

SF Urban Forest Coalition
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May 1, 2008

Mr. Paul Pelosi, Jr., Chairman
Commission on the Environment
11 Grove Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mr. Pelosi;

As you will recall, at the Commission meeting Tuesday I was the first person to give public comment on matters not on the meeting agenda. I spoke in my capacity as Executive Director of the SF Urban Forest Coalition, a not-for-profit corporation whose purposes and goals are to halt and reverse the City's current pattern of neglect and to make the rebuilding, enhancement and protection of its urban forest one of the City's highest priorities. At the outset I described the environmental importance of the City's urban forest, a subject certainly within the Commission's jurisdiction.

Although you inappropriately interrupted me twice during my allotted three minutes, your impatience with my remarks demonstrated, at least to me, that you did not consider this a serious matter. Moreover, your suggestion that I wait some indeterminate period of time while you and your colleagues worked through another 15 or so agenda items to hear a snippet about the urban forest from Mr. Blumenfeld was not particularly helpful, given Mr. Blumenfeld's lack of focus on the crisis in the City's urban forest. I have been advised that he has assigned only one person, out of some 65 in total, to devote only two-thirds of that employee's time to the City's urban forest. That tells me that he is likely responsible for the Department of the Environment virtually ignoring the manifest problems of the City's urban forest.

Your query to me regarding the Urban Forestry Council - whose administration falls under the Department's jurisdiction - implied that it was a significant factor in dealing with the problems of the City's Urban Forest. You should know that the Council has no authority to make or implement policy. Section 1201(d) of the Urban Forest Ordinance provides that "The Council's scope of authority is completely advisory and educational in nature. The Council will have no authority to legislate." Its proposed Urban Forest Plan submitted in May 2006 died in the Planning Department, which is now undertaking the development of its own Urban Forest Master Plan through a project with an outside contractor. I have been told the Department of the Environment had no input in the preparation of the RFP for the project and is not being consulted on the scope of the Master Plan by the Planning Department. One would think that being directly involved in that project is part of the responsibilities of the Department your Commission oversees, given the critical contribution of trees to the environment of a densely populated city such as ours.

Yours Very Truly,


Allen Grossman