



***ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
REGULAR CALLED MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, September 20, 2023***

The ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION convened in a REGULAR meeting on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, at 6310 Wilhelmina Delco Drive in Austin, Texas.

Chair Ramberg called the Environmental Commission Meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Commissioners in Attendance: Kevin Ramberg, Perry Bedford, Jennifer Bristol, Richard Brimer, Peter Einhorn, Mariana Krueger, Melinda Schiera, David Sullivan

Commissioners in Attendance Remotely: Hanna Cofer, Haris Qureshi

Commissioners Absent: Colin Nickells

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve the minutes of the Environmental Commission Regular Meeting on September 6th, 2023.
The minutes from the regular meeting on September 6th, 2023 were approved at the September 20th, 2023 meeting on Commissioner Bedford’s motion, Commissioner Brimer’s second on a 6 – 0 vote. Commissioners Krueger and Ramberg abstained. Commissioner Nickells was absent. Commissioners Einhorn and Sullivan were off the dais.

STAFF BRIEFINGS

2. Staff briefing regarding the Austin Energy Transportation Electrification Implementation Overview – Cameron Freberg, Austin Energy. Requested by Environmental Commissioner Qureshi
Item conducted as posted. No action taken.
3. Staff briefing on “Eliza Springs Daylighting: Response of Barton Springs Salamanders to Habitat Expansion” – Nathan Bendik, Watershed Protection.
Item conducted as posted. No action taken.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

4. Discussion and possible action on a recommendation to City Council regarding the allocation of additional funds to preserve the topsoil in exposed parts of Zilker Park and to ban parking on the Polo Field – Presented and requested by Commissioners Sullivan and Brimer.

A motion to recommend City Council allocate additional funds to preserve the topsoil in exposed parts of Zilker Park and to ban parking on the Polo Field was made by Commissioner Sullivan and seconded by Commissioner Brimer.

An amendment to add “planting native grasses where appropriate on exposed parkland, for storm water diversion, and other steps to prevent topsoil loss in Zilker Park” made by Commissioner Sullivan passed unanimously. Commissioner Nickells was absent.

An amendment to change “FY2024” to “FY2025” and add 2025 to the parking condition made by Commissioner Brimer and seconded by Commissioner Sullivan passed unanimously. Commissioner Nickells was absent.

An amendment to change the subject to “Allocation of funds to preserve the topsoil and restore grassland within Zilker Park” made by Commissioner Sullivan passed on a 9-1 vote. Commissioner Brimer voted against. Commissioner Nickells was absent.

An amendment to add “the Environmental Commission recommends the City Council to direct staff to create a comprehensive plan for parking in and around Zilker Park that protects the natural assets of Zilker Park” made by Commissioner Bristol and seconded by Commissioner Einhorn passed unanimously. Commissioner Nickells was absent.

An amendment to add “prepare to ban regular parking on the Zilker Polo Field in FY2025, and add additional parking elsewhere within or near Zilker Park,” made by Commissioner Bristol and seconded by Commissioner Einhorn passed unanimously. Commissioner Nickells was absent.

An amendment to add “WHEREAS, the Environmental Commission acknowledges the need for a comprehensive vision plan that includes provisions, affordable parking and otherwise, for equitable access to Zilker Park for all park visitors, and” made by Commissioner Krueger passed unanimously. Commissioner Nickells was absent.

The motion from Commissioner Sullivan with amendments passed on a 9–1 vote. Commissioner Cofer opposed. Commissioner Nickells was absent.

WORKING GROUP/COMMITTEE UPDATES

5. Update from the Urban Forestry Committee – Richard Brimer (Committee Chair), Mariana Krueger, Colin Nickells, and Melinda Schiera

Commissioner Brimer updated the commission that the Urban Forestry meeting will be on October 12th.

6. Update from the Joint Sustainability Committee – Haris Qureshi (member) and Richard Brimer (alternate member)

7. Update from the Balcones Canyonlands Conservation Plan Citizen’s Advisory Committee – Jennifer Bristol

8. Update from the Joint Committee of the Environmental Commission and Parks and Recreation Board – Perry Bedford, Hanna Cofer, Haris Qureshi, and Kevin Ramberg

Commissioners Bedford and Qureshi shared that PARD provided an update to members on Flo, the pecan tree at Barton Springs.

9. Update from the South Central Waterfront Advisory Board – David Sullivan

10. Update from the Native Landscaping Working Group – Melinda Schiera, Perry Bedford, Richard Brimer, and David Sullivan

Commissioner Schiera updated that she is planning to ask for a meeting on Functional Green.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Commissioner Sullivan shared that there is a Project Connect Event on Sept 24th at 11 am at Plaza Saltillo Station. He also shared an update on Project Connect meeting with architects to discuss station design.

Chair Ramberg adjourned the meeting at 9:22 p.m. without objection.

The minutes were approved at the October 4, 2023 meeting on Commissioner Bedford’s motion, Commissioner Einhorn’s second on a 8–0 vote. Commissioner Nickells abstained. Commissioners Cofer and Schiera were absent.