed to consider how other jurisdictions enforce the blower ban.

Peter Wilk inquired about why gas-powered leaf blowers are an issue in Capitola and if there have been several complaints to raise this as a problem?

Meredith Keet inquired about the environmental impact of gas-powered leaf blowers and the effects on the blower operator.

Steve Jesberg responded a city council member had received a complaint. Gas powered leaf blowers impact emissions blow particulate material into the air.

Peter Wilk requested comparison information on the emissions impacts from gas powered leaf blowers, gas powered mowers, gas powered tree/hedge trimmers and similar gas-powered equipment.

Michelle Beritzhoff-Law supported reviewing comparative data to evaluate the various impacts of gas-powered equipment and the efficiency of battery powered equipment. She commented there is pollution created by expired batteries.

Staff will bring back comparative information on various gas-powered equipment including emission and noise data.

**ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**

Work plan items

Gas-powered equipment information

**ADJOURNMENT** to a Regular meeting on March 17, 2021

Approved at the meeting of March 17, 2021