

**CITY OF REDLANDS
CITRUS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of June 14, 2022
MINUTES**

1. Call to order at 4:04 pm - Attendance

Present: Michael Day, Chair
Roger Hardy
Tom Lanza
Rolland Moore
Heather Ross
Jack Steward

Absent: Marc Shaw, excused

City Council: None present

FCS Staff: Zach LaBonte, Tricia Swope,

Farming/Packing companies: Al Ruiz, John Gless

Guests: Dennis Bell, Iris Chu, John Paul Beall

2. Public Comments: John Paul Beall submitted public comment (attachment included) sharing the benefits of citrus groves reducing the carbon footprint and how orange groves can still drive citrus economy.

3. Approval of Minutes: Commissioner Steward motioned to accept May 10, 2022, minutes. Commissioner Moore motioned to second.

4. Status Reports

- A. *Packinghouse report:* Villa Park is merging with Clean Citrus and will be finalized in November 2022. Jim Layes is no longer with Villa Park. University Grove has been cleaned of Valencias. City is more than 50% picked. All but navels were much high in this year's pack outs. Packing houses are requesting color and larger sizes so fruit is currently hanging to see how best to proceed. University Grove fruit was exported and did well on pricing. Late navels have 85% pack out this year.
- B. *Farming report by John Gless:* Team is working well.
- C. *Facilities & Community Services report:* Lots of irrigation going on. Replaced tanks on Pennsylvania & Judson that serve Mullen and Lugonia groves. Budget was approved to hire an additional grove worker for a total of 3 positions so hope to have additional staff by September 2022. Bid out for trees to replace Lugonia grove was issued and received no bids.
- D. *Individual Commissioner Reports:* no issues. Texas Grove is looking good after heaving pruning.

6. Old Business

- A. Discussion and possible action regarding type of citrus variety for Lugonia replanting
Staff bid out for trees to replace Lugonia grove was issued and received no bids. Committee decided to purchase Washington variety which John can purchase on City of Redlands behalf. 2nd bid would be issued in July and include planting and irrigation (based on tree delivery). Demo trees would be included in 3rd bid.
- B. Review of Citrus Division Fund balance. Claim on cash -\$33,480.00; Expenditures Control (invoices); Revenue Control (payments). As of end of April, 2022.
- C. Report from subcommittee for items related to private commercial groves.
Commissioner Ross will share letter from Iris Chu and where private small growers would like help from the City.

- a. City Citrus Policy (adopted May 20, 2008)
Primary objective – **to maintain the historic presence of representative citrus lands throughout the entire city and, in particular, at location where they will be seen and appreciated regularly by our citizens** and to manage City-owned groves in an economically sustainable manner.
 - i. City-owned groves should be managed with the goal, but not the requirement to, being supported by revenue received from the sale of citrus products from the groves.
 - ii. Understanding the dynamics of the original purpose of measure “O” and the citrus market, as a whole, recommendations should be made in consideration based on the following:
 1. profitability,
 2. ii. long-term viability
 3. iii. aesthetics,
 4. iv. and any other factors important to the citizens of Redlands.
- b. Much discussion between Commissioners regarding their role and focus on Commission.
 - i. Day – sole purpose of committee is to ensure profitable of City Owned Groves
 - ii. Hardy – try to preserve citrus heritage of community which is highlighted in all City documents presented.
 - iii. Moore – Citrus Preservation Commission has a broader scope and has shrunk to be a farming commission instead of a Preservation Commission. Have grower help the City, not city help grower.
 - iv. Steward – maintain the trees in the accepted farming practices. City gets maximum profit. Dead set against commission getting involved in private growers.
 - v. Ross – to follow with the City’s Citrus Policy which includes Kasey Hawes document
- c. Commission Hardy recommended Citrus Preservation Council members to read the document Commission Ross submitted, provide input in what Council’s charge is provide suggestions to Council.
- d. Commissioner Ross will share letter from Iris Chu and where private small growers would like help from the City.

