

**CLAREMONT COMMUNITY AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday, May 7, 2025 - 7:00 PM

Video recording is archived on the City website.

<https://www.claremontca.gov/Government/City-Council/Watch-a-Meeting>

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**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Sifuentes called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT**

COMMISSIONER: BINDER, BROWER, GLASS, ROSELLE,  
SCOTT TOUX, SIFUENTES, SILVA

**ABSENT**

COMMISSIONER: NONE

**ALSO PRESENT**

Michelle Castillo, Management Analyst  
Cari Dillman, Community Services Manager  
Richard Hecker, Landscape Maintenance Supervisor  
Dawn Ross, Senior Administrative Assistant  
Jeremy Swan, Community Services Director  
Melissa Vollaro, Recreation and Human Services Director

**CEREMONIAL MATTERS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND PRESENTATIONS**

***Announcements***

Katherine Loeser, Claremont Helen Renwick Library Manager, shared Library updates and upcoming events during the month of February.

Kristin Mikula, Community Services Manager, announced proposed changes to the Get About and Get About Extended programs and provided information on a public hearing scheduled to discuss the changes.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

This item starts at 00:05:10 in the archived video.

Chair Sifuentes invited public comment.

Dawn Ross, Senior Administrative Assistant, announced that no written public comment had been received.

Dr. Angela Medina Rhodes, Claremont resident, stated that her child's birthday falls between the age cutoff for campers and the 7th Grade completion requirement for volunteers. Dr Medina Rhodes asked the Commission to refer the matter to the appropriate staff or committee to ensure that no child is left out of the program.

Aldrin “Roo” Rhodes, Claremont resident, stated that he loves attending Camp Claremont and is disappointed that he is not able to attend with his friends this year as either a camper or volunteer.

There were no additional requests to speak.

Chair Sifuentes closed public comment.

Melissa Vollaro, Recreation and Human Services Director, responded that Camp Claremont was intended for elementary school aged students and that previous issues with volunteers prompted the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade completion requirement. Director Vollaro will take the feedback to staff to try to develop a solution to address the gap in eligibility.

### **CONSENT CALENDAR**

This item starts at 00:12:11 in the archived video.

Commissioner Scott Toux pulled Item No. 2 from the Consent Calendar.

Commissioner Silva pulled Item No. 4 from the Consent Calendar.

Commissioner Glass pulled Item No. 7 from the Consent Calendar.

Chair Sifuentes invited public comment on Consent Calendar Items No. 1, 3, 5, and 6.

Senior Administrative Assistant Ross announced that no written public comment had been received on Consent Calendar Items No. 1, 3, 5, and 6.

There were no requests to speak.

Chair Sifuentes closed public comment.

***Commissioner Scott Toux moved to approve Consent Calendar Items No. 1, 3, 5, and 6, seconded by Commissioner Roselle, and carried on a roll call vote as follows:***

**AYES:**            ***Commissioner – Binder, Brower, Glass, Roselle, Scott Toux, Sifuentes, Silva***  
**NOES:**           ***Commissioner – None***

1.    Community and Human Services Commission Meeting Minutes of April 2, 2025  
Approved and filed the Community and Human Services Commission meeting minutes of April 2, 2025.
2.    Committee Meeting Minutes  
Item removed from the Consent Calendar.
3.    Tree Plantings and Removals for February 2025  
Received and filed the report.

4. Semi-Annual Reporting of Urban Forest Activities: July–December 2024  
Item removed from the Consent Calendar.
5. Urban Forest Update – 2024  
Received and filed the report.
6. Sanitation and Sewer Rate Increase of 3.0 Percent, Effective July 1, 2024, and Multi-Family Bulky Item Pilot Program  
Received and filed the report.
7. Revisions to the Grant Allocation Policy for the Community Based Organization General Services and Homeless Services/Critical Need Program  
Item removed from the Consent Calendar.

### **ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE CONSENT CALENDAR**

2. Committee Meeting Minutes

This item starts at 00:15:28 in the archived video.

