



***ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
REGULAR CALLED MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, August 2, 2023***

The ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION convened in a REGULAR meeting on Wednesday, August 2, 2023, at 6310 Wilhelmina Delco Drive in Austin, Texas.

Chair Ramberg called the Environmental Commission Meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Commissioners in Attendance: Kevin Ramberg, Perry Bedford, Jennifer Bristol, Hanna Cofer, Peter Einhorn, Haris Qureshi, David Sullivan

Commissioners in Attendance Remotely: Richard Brimer, Melinda Schiera

Commissioners Absent: Colin Nickells, Mariana Krueger

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve the minutes of the Environmental Commission Regular Meeting on July 5, 2023
The minutes from the meeting of July 5, 2023 were approved on Commissioner Bedford's motion, Commissioner Ramberg's second on a 9-0 vote. Commissioners Krueger and Nickells were absent.

DISCUSSION

2. New Environmental Commission member welcome and introduction
Item conducted as posted. No action taken.
3. Update on Environmental Commission Annual Report—Kevin Ramberg, Environmental Commission Chair
Item conducted as posted. No action taken.

STAFF BRIEFINGS

4. Staff briefing on Austin's Blackland Prairie ecoregion study recommendations and follow-up actions—Ana Gonzalez, Division Manager, Watershed Protection, and Valerie Tamburri, Ben Bertram, Tree Folks
Item conducted as posted. No action taken.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

5. Presentation, discussion, and possible action regarding a recommendation on the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) Land Management Guide for parkland natural areas – Amanda Ross, Division Manager, and Matt McCaw, Program Manager, PARC

Speakers:

Amanda Ross, Parks and Recreation Department

Matt McCaw, Parks and Recreation Department

Elizabeth McGreevy

Roy Waley, Sierra Club

Sherri Kuhl, Austin Water

Kimberlee Harvey, Austin Water

A motion to recommend the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) Climate Vulnerability Analysis and Management Strategies was made on Commissioner Bristol's motion, Commissioner Ramberg's second.

Commissioner Brimer's amendment to add "using the best technology of the time, prescribed burn notification should go to all residents within a mile of the burn and within 30 days; with specific burn date notification happening within 3 days depending on weather" failed when it was not seconded.

Commissioner Cofer's amendments to "Incorporate additional ways to improve soil health and increase ground hydration in future associated work plans, ensure work plans include measurable monitoring efforts to detect and correct for any adverse effects of management activities such as prescribed burns and tree thinning, and remove use of toxic herbicides except to control invasive, non-native species, identify alternatives for pesticide application, and consider additions to the 2017 PARC Integrated Pest Management Plan that take sensitive karst features into consideration," seconded by Commissioner Sullivan, were added to the original motion with no opposition. Commissioners Krueger and Nickells were absent.

Commissioner Bristol's motion with Commissioner Cofer's amendments passed on a 8-0 vote. Commissioner Brimer abstained. Commissioners Krueger and Nickells were absent.

Chair Ramberg called for a recess at 8:57 pm.

Chair Ramberg reconvened the meeting 9:05 pm.

6. Discussion and possible action regarding a recommendation to Austin City Council to eliminate parking on the Zilker Park Polo Field and expand the Zilker Park Shuttle – Requested and presented by Commissioner Brimer

A motion to extend the meeting until 10:15 P.M. was approved on Commissioner Ramberg's motion, Commissioner Bedford second on a 8-0 vote. Commissioner Bristol recused. Commissioners Krueger and Nickells were absent.

A motion to postpone this item until a near future meeting to coordinate with PARD and better understand the cause and effects of closing the Polo Field passed on Commissioner Ramberg's motion, Commissioner Einhorn's second, on a 8-0 vote. Commissioner Bristol recused. Commissioners Krueger and Nickells were absent.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

7. Urban Forestry Committee – Richard Brimer (Committee Chair), Colin Nickells, and Melinda Schiera
8. Report on the Joint Sustainability Committee – Haris Qureshi (member) and Richard Brimer (alternate member)

Commissioner Qureshi brought the Joint Sustainability Committee motion recommending that: “the offices of Sustainability, Resilience, Equity, and Civil Rights remain independent and autonomous offices that report directly to the Office of the City Manager” to the attention of the commission and asked that commissioners reach out to Mayor or Council if they agree.

9. Report on the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan Citizen's Advisory Committee – Jennifer Bristol
10. Report on the Joint Committee of the Environmental Commission and Parks and Recreation Board – Perry Bedford, Haris Qureshi, and Kevin Ramberg
11. Report on the South Central Waterfront Advisory Board – David Sullivan

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Chair Ramberg reminded commissioners of the annual retreat occurring Wednesday, August 9th.

Chair Ramberg adjourned the meeting at 10:11 p.m. without objection.

The minutes were approved at the August 16th, 2023 meeting on Commissioner Bedford's motion, Commissioner Sullivan's second on a 6-0 vote. Commissioner Kruger abstained. Commissioners Bristol, Cofer, and Qureshi were absent. Commissioner Brimer was off the dais.