7. New Business
No Items

- 8. Possible Agenda Items for Next Meeting**
- A. Farm Bureau Executive Director (Maggie O’Neill) to make presentation at an upcoming meeting. San Bernardino ACP task force new AG Commissioner (Angela) to give quick update. (grower list for citrus)
 - B. Regular Presence of City Council at Citrus Commission Meetings

9. 6:16 pm – Adjournment to July 12, 2022, meeting

I am a former Commissioner of the Parks Commission for Redlands, the great-grandson of a Redlands citrus growing and packing family, and also an expert in carbon offsetting, and I do this professionally for a Fortune 500, New York-based bank. I am not here to preach about what we have already heard people say about Climate Change; I am going to speak today about what we as Redlanders can easily and objectively observe for ourselves. This isn't about polar bears; it's about us, our children, and our community.

With citrus all around us in Redlands, it is easy for all of us to take our grove lands for granted. We have also taken for granted the relative quality of our air in this valley. As we are surrounded on three sides by mountains and hills, the marine winds blow all air pollution to the west of us into our valley. Not 50 years ago it was so bad, people could not see our beautiful 10,000 foot-plus mountains for entire parts of the year. This is likely what inspired Richard Nixon, the son of a lemon farmer from nearby, to found the EPA. It is under poor air quality circumstances that people become more prone to respiratory diseases, and children develop ailments like asthma, which they live with their entire lives.

Why am I saying all this? Because a single acre of citrus or avocado groves is one of the highest performing acres of plantings in the United States at removing these greenhouse gases from the air. In fact, acre for acre, orange grove is 82% as effective as Amazon rainforest in removing carbon from the air. Put differently, 1.2 acres of our grove land removes just as much carbon from the air as an acre of Amazon rainforest or 2.5 acres of US natural forest. So when we destroy grove land and pave it over, which worsens our already dire water problems by preventing water from sinking back into our aquifers, we are literally taking one of America's best carbon capture resources, eliminating it, and then replacing it with some of the worst.

All of this is why I was so surprised when I asked Brian Foote this question at an ANCA session a few months ago, that he had the gall to claim that our air quality would improve from eliminating all our groves! If the City of Redlands truly cares about the green goals it claims to have, it needs to start walking the walk, and not spreading misinformation to the people of Redlands.

But here is where you are beginning to think of the oft-uttered phrase, "well orange groves don't pay." Other regions like Ventura County are productive enough to support the world's largest Citrus company, Limoneira, which is a publicly traded citrus company operating groves across the Southwest. How can it be that citrus is productive nearby, but not here? Part of Limoneira's success has come by diversifying orange groves with more profitable and less volatile produce like Lemons, Grapefruit, and Avocados, all of which grow well in the San Bernardino Valley. Large growers in Redlands like the Buoyes and Jacintos are already beginning to do just this. This is nothing different from how any of you probably manage your stock

portfolios. And Limoneira has still been effectively creating more affordable housing stock for its workers while preserving citrus acreage, so this isn't a zero-sum game.

So maybe it's not the groves...maybe it's us! If there is an issue of profitability and productivity of groves, it is a question of management, innovation, and of avoiding deferred maintenance. If local grove management behaves as a monopoly and squeezes profits of small growers, perhaps companies like Limoneira can offer second opinions to restore market discipline. Look at your own results with grove investments at Prospect Park or Fifth Avenue and you will see what you know to be true. The Redlands citrus industry is sustainable, and the Redlands citrus industry has a future. If it has had a decline, it's decline is man-made.

So what can the Citrus Commission do about it? You have the time horizon to take the long term view, to model the latest in citrus management, in water efficient irrigation, in crop diversification. You have the standing to educate small orange growers, to advise the city on green policy, and foster the use of federal incentives to boost the return of groves to help pay for deferred maintenance and making them more sustainable. We are at a critical juncture. The citrus culture of California, and indeed in the United States, began in this valley. The State of California has lost between a quarter and a third of its citrus acreage since the 1940s; Redlands has lost far more than that. As of 2018, as noted on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, the San Fernando Valley lost its last orange grove after 250 years of citrus culture, and nearly everything between us and Los Angeles has been denuded of citrus groves. If citrus groves are our rainforests, Redlands and Crafton are essentially among the last in the entire Los Angeles and Orange County region. And when the global supply chain shifts far into the future, and our warehouses aren't needed anymore, what will we have left?

Our air quality is once again at risk. The preservation and creation of grovelands that protect our air from the increased traffic is paramount. Without our groves, life in Redlands will be smoggier, drier, hotter, and sicklier. In effect, everything that is pleasant about life in Redlands right now will cease to exist. The citrus industry is still viable and profitable if we spur innovation and use resources already at our disposal. The Citrus Preservation Commission has a role to play.