



## PACIFIC PALISADES COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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August 3, 2021

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

**City Administrative Officer:** Matt Szabo, CAO; Yolanda Chavez, Assistant CAO

*Via email to all addressees and submission to City Clerk filing portal*

Re: Council File 21-0350; CAO Feasibility Study – Use of Will Rogers State Beach (WRSB) Parking Lot for Homeless Housing / Factors Demonstrating Infeasibility

Dear President Martinez, City Councilmembers, Mr. Szabo and Ms. Chavez:

Pacific Palisades Community Council (PPCC) is a member of the Westside Regional Alliance of Councils (WRAC) – an alliance of all 14 neighborhood and community councils on the Westside of Los Angeles, including constituents of CD 11 (Bonin), CD 5 (Koretz) and portions of CD 4 (Raman) and CD 10 (Ridley-Thomas). WRAC opposes the use of beaches and beach parking lots to house the unhoused.<sup>1</sup>

At a WRAC public committee meeting on August 1, 2021, a CD 11 representative announced that the CAO’s report is expected soon. The report of course will not bind Councilmembers. Meanwhile, PPCC reminds all public officials: *WRSB is not CD 11’s beach; it is not Pacific Palisades’ beach; and it is not the City Council’s beach.* It is a **State Park**, owned by the State and held in trust for **all Californians**, including **all people of the City and County**.

**WRSB must be preserved for families and children.**

It is beyond dispute that millions of people of *all ethnicities & income-levels from throughout the Southland* – including families with children – regularly visit WRSB for recreation and enjoyment. WRSB is **their** beach.

In fact, as demonstrated by a recent “Best of the Southland” survey conducted by the Los Angeles Times (in the August 1, 2021 print edition),<sup>2</sup> Angelenos regard WRSB as **one of the seven top “family friendly” attractions in all Los Angeles** – along with such iconic venues as the Natural History Museum, the California Science Center and the LA Zoo. WRSB was in fact the **only recreational open space (or beach) in the entire City** to be so-recognized.

No responsible public official would ever consider placing homeless housing at the now-open Natural History Museum, the California Science Center or the LA Zoo. Despite rhetoric from some officials and commentators that

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://westsidecouncils.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/WRAC-Letter-CF21-0530-1.pdf>. Note: the motion was also passed by Venice NC after the WRAC position letter was submitted.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.latimes.com/best-of-the-southland/story/2021-08-02/best-of-the-southland-westside-central-l-a>

“all options” must be on the table, these types of treasured public venues frequented by families and children are not recognized *in the first place* as suitable options for this proposed use. Certainly, the elected representatives of these respective venues – Councilmembers Price and Raman – to our knowledge have never proposed these sites, or even requested an evaluation as to whether or not they are “feasible” to house the unhoused. *So too, WRSB should never have been proposed in the first place and should be rejected now.*

**WRSB must be preserved for all.**

Removing a portion of WRSB<sup>3</sup> in order to make an exception for one segment of the population (the unhoused) – thus applying the rules unequally among beach users and *restricting access to the beach for all* – would directly contradict **principles of equity and social justice** that all City Councilmembers profess to support.

It would also contradict principles of **environmental justice**, now enshrined in State law and which the California Coastal Commission is authorized to consider when making decisions on required Coastal development permits (including this use, should either the City or County move forward with this proposal).<sup>4</sup> We submit that application of these principles demands that WRSB be rejected as a site for this purpose.

**13 Councilmembers effectively recognize that WRSB is inappropriate.**

Thirteen City Councilmembers voted in favor of Council File 21-1376-S1, which includes a prohibition on sitting or sleeping on public property *up to 500 ft. from sensitive uses such as public parks* (if posted and so-designated by City Council resolution). Thirteen Councilmembers clearly recognize that homeless dwelling should not occur – let alone be sanctioned -- on or near public parks. **WRSB is a State Park, open to all members of the public; dwelling is not allowed at WRSB** (either on the beach itself or in the parking lot). Consistent with its recent vote on CF 21-1376-S1, under no circumstances should the City Council approve housing for the unhoused at the WRSB parking lot, whether or not technically “feasible.”

**Public safety considerations demand that WRSB be rejected.**

We have previously identified numerous substantial risks to public safety – including **risk of harm to the unhoused** – arising from this proposal, *e.g.*, fires, flooding, landslides and serious injury from PCH traffic.<sup>5</sup> Recent developments corroborate the validity of our concerns and demonstrate that sanctioning such housing at the WRSB parking lot would be unconscionable. The City and/or the County might also be put at **risk of liability** should harm occur as a result.

Tsunami/flooding: An 8.2 earthquake occurred in Alaska this past Saturday, 7/31/21 – the largest earthquake in that region since the catastrophic 1965 earthquake. A tsunami warning was issued by the U.S. NOAA for the entire coastal area of California, and the central coast actually experienced tsunami conditions. The warning was eventually lifted,

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<sup>3</sup> The WRSB General Plan as well as County Code make clear that the beach parking lot is a necessary facility of the beach; the beach and its parking lot are together part of the State Park land owned by the State of California, and together are **one**. LACC §17.12.030.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://coastal.ca.gov/env-justice/>. Environmental justice is defined as “the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” Government Code Section 65040.12.

<sup>5</sup> <http://pacpalicc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PPCC-Letter-to-CAO.pdf> (see pp. 9-11).

but the concern should not be ignored.<sup>6</sup> Portions of Pacific Palisades are **in the tsunami zone** (including the beach parking lot) and a tsunami evacuation warning is posted nearby. The General Plan for WRSB also warns about the possibility of “waves capable of rendering damage, especially during high tides.” We have also noted the recent concerns of a Certified Consulting Meteorologist about inundation due to storm surges and astronomical high tides.

Landslides/hazard area: As we recently learned, the General Plan section on Resources cautions that “despite a broad beach,” WRSB is “in a zone which merits a **high hazard rating**.” It is subject to flooding, erosion, landslides, earthquakes, rockfalls and slumping, thus “endangering life and livelihood along the highway.” “**Rockfalls are common, and massive slumps are spectacular and disastrous.**” “Development on both sides of the highway [PCH], as well as the highway itself, is threatened by mass movement as well as debris torrents from canyon mouths.” In 1958, a massive landslide occurred directly above and onto WRSB, burying alive a Caltrans worker and causing the rerouting of PCH around the slide and construction of the new sand beach and parking lot areas used today. See an historical photo of the slide at: <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/digital/collection/p15799coll44/id/51710>.

Injury crossing PCH.

Injuries – including fatalities – experienced on PCH due to unsafe crossing, illegal jaywalking or unhoused, mentally-ill individuals wandering onto the highway are well-documented. This past weekend, **yet another such injury occurred:** an unhoused man with mental issues, who claimed to have been hit by a car on PCH, was found injured lying on the side of a road and was transported to a hospital (current condition unknown).

As we have previously emphasized: There are thousands of other potentially suitable sites in Los Angeles, currently being evaluated by Controller Galperin, which would not pose the same risk of harm to unhoused individuals. There is no order or directive requiring this use at WRSB or at any particular site – especially not a site that would be dangerous or unsuitable. In light of all the circumstances, we believe it would be the height of irresponsibility for the City Council to approve of housing for the unhoused at WRSB.

**Conclusion.**

Former Governor Jerry Brown was unquestionably right – placing housing for the unhoused at WRSB would be “**crazy.**” PPCC implores all Councilmembers: For the benefit of families, children and all beachgoers – and in the interest of the safety of the unhoused – please reject this ill-conceived and dangerous idea.

Executive Committee, Pacific Palisades Community Council

David Card, Chair

Christina Spitz, Secretary

David Kaplan, Vice-Chair

John Padden, Organization Representative (P.R.I.D.E.)

Richard G. Cohen, Treasurer

Joanna Spak, Elected Representative (Area 1; Castellammare, Paseo Miramar)

*cc: other City, County, State, Federal and relevant individuals and organizations (listed on p. 4, following)*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.tsunami.gov/>

cc (via email):

City: **Hon. Eric Garcetti**, Mayor, City of Los Angeles; **Hon. Mike Feuer**, City Attorney; **Hon. Ron Galperin**, City Controller; **Ralph M. Terrazas**, Chief, and **Armando Hogan**, Deputy Chief & West Bureau Commander, LAFD; **Michel R. Moore**, Chief, and **Jonathan Tom**, Captain III & West Division Commanding Officer, LAPD; **Patricia J. Huber**, Asst. CAO and Executive Officer; **Ben Ceja**, Asst. CAO; **Meg Barclay**, CAO's office/Homeless Strategy

County: **Hon. Hilda Solis**, Chair, County Board of Supervisors; **Hon. Sheila Kuehl**, County Supervisor, CSD 3; **Hon. Janice Hahn**, County Supervisor, CSD 4; **Hon. Kathryn Barger**, County Supervisor, CSD 5; **Hon. Holly J. Mitchell**, County Supervisor, CSD 2; **Daryl L. Osby**, Chief, County Fire Dept.; **Gary Jones**, Director, and **Kerry Silverstrom**, Chief Deputy Director, County Beaches & Harbors Dept.; **Cris Liban**, Chair, Beach Commission; **Clark Stevens**, Executive Officer, and **R.C. Brody**, President, Board of Directors, Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains

Joint City/County: **Heidi Marston**, Executive Director, LAHSA; **Wendy Greuel**, Chair, LAHSA Commission

State: **Hon. Gavin Newsom**, Governor, State of California (via Jason Elliott, Senior Counselor for Housing & Homelessness); **Hon. Ben Allen**, State Senator, SD 26; **Hon. Henry Stern**, State Senator, SD 27; **Hon. Richard Bloom**, State Assemblyman, AD 50; **Jack Ainsworth**, Executive Director, and **Steve Hudson**, District Director, California Coastal Commission; **Sam Schuchat**, Executive Director, and **Megan Cooper**, Regional Manager, California State Coastal Conservancy; **Guangyu Wang**, Chief Administrative Director, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission; **Wade Crowfoot**, Secretary for Natural Resources, and **Angela Barranco**, Undersecretary for Natural Resources, California Natural Resources Agency; **Armando Quintero**, Director, and **Jerry West**, Angeles District (acting) Superintendent, California State Parks; **Rue Mapp**, Chair, State Park and Recreation Commission; **Jennifer Lucchesi**, Executive Officer, State Lands Commission; **Joseph T. Edmiston**, Executive Director, MRCA and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy; **Tony Tavares**, Director, Caltrans District 7

Federal: **Hon. Diane Feinstein**, U.S. Senator (via Peter Muller, Deputy State Director); **Hon. Alex Padilla**, U.S. Representative (via Lauren Gallant, Sr. Field Representative); **Hon. Ted Lieu**, U.S. Representative, 33<sup>rd</sup> District (via Janet Turner, Field Supervisor); **Judge David O. Carter**, U.S. District Court Judge, Central District of California; **Cindy Orlando**, (Acting) Regional Director, Interior Region 8, National Park Service; **David Szymanski**, Superintendent, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area; **Tom Ford**, Director, Santa Monica Bay National Estuary Program

Other: **Hon. Paul Grisanti**, Mayor, City of Malibu; **Hon. James Bozajian**, Mayor, City of Calabasas; **Hon. Denis Weber**, Mayor, City of Agoura Hills; **Carrie Carrier**, President, Topanga Town Council; **Kim Lamorie**, President, Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation; **Rachel Norton**, Executive Director, California State Parks Foundation; **Guillermo Rodriguez**, State Director, The Trust for Public Land; **Morgan Goodwin**, Sr. Chapter Director, Sierra Club/Angeles Chapter; **Shelley Luce**, President & Chief Executive Officer, Heal the Bay; **Tom Ford**, Executive Director, The Bay Foundation; **Bruce Reznik**, Executive Director, LA Waterkeeper; **Graham Hamilton**, LA Chapter Coordinator, Surfrider Foundation