



PACIFIC PALISADES COMMUNITY COUNCIL

August 6, 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) calls your attention to additional, recently-learned and relevant facts:

Lawsuit against the City

The Los Angeles Times reported this week that a woman who was struck by a car and injured while bypassing a homeless encampment in Hollywood has brought a lawsuit against the City. She reportedly alleges that the tents blocking the sidewalk were a dangerous condition known to the City. An unhoused individual was also struck. See: <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-08-04/woman-sues-after-being-hit-by-a-car-on-street-where-homeless-encampment-blocks-the-sidewalk>.

We have provided the City with ample notice of dangerous conditions on PCH vis a vis unhoused individuals with mental or addiction issues who frequent the Palisades beach and bluff areas and are repeatedly struck by cars – sometimes fatally –when the individuals jay walk or otherwise wander into traffic in the freeway-like conditions. This occurred as recently as last weekend in Pacific Palisades. It is the first duty of elected officials to protect public safety. For City Councilmembers to sanction the siting of housing for the unhoused at the WRSB parking lot adjacent to PCH – knowing of these dangerous conditions – would be reckless in the extreme and an abdication of its responsibility to the public. At the very least, the City would be subject to liability for injuries caused by these and other dangerous conditions in the area of WRSB that we have brought to the attention of public officials.

Motion before the Board of Supervisors

On August 10, the LA County Board of Supervisors will vote