Commissioner Scott Toux asked that the minutes from the Teen Committee meeting of March 19, 2025 be corrected to reflect the next meeting date of April 16, 2025.

Commissioner Binder asked why the minutes from the September 11, 2024 Committee on Aging meeting were not presented at an earlier meeting.

Melissa Vollaro, Recreation and Human Services Director, explained that committee meeting minutes are not presented to the Commission until they have been reviewed and approved by that committee. Because the Committee on Aging does not meet monthly and one meeting may have been cancelled, the minutes were not brought to the Commission until this meeting.

Chair Sifuentes invited public comment.

Senior Administrative Assistant Ross announced that no written public comment had been received on this item.

There were no requests to speak

Chair Sifuentes closed public comment.

***The Commission received and filed the report.***

4. Semi-Annual Reporting of Urban Forest Activities: July–December 2024

This item starts at 00:18:54 in the archived video.

Commissioner Silva asked for an explanation for the fluctuations in planting numbers over the past seven years.

Cari Dillman, Community Services Manager, explained that the apparent decline in planting is due to factors such as windstorm response, residents choosing to plant private trees rather than accepting City trees, the Towne Avenue project not yet being turned over to the City (those trees not yet being entered into the City's inventory), the conclusion of grant-funded planting programs, discontinuing the mandatory planting policy, and drought-related water restrictions.

Chair Sifuentes invited public comment.

Senior Administrative Assistant Ross announced that no written public comment had been received on this item.

There were no requests to speak.

Chair Sifuentes closed public comment.

***The Commission received and filed the report.***

7. Revisions to the Grant Allocation Policy for the Community Based Organization General Services and Homeless Services/Critical Need Program

This item starts at 00:26:12 in the archived video.

Commissioner Glass expressed concerns regarding the language in the Grant Eligibility Requirements and suggested the need to clarify how the program benefits Claremont participants.

Michelle Castillo, Management Analyst, and Melissa Vollaro, Recreation and Human Services Director, responded to questions from the Commission regarding the possibility of appointing an ad hoc committee to review the language.

Chair Sifuentes invited public comment.

Senior Administrative Assistant Ross announced that no written public comment had been received on this item.

There were no requests to speak.

Chair Sifuentes closed public comment.

The Commission discussed possible revisions to the Eligibility Requirements section of the Grant Allocation Policy to reduce vague language that may restrict allocation of benefits, the timeline for any revisions to ensure that the revised policy may be approved by the City Council in time for the application period to open July 1, and specific suggestions for revisions.

The Community and Human Services Commission recessed at 7:48 PM.

The Community and Human Services Commission reconvened at 7:55 PM.

***Commissioner Glass moved to approve the revisions to the CBO Grant Allocation Policy with the following changes to the Grant Eligibility Requirements section:***

***A. For the General Services Program, revise “the majority of the participants” to “a significant portion of the participants”; and***

***B. For the Homeless Services/Critical Need Program, after “Claremont Unified School District,” revise the sentence to read: “...or provides an ongoing resource for future needs and aligns with the aforementioned Funding Priorities.”***

***Seconded by Commissioner Roselle, and carried on a roll call vote as follows:***

***AYES: Commissioner – Binder, Brower, Glass, Roselle, Scott Toux, Sifuentes, Silva***

***NOES: Commissioner – None***

## **ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

### **8. Request for Tree Removal – 616 Charleston Drive**

This item starts at 00:56:56 in the archived video.

Cari Dillman, Community Services Manager, provided a PowerPoint presentation.

Manager Dillman responded to questions from the Commission regarding the Tree Committee’s recommendation, whether additional trimming would satisfy the resident’s concerns, why the staff’s recommendation is counter to the Tree Committee’s recommendation, the number of Canary Island pine trees on the street, how many other residents on the street have submitted complaints related to the species, the number of comments received following posting of the notice of proposed removal of the tree, and what makes a tree a “City tree.”

