



PACIFIC PALISADES COMMUNITY COUNCIL

April 29, 2021

Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Los Angeles City Mayor Eric Garcetti
Los Angeles City Councilmember Mike Bonin
Via email to all addressees

Re: Proposal to use public state beach parking lots for homeless housing

Pacific Palisades Community Council (PPCC) regrets that to date, we have had no response from Supervisor Kuehl, Mayor Garcetti or other Los Angeles County and City officials to our letters expressing significant concerns about the proposal to use public state beach parking lots for homeless housing.¹

This is a serious matter affecting countless citizens of Los Angeles and beyond who regularly visit and enjoy these public recreational resources. The public deserves a serious, definitive response.

PPCC follows up with additional comments and questions:

1. According to online reports and statements on the Los Angeles County Dept. of Beaches and Harbors (DBH) website, Will Rogers State Beach (WRSB) and Dockweiler Beach (Dockweiler) are *state-owned but operated by Los Angeles County* pursuant to an operating agreement with the State of California. We request that County officials, including Supervisor Kuehl and/or DBH, provide PPCC with a copy of this operating agreement; please advise whether you will insist instead that we first submit a formal request under the California Public Records Act.
2. The Los Angeles County Code provides that the term “beach” includes “all appurtenant areas such as . . . parking lots.” (LACC Sec. 17.12.030). Further, the County Code provides:
“No person shall inhabit any area of any beach parking lot.” (LACC Sec. 17.12.232)
“Under no circumstance shall any canopy, tent, lodge, shelter or structure be used as a dwelling place or for habitation, or be left overnight on any beach.” (LACC Sec. 17.12.260)

Please advise whether, in accordance with these provisions, Los Angeles County officials will refuse to permit homeless housing (“dwelling place/s” or “habitation”) on the WRSB and Dockweiler parking lots. If the County maintains that such use may be permitted notwithstanding these restrictions, please advise: 1) what is the superseding authority that County officials claim permits such use; 2) will the County in fact permit such use, and if so, under what terms and conditions; and 3) if the County will permit such use, will the County or the City, or both, also apply for further permission from the California Coastal Commission?

3. According to PPCC’s online minutes, at a public PPCC meeting in August 2019, during a discussion about a potential location for a skateboard park in Pacific Palisades, Supervisor Kuehl’s representative stated: “*Will*

¹ Councilmember Bonin submitted one brief letter shortly before our 4/23/21 meeting when the PPCC board voted unanimously to adopt the PPCC Position Statement. His letter did not address our concerns; instead, he disingenuously suggested that PPCC should advise him of alternate sites, even though he is very familiar with Pacific Palisades and should know that there are no City-owned sites suitable for homeless housing in the Palisades. We have not received any other response from him.

Rogers State Beach is operated by the County. The Coastal Commission will be very concerned about taking away parking spaces from the public in the Coastal Zone.” PPCC agrees with this assessment. Do any of our County or City officials now have contrary information about the Commission’s expected position with respect to removing parking spaces at WRSB or Dockweiler from the public, in order to locate homeless housing?

4. Councilmember Bonin has suggested that the use of the public beach parking lots to house homeless individuals would be “temporary.” According to online reports, other “tiny home” or “safe camping” sites in Los Angeles are intended to be used temporarily only until sufficient permanent housing can be found. We have heard that “temporary” in this context can mean anywhere from *three to five years or even longer*. In a report filed in federal court by the City Dept. of Recreation and Parks (RAP) in the *Alliance* case, the RAP General Manager stated that a “temporary” pallet shelter village will be situated in Arroyo Seco Park for three years. At a PPCC meeting on April 8, 2021, Councilmember Bonin was asked but did not provide an answer as to how long “temporary” would actually be in terms of the proposed use of the WRSB parking lot. PPCC reiterates: We do not trust that “temporary” will in fact be temporary; we fully expect that if a “tiny home” or “safe camping” site were to be allowed at WRSB, it would remain for many years, likely indefinitely.

5. PPCC strongly disagrees with claims that an “immediate emergency” has now arisen which might otherwise justify the use of public beaches and parks for homeless housing. We emphasize:

- Mayor Garcetti represented, in a letter recently filed in federal court in the *Alliance* case, that the City of Los Angeles has *not issued an emergency declaration* regarding homelessness, describing the situation instead as a “decades-long crisis involving multiple jurisdictions.”
- County counsel represented, in a recent submission in the *Alliance* case, that the County had issued an emergency homeless declaration in *2016, five years ago*. We were unaware until now of this declaration. In the years since, Supervisor Kuehl’s representatives have advised us about progress in funding and constructing homeless housing, but we were never told that an immediate emergency situation exists such that the state beach parking lots (or any particular site) are needed for homeless housing.
- In 2016, Councilmember Bonin stated at a PPCC meeting that homelessness was then a “crisis.” In 2018, he described the situation at the time as an “emergency,” and explained that he was asking all communities in CD 11 to try and find sites for homeless housing. According to PPCC’s online minutes, an effort was made by past PPCC Chairs to find suitable sites; to our knowledge none were found. In the years since, *Councilmember Bonin and his representatives did not communicate anything more to PPCC about a supposed need to find suitable sites because of an immediate homeless emergency or crisis, or for any other reason*. The Councilmember did not reach out to PPCC or PPTFH before bringing his recent City Council motion or proposing the WRSB and Dockweiler parking lot sites as part of the Sheltering Plan for CD 11 in the *Alliance* case.
- According to PPCC’s online minutes, *since 2002, and every year after that for 19 years*, issues involving homelessness in Pacific Palisades were publicly discussed, often with City, County and state government representatives in attendance. Our public officials were and are fully aware of the constant, ongoing problems involving homeless individuals camped in or inhabiting our public areas, bluffs, canyons and WRSB. At no time during these 19 years, until this sudden, surprising proposal by Councilmember Bonin, have he or any other government representatives suggested that homeless individuals should be allowed to camp or otherwise dwell on the public beach or in public beach parking lots (which are the “beach,” as per Los Angeles County law).

It appears that the only new “emergency” at this time is the perceived need to respond quickly to Judge Carter’s orders in the *Alliance* case. This situation does not justify proposing *clearly unsuitable sites*, such as WRSB, Dockweiler or other public recreational resources for homeless dwelling purposes.

If, in fact, the so-called “emergency” now is a reaction to demands made by Judge Carter, then the proposal to use the DRSB and Dockweiler parking lots is particularly inappropriate. Judge Carter made clear in his preliminary injunction ruling that it was his intention to prevent the use of such public recreational spaces for shelter for the homeless. His intent instead is to reserve such beach and park spaces for their historic intended purposes – public access and recreation by the citizens of the County and City of Los Angeles.

We respectfully request a prompt, unequivocal response from our County and City elected officials to this question: Will you reject or withdraw any proposal involving use of the public state beach parking lots for homeless housing, whether “tiny homes,” safe camping, or any other type of dwelling?

Sincerely,

David Card, Chair	David Kaplan, Vice-Chair
Richard G. 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. Mark Ridley-Thomas, LA City Councilmember, CD 10
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
Tony Tavares, Caltrans District 7 Director