



PACIFIC PALISADES COMMUNITY COUNCIL

April 26, 2021

Hon. Sheila Kuehl
Los Angeles County Supervisor, District 3

Via email

Re: Proposed Use of Public Beach Parking Lots for Homeless Housing

Dear Supervisor Kuehl:

Pacific Palisades Community Council (PPCC) has been the most broad-based community organization and voice of the Palisades since 1973. Pacific Palisades is home to Will Rogers State Beach (WRSB), a public recreational resource owned by the State of California and operated by Los Angeles County which is annually visited and enjoyed by millions of individuals and families from the entire Los Angeles region and beyond.

Homeless individuals have for many years been drawn to WRSB as well to as our nearby bluffs and canyon areas. When encampments were mushrooming on the beach several years ago, Pacific Palisades was fortunate to have the strong support of Stephanie Cohen, your current Health Services Deputy, who assisted with PPCC in the formation of the Pacific Palisades Task Force on Homelessness (PPTFH). We were and are grateful for Ms. Cohen's capable assistance and support.

Soon after its formation, PPTFH became a respected, independent volunteer non-profit organization. Over the years, with generous donations from the Palisades community, and working daily with our LAPD beach detail and outreach workers from The People Concern, PPTFH volunteers have had great success in helping the homeless find housing and services, eliminating encampments and reducing crime, debris and the ever-present fire risk.¹ PPCC thanks PPTFH volunteers, LAPD beach detail officers and the outreach workers for their tireless, ongoing efforts that keep the public beach and community safe.

PPCC strongly opposes the use of the public beach parking lots at WRSB and Dockweiler Beach for homeless housing, as proposed recently in a motion by Councilmember Mike Bonin in City Council, as well as in a "Sheltering Plan" submitted by the City of Los Angeles in the federal *Alliance* lawsuit involving the homeless. Our position on these proposals was explained at length in a series of letters written to public officials, including most recently to U.S. District Judge David O. Carter, the judge presiding in the *Alliance* case.²

In brief, PPCC maintains that the state-owned/county-operated public beaches, including WRSB and Dockweiler Beach, are held in trust for the benefit of all citizens. A core mandate of the Coastal Act is to preserve and protect public access to beaches. Housing the homeless at beach parking lots would impermissibly impede public access to these valuable recreational resources.

¹ See recent PPCC letters linked below for more information about fire risks as a result of dangerous homeless activities on the beach and in our nearby fire-prone bluffs and canyon areas.

²4/19/21: <http://pacpalicc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Letter-re-CF-21-0350-Sheltering-Plan.pdf>

4/23/21: <http://pacpalicc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Letter-re-CF-21-0350-beach-parks-homeless-housing.pdf>

4/24/21: <http://pacpalicc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Letter-re-Alliance-beach-housing.pdf>

See also position of PPTFH at <https://www.pptfh.org/>.

We recognize that you and other County officials have long stressed the importance of *preserving and even increasing accessibility to our public beaches*. A statement in 2017 by a former DBH Deputy Director (John Kelly), arising from then-erosion of beaches and damage to related facilities due to storms, is instructive:

“Our duty is to protect public access to the beach, the parking lots, the restrooms, the concession stands. So that people who can’t afford to live on the beach can still enjoy the beach,” Kelly said. “That’s why this is important.”

<https://lacounty.gov/newsroom/winter-wallop-erosion-takes-toll-on-l-a-county-beaches/>.

The proposal to use the public WRSB parking lot to house the homeless would deprive people who can’t afford to live on or near the beach from enjoying the beach. The WRSB parking lot is regularly used by countless citizens of Los Angeles and the wider region, of all income levels, in order to access this beautiful and popular public beach. There is no parking on PCH at that location. Turning the heavily-used beach parking lot into homeless housing would render the public beaches -- pivotal to citizens’ quality of life, as expressed by Judge Carter in his recent preliminary injunction ruling in the *Alliance* case -- inaccessible and unavailable.

Moreover, there can be little question that installing homeless housing in the WRSB parking lot would have the opposite effect of preserving and enhancing WRSB as a “choice destination for all generations” (see DBH’s express Vision for the public beaches in Los Angeles, as set forth in the Strategic Plan on the DBH website).

We believe that the City and County should instead be proposing other suitable, government-owned locations for homeless housing that are *not part of the public recreational trust as are beaches and parks*.

Supervisor Kuehl, PPCC has appreciated your strong leadership on important issues for many years, including your efforts to protect and preserve our critical public resources and your recent express support for increased access to our public beaches. We hope and trust that you will exercise that same leadership in rejecting any proposal by the City of Los Angeles to use the public WRSB parking lot for homeless housing. In light of swiftly-moving developments in both the *Alliance* case and in Los Angeles City Council, time is of the essence. We respectfully urge you to make public your position on this matter.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,

David Card, Chair	David Kaplan, Vice-Chair
Richard Cohen, Treasurer	Christina Spitz, Secretary
Pacific Palisades Community Council	

cc (via email):

Hon. Ben Allen, CA State Senator, SD 26
Hon. Richard Bloom, CA State Assemblymember, AD 50
Hon. Janice Hahn, LA County Supervisor, CSD 4
Hon. Eric Garcetti, LA City Mayor
Hon. Mike Bonin, LA City Councilmember, CD 11
Jack Ainsworth, CA Coastal Commission Executive Director
Steve Hudson, CA Coastal Commission District Director
Cris Liban, LA County Beach Commission Chair
Gary Jones, DBH Director