Chair Sifuentes invited public comment.

Senior Administrative Assistant Ross announced that no written public comment had been received for this item.

David Brownlee, property owner, attended the April 30 Tree Committee Meeting and heard the Committee’s recommendation to remove the tree. Mr. Brownlee suggested a public notice if a recommendation changes between one meeting and the next. Mr. Brownlee feels that his tree meets the criteria for removal, based on the *Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual* stating that identifying a tree as potentially hazardous shall be “based on, but not limited to” a list of specified conditions.

Murray Monroe, Claremont resident, noted that many of the pine trees on Briarcroft Road fell during the windstorm leaving the street looking sparse, but the photographs presented

in the report show that only one or two trees fell on Charleston Drive. Mr. Monroe acknowledged the property owner's concerns but feels that the Commission should consider that the tree was deemed safe.

There were no additional requests to speak.

Chair Sifuentes closed public comment.

Manager Dillman; Richard Hecker, Landscape Maintenance Supervisor; and Jeremy Swan, Community Services Director, responded to questions from the Commission regarding sway and failure risk of Canary Island pine trees versus other species, the City's approval of the planting palette at the time of the neighborhood's development, areas of the City where the Canary Island pine tree remains on the designated street tree list and why, and whether the trees on Charleston that fell during the windstorm were replanted.

The Commission discussed the prohibitive cost of removing all of the pine trees on the street, the alternative recommendation to remove the tree and replant two trees at the property owner's expense, the ability of the Commission to grant removal of a tree that does not meet the criteria for removal as outlined in the *Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual*, balancing the burden to the property owner versus the benefit to the community, changes to the environment affecting landscaping decisions, whether the property owner would have input regarding replanting if the tree were to be removed, possible liability if removal is denied and the tree falls, and the ability of other residents on the street to consider their own circumstances if requesting removal of the trees if front of their homes.

***Commissioner Scott Toux moved to approve the request for the removal of the Canary Island pine tree at 616 Charleston Drive and the replanting of two trees, as required by the Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual, at the property owner's expense, for an estimated total cost of \$2065, seconded by Commissioner Glass, and carried on a roll call vote as follows:***

**AYES:**           ***Commissioner – Binder, Glass, Roselle, Scott Toux, Silva***

**NOES:**           ***Commissioner – Brower, Sifuentes***

9.    Request for Tree Removal – 1034 Maryhurst Drive

This item starts at 01:35:27 in the archived video.

Cari Dillman, Community Services Manager, provided a PowerPoint presentation.

Chair Sifuentes asked the Tree Committee Members that were present at the April 30 meeting why no decision was made on this item at that meeting.

Commissioner Brower felt that removing the Brazilian pepper tree in front of the resident's home would likely not alleviate his daughter's health issues, due to the number of other trees of the same species on the street.

Commissioner Binder felt that the effects of the tree on the health of the resident, as supported by a medical professional, were the deciding factor, more than the plumbing repairs.

Manager Dillman responded to questions from the Commission regarding allergenic properties of the species, the differences between the male and female of the species, the number of other Brazilian pepper trees on the street, possible causes of the property damage claims at the home, whether the City has estimated costs for possible future claims at this address, whether health issues are considered when identifying a tree as hazardous, identified potential health risks for the species, and whether other designated species for the street are non-allergenic.

Chair Sifuentes invited public comment.

Senior Administrative Assistant Ross announced that one written public comment had been received for this item.

Marc Wirtz, property owner, spoke to the toxicology of the species, noting that it is in the same family as poison oak and poison ivy, and that a derivative of the sap is a component of pepper spray. Mr. Wirtz supports the alternative recommendation to remove the tree and replant two, growing the urban forest, in order to mitigate the health and safety effects on his daughter and damage to his sewer line and the sidewalk.

There were no additional requests to speak.

Chair Sifuentes closed public comment.

The Commission discussed the difference between negative effects on property versus on people, and the documented physical effects experienced by the resident's daughter.

