



PACIFIC PALISADES COMMUNITY COUNCIL

May 16, 2021

Members of the Los Angeles City Council:

Hon. Nury Martinez, President, CD 6; Hon. Bob Blumenfield, CD 3; Hon. Mike Bonin, CD 11; Hon. Joe Buscaino, CD 15; Hon. Gilbert A. Cedillo, CD 1; Hon. Kevin de León, CD 14; Hon. Marqueece Harris-Dawson, CD 8; Hon. Paul Koretz, CD 5; Hon. Paul Krekorian, CD 2; Hon. John Lee, CD 12; Hon. Mitch O'Farrell, CD 13; Hon. Curren D. Price, CD 9; Hon. Nithya Raman, CD 4; Hon. Mark Ridley-Thomas, CD 10; Hon. Monica Rodriguez, CD 7

Via email to each addressee and submission to the Council File public comment portal

Re: CF 21-0350 – OPPOSE use of public state beaches, beach parking lots and parks for homeless housing

Pacific Palisades Community Council (PPCC) has been the most broad-based community organization and voice of Pacific Palisades since 1973. PPCC strongly opposes any proposal to use or study the use of public state beaches, beach parking lots and parks for *homeless housing* of any kind, whether described as “tiny cabins,” safe camping,” or “emergency response shelters.”¹ Thousands of other citizens of Los Angeles, including the overwhelming majority of Palisadians, share our position.

PPCC supports the lawful use of our public state beaches and parks by all citizens, housed and unhoused alike, for recreation and enjoyment. But the dangerous “Palisades Fire” – which, as has been widely reported, exploded over the weekend in our fire prone hillsides and quickly spread, at this writing, to 835 acres – has put this matter into stark relief for the Palisades community. *Under no circumstances should public officials entertain the idea of sanctioning homeless habitation at Will Rogers State Beach (WRSB) or any of our nearby fire-prone areas.*

1. The Beaches Are for All Citizens of Los Angeles and the Entire Region; They Are Our Central Park.

This issue affects virtually everyone in Los Angeles. Tens of thousands of constituents of each and every Los Angeles City Councilmember – whether in a coastal or a non-coastal district – visit the state beaches for recreation, relaxation and enjoyment and to escape the heat. It should be as unthinkable to consider using state beaches or beach parking lots for homeless housing in Los Angeles as it would be to consider such a proposed use in Central Park.

2. The Use Would be Unsafe for Homeless Individuals, the Nearby Community and the Region.

Pacific Palisades is entirely within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Reducing the capacity in the WRSB parking lots for critical life and property saving activities would have a devastating impact on the Palisades community and the wider region. Our community is at acute risk of wildfires. Homeless individuals regularly set fires on our beaches and in nearby bluffs areas. The Los Angeles Times reported last week that fires in homeless encampments have *nearly tripled* in the first four months of 2021.

As noted, a huge wildfire started in Pacific Palisades this weekend, quickly spread to hundreds of acres and resulted in mandatory evacuation orders for 500 homes in the nearby Topanga State Park area.² The WRSB parking lot is

¹ PPCC Position Statement: <http://pacpalicc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Letter-re-CF-21-0350-beach-parks-homeless-housing.pdf>
PPCC Supplemental Position Letter: <http://pacpalicc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PPCC-Supplemental-Letter-re-CF-21-0350.pdf>

² At this writing, LAPD and LAFD are actively seeking to apprehend the individual believed to have been responsible for starting the fire. A number of homeless persons who frequent WRSB are known to have deliberately started multiple fires in the past few days, both *on the beach and in bluffs and hillside areas of Pacific Palisades*. At least one of these individuals is a *convicted arsonist* who has eluded the authorities after starting many fires in the community.

now serving as a command post and critical staging area for firefighting personnel and equipment, as is typical during major fire events. Palisadians justifiably fear that the introduction of sanctioned homeless habitation at WRSB – and the additional *unsanctioned* habitation that will inevitably be drawn to our area as a result – will reduce firefighting capacity and exacerbate already dangerous conditions.

In addition, PCH – a six-lane highway with regular heavy traffic – borders the WRSB parking lot areas. Homeless individuals who are already on the beach and in nearby bluffs are often observed trying to jaywalk across PCH. Individuals have been killed, as recently as this past February, illegally crossing PCH. This unsafe and deadly activity will only increase with sanctioned homeless habitation in the WRSB parking lot.

3. The County Controls the Use of the State Beaches; Habitation on Beach Parking Lots is Not Permitted and is Contrary to the County Supervisors' Express Goals.

County Code expressly prohibits habitation/dwelling on beaches and in beach parking lots: *LACC Sec. 17.12.232 and Sec. 17.12.620*. The proposed sites are *not options*, according to Supervisor Hahn. All Supervisors have stressed the importance of preserving and enhancing our public recreational spaces as a matter of equity, health and well-being for all citizens.

