



PACIFIC PALISADES COMMUNITY COUNCIL

April 4, 2020

Via email

Hon. Eric Garcetti, Mayor, City of Los Angeles
Hon. Sheila Kuehl, LA County Supervisor, District 3
Hon. Mike Bonin, Councilmember, CD11

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Dear Mayor Garcetti, Supervisor Kuehl and Councilmember Bonin:

This letter will follow-up on the two previous letters sent by the Pacific Palisades Community Council (PPCC) Executive Committee, on March 21 and March 23, 2020, posing numerous questions and considerations to public officials regarding the City's plan to locate an emergency homeless shelter in Pacific Palisades – which we've now learned would be located, if activated, at the Palisades Recreation Center (PRC). Please see our letter of March 23: <http://pacpalicc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PPCC-EC-Letter-to-Mayor-re-homeless-shelter.pdf>.

We reiterate our support for prudent action to quickly shelter and provide services for homeless people during this grave public health crisis in order to protect public health and safety. At the same time, we all need to take strong measures to minimize the community spread of the virus in order to protect the health, safety and security not only of those in temporary shelters but also the surrounding neighborhoods.

Serious questions remain as to whether the use of PRC would be prudent, suitable or safe for either the homeless or the Palisades community.¹ We acknowledge the concerns expressed by residents and the growing anxiety within the community as the virus is already spreading now in the Palisades (26 confirmed cases as of 4/4, more unreported), and questions about a possible shelter in the Palisades haven't been sufficiently or satisfactorily answered.

While we appreciate that Lisa Payne of the Mayor's office and LAPD Capt. III Jonathan Tom have provided some answers to our questions, we have not received detailed or complete responses from you or other public officials. As to whether or when the PRC might be activated, we've only been told that the facility will not be designated for use unless capacity is reached at the other recreation center shelters now activated in Los Angeles. We've received no information on the status of the other shelters, what specific operating protocols are in place or what the capacity is at these shelters; it isn't clear whether we will receive advance notice or whether our input will be sought about a decision to activate the PRC for this use; we haven't been assured that the existing unsafe and unsanitary conditions at the PRC will in fact be repaired before anyone is to be housed there; and no explanation has been offered as to why the County Health Dept. has apparently countermanded the CDC's guidelines by advising the City that the use of congregate facilities, with less than a 12' x 12' space around cots, is

¹ As explained previously, the Executive Committee has not taken a position to date on behalf of PPCC on the use of the PRC (or any site) as a homeless shelter. That is because the coronavirus crisis prevents the full PPCC board from meeting and undertaking our customary investigation and public discussion among all interested parties in order to ascertain community consensus. PPCC's bylaws require policy positions to be taken by a 2/3 vote of members voting at public board meetings. However, our bylaws authorize the Executive Committee to act for the board during emergencies. Because of the current grave circumstances, if we do not receive convincing, detailed answers satisfying us that the use of the PRC will be safe and suitable, the Executive Committee would oppose this use.

supposedly safer than other alternatives such as enhancing sanitation at existing encampments when individual dwelling units are not available.

On the other hand, we've received an unprecedented level of response from community members about this issue. While several residents have expressed support and even volunteered to help with the shelter, many others have raised serious public safety concerns. Our respected Pacific Palisades Task Force on Homelessness (PPTFH) has requested "direct, first-hand, detailed information about the plans for the proposed shelter"; see: <https://www.pptfh.org> (3/23/20 Coronavirus Bulletin). Similar concerns and requests have also been expressed by members of the Westside Regional Alliance of Councils (WRAC) as set forth in a 4/3/20 letter by WRAC Chair Maryam Zar: <http://pacpalicc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-Shelters-letter-2.pdf>.

The PPCC Executive Committee now has several additional questions and concerns which are listed below. It is imperative that the City's plans and processes be fully transparent and that we receive detailed answers to all of our questions at the earliest possible time, before any decision is made to use the PRC as a homeless shelter.

During this unprecedented public health crisis, the Palisades community needs and deserves assurances that there is a detailed plan, that it's shared with the community, that it's safe for residents of the shelter and residents of the community, and that the shelter really is temporary.

Without complete and satisfactory answers by our public officials convincing us that the use will be safe and suitable, the PPCC Executive Committee would oppose the use of the PRC as a homeless shelter.

Executive Committee, PPCC:

David Card, Chair
David Kaplan, Vice Chair
Richard Cohen, Treasurer
Christina Spitz, Secretary

Maryam Zar, Chair Emeritus
John Padden, Organization Representative (PRIDE)
Joanna Spak, Area Representative (Area 1, Castellammare,
Paseo Miramar)

cc:

LA Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners
Mike Shull, General Manager, LA Recreation & Parks Dept.
Aram Sahakian, General Manager, LA Emergency Management Dept.
Fernando Morales, District Director, Supervisor Kuehl
Lisa Payne, Director of Public Engagement, Mayor's Office
Lisa Cahill, Palisades Deputy, Councilmember Bonin
Capt. III Jonathan Tom, LAPD West Division Commander
Erich Haas, Director, Palisades Recreation Center
Mike Skinner, Chair, Palisades Park Advisory Board
Doug McCormick, President, PPTFH

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ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

- Given the existing unsafe and unsanitary conditions at the inadequate PRC, can you now rule out using the PRC for an emergency homeless shelter? If not, please respond to the following questions.
- What is the status of existing/activated shelters at recreation centers in Los Angeles? How many are now open, what is the capacity, how many more are available, what is the status of staffing? Have written operating protocols been developed? If so, what are they? Do you know what the capacity is at the PRC? Is it less than the minimum capacity at other shelters that have been activated? Is that capacity based on 6' cot separation or the CDC-recommended 12' x 12' space around cots?

- Do you assign overall managers of each shelter? Do they take into account input from the community and/or relevant neighborhood or community council? If activated, will PRC have an assigned manager? Will you provide contact information for this individual to PPCC and the community and will he or she work with us to mitigate risks to public health, safety and security?
- Will you provide sufficient advance notice of a plan to activate the PRC to PPCC and PPTFH? Will you receive input from our organizations on parameters and operations of the shelter?
- Before activating the PRC for this use, will you make all necessary repairs to bathrooms and other unsafe or unsanitary conditions and provide showers? If not, what alternate hygiene facilities will be installed at the site?
- Where will inhabitants of the shelter come from and how will they get to the PRC? What exact pre-screening procedures will take place? Temperature and health history only? Criminal history? Will you require a negative test for COVID-19 for all potential inhabitants? If not, will you limit the inhabitants only to lower risk individuals?
- Where will higher risk individuals be housed? Do you propose to install trailers for such individuals (such as the 41 trailers now installed at the Westwood Recreation Center)? Can you assure us that no such trailers will be installed in or near any residential neighborhoods in Pacific Palisades? *Any such installation would be completely unacceptable and we would be unequivocally opposed.*
- Will all inhabitants be required to wear face coverings or masks at all times (inside and/or outside of the facility)? What other protocols and restrictions will be in place to ensure that 1) shelter inhabitants will *at least* be required to abide by the same restrictions that Palisades residents must abide by, and 2) the safety and security of the Palisades community will be protected?
- Why will shelter residents be free to come and go at will, increasing the risk of community spread? Aren't we all ordered to shelter at home, including shelter homes? Have you considered restricting the shelter residents to the shelter building and adjacent grounds?
- What is the status of using hotels/motels to house the homeless? We note Gov. Newsom's recent announcement that the State has acquired 7,000 hotel/motel rooms for this purpose. How many will be opening in Los Angeles and will this affect future potential use of recreation centers as shelters, specifically including the PRC?
- What is the status of using parking lots to house the homeless in individual tents? The Palisades has lots at its beaches, a high school and 3 state parks. We note that this alternative is in place elsewhere, including in Tampa Bay, Florida (as Councilmember Bonin has publicly noted). Is this alternative being actively explored and if not, why not?
- What specific guidelines did the County Public Health Dept. provide to the City regarding the use of recreation centers for homeless shelters during this crisis? Why are the CDC guidelines not being recommended by the County or followed by the City? Can you refer us to a contact person at County Public Health for direct answers to our questions about why the County's guidelines to the City are contrary to the CDC guidelines?
- What is the "end game"? Where will the inhabitants of the shelters go when the crisis is over and how will they get there? Will services and housing be offered? What assurances can you give that the homeless individuals who were brought to the shelters will not remain or set up other encampments in the same or nearby areas?