***Commissioner Glass moved to approve the request for removal of the Brazilian pepper tree at 1034 Maryhurst Drive and the replanting of two trees, as required by the Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual, at the property owner's expense, for a total cost of \$1,820, seconded by Commissioner Roselle, and carried on a roll call vote as follows:***

**AYES:**        ***Commissioner – Binder, Glass, Roselle, Scott Toux, Sifuentes, Silva***  
**NOES:**       ***Commissioner – Brower***

10. Request for Tree Removal – 2475 Michigan Drive

This item starts at 02:01:23 in the archived video.

Cari Dillman, Community Services Manager, provided a PowerPoint presentation.

Manager Dillman responded to questions from the Commission regarding the property damage reported by the owner, other Canary Island pine trees in the neighborhood that fell during previous windstorms, the timeline of the removal and replanting of trees related to

when the property owner submits payment for the work, and the removal cost of the two trees.

Chair Sifuentes invited public comment.

Senior Administrative Assistant Ross announced that no written public comment had been received for this item.

There were no requests to speak.

Chair Sifuentes closed public comment.

The Commission discussed the difference between the potential for damage versus actual damage, factoring environmental concerns into long-term decisions regarding the urban forest, making decisions based on the current *Tree Policies and Guidelines Manual*, possibly establishing a precedent for removing healthy trees, the difference between this removal request and the previous two in terms of proof of burden on the property owner, developing a means to collect data regarding property damage claims to develop a predictive model for future costs, the value of upgrading and modernizing the urban forest over trees no longer suitable for the location and environment, and how the changing homeowner's insurance industry may impact the urban forest.

Manager Dillman and Jeremy Swan, Community Services Director, responded to questions from the Commission regarding the number of trees that fell in the past two windstorms, the failure rate of Canary Island pine trees versus other species during the windstorms, and the development of future plans for phased removal of pine trees in specific areas with emergency access concerns.

***Commissioner Silva moved to deny the request for the removal of two Canary Island pine trees at 2475 Michigan Drive, seconded by Commissioner Brower, and carried on a roll call vote as follows:***

**AYES:**           ***Commissioner – Brower, Glass, Roselle, Scott Toux, Sifuentes, Silva***  
**NOES:**           ***Commissioner – Binder***

The Community and Human Services Commission recessed at 9:34 PM.

The Community and Human Services Commission reconvened at 9:37 PM.

## **REPORTS**

### **Staff**

### **DIRECTORS' REPORT**

This item starts at 02:37:14 in the archived video.

Jeremy Swan, Community Services Director, reported on:

- Employee of the Quarter
- Park Facilities Improvement Plan
- Get About Service Changes
- Urban Forest Update
- Open/Upcoming Bids

Melissa Vollaro, Recreation and Human Services Director, reported on:

- Recap of Spring Celebration
- Recap of Volunteer Recognition Ceremony
- Recap of Hydrogen Electric Bus Tour with Teen Committee
- Recap of Special Needs Resource Fair
- Recap of CBO Site Visits
- Summer Activity Guide
- 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration Information
- Senior Program Updates
- Memorial Day Services
- Special Needs and Inclusion Program Update

### **Commission/Committee**

Commissioner Glass reported on an Eagle Scout project developed by Claremont resident Aiden Ballesteros to provide bike bells at several entrances to the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park for use while riding in the park. The City has since expanded the project to organize events to provide and install 1,000 additional bells for cyclists.

Commissioner Scott Toux reported that the Teen Committee is scheduled to tour City Hall on June 3, 2025.

Chair Sifuentes reported that the Independence Day Committee (IDC) did not meet in April, but that information from the May IDC meeting will be presented at the June Commission meeting.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Sifuentes adjourned the meeting of the Community and Human Services Commission at 9:52 PM. The next regular meeting of the Claremont Community and Human Services Commission will be held on Wednesday, June 4, 2025, at 7:00 PM.

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Brisa Sifuentes, Chair

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Dawn Bonnell Ross, Recording Secretary