4. The Use Would Violate the Coastal Act and is Unprecedented in California.

The California Coastal Act (PRC §30000, *et seq.*) mandates public access to the coast. Use of the state beach parking lots for homeless housing would violate the access mandate and would be unprecedented in California.

5. The Use is Contrary to Judge Carter's Ruling and Express Goals.

In his preliminary injunction ruling, Judge Carter expressly indicated his dismay that *due to inaction by public officials*, homeless individuals have “no other place to turn” except for “pivotal” public spaces such as beaches and parks, which “enhance the quality of life for all citizens.” It is incomprehensible why public officials would disregard the Judge’s clear message by proposing that such sites be studied for homeless housing – a proposal that is contrary to the Judge’s express goal: to preserve these “pivotal” spaces for public access and enjoyment by all citizens.

6. There is No “Immediate Emergency”, Nor Would the “Solution” be “Temporary.”

We reject in the strongest possible terms the proposition that an “immediate emergency” exists. The homeless crisis has been with us, and growing steadily, for over a decade. If we now face an “immediate emergency” which is somehow materially different from prior emergencies, why are sites that are subject to *other jurisdictions with laws prohibiting the express use* (habitation), and that require *lengthy approval processes* (*i.e.*, the beach parking lots), suddenly being proposed for “study”? Why aren’t the 1,000+ government properties in Los Angeles that we understand have been identified by Controller Galperin being studied, instead? Moreover, we have seen that other “temporary” homeless sites in Los Angeles are planned for three to five years. Placing homeless housing on state beach parking lots for three to five years or any length of time – and only after a long approval process – belies the claim of “immediate emergency” and is completely unwarranted.

7. Pacific Palisades is Overwhelmingly Opposed, as are Numerous Neighborhood & Community Councils and Thousands of Other Citizens.

Respected Palisades organizations, entities and individuals strongly oppose the use or study of the use of public beaches, beach parking lots and parks for homeless housing. *The level of community opposition is unprecedented.*

To date, eight Westside neighborhood and community councils (including five non-coastal councils), representing tens of thousands of constituents, oppose CF 21-0350 and/or the use of the beach parking lots and public parks for this use. Over 1,000 pages of public comments in opposition have been submitted in CF 21-0530. Over 20,000 individuals have now signed an online petition opposing the use of public beaches and parks for homeless housing.

Moreover, as result of the motion in CF 21-0350, the public outrage about this ill-advised proposal and the ongoing, unacceptable conditions at homeless encampments in CD 11, *11,000+ individuals have signed a recent online petition calling for Councilmember Bonin's recall.*

The proposal to “study” the use of public state beach parking lots and parks for homeless housing is a singularly unnecessary, dangerous and bad idea. PPCC implores Los Angeles City Councilmembers to act responsibly, in the best interest of all citizens of Los Angeles and the wider region, by amending the motion in CF 21-0350 and removing the state-owned/county-operated WRSB and Dockweiler Beach parking lots, as well as Westchester Park and Mar Vista Park (*opposed by the respective councils in those areas*), from the sites to be studied for feasibility and/or funding for homeless habitation.

LAFD warns on its website:

“Catastrophic brush fires are occurring at an increasing rate not only in California but across the country. Hillside communities within Los Angeles are under continuous threat of a devastating wildfire. As this risk increases, it is important you protect yourself and your family by planning, preparing and staying aware.”

Given the clear and grave risk to public safety, allowing this matter to proceed any further with respect to WRSB would be the height of irresponsibility by our public officials. ***Should the City Council vote to approve this motion without removing WRSB as a possible site for sanctioned homeless habitation, PPCC will consider taking all appropriate, available steps to protect the lives and welfare of all Angelenos and others who visit WRSB (housed or not), who rely on PCH to commute, and who live nearby.***

Sincerely,

Executive Committee:

David Card, Chair	Christina Spitz, Secretary
David Kaplan, Vice-Chair	John Padden, Organization Representative (PRIDE)
Richard G. Cohen, Treasurer	Joanna Spak, Elected Representative (Area 1; Castellammare, Paseo Miramar)

Pacific Palisades Community Council

cc (*via email*):

City:

Hon. Eric Garcetti, Mayor, City of Los Angeles
Hon. Mike Feuer, LA City Attorney
Michael Shull, General Manager, LA City Dept. of Recreation and Parks

County:

Hon. Sheila Kuehl, LA County Supervisor, CSD 3
Hon. Janice Hahn, LA County Supervisor, CSD 4
Gary Jones, Director, LA County Dept. of Beaches & Harbors
Kerry Silverstrom, Chief Deputy Director, LA County Dept. of Beaches & Harbors
Cris Liban, Chair, LA County Beach Commission

State:

Hon. Ben Allen, State Senator, SD 26
Hon. Richard Bloom, State Assemblymember, AD 50
Jack Ainsworth, Executive Director, California Coastal Commission
Steve Hudson, District Director, California Coastal Commission
Jerry West, Superintendent, Angeles District, State Dept. of Parks & Recreation
Tony Tavares, Caltrans District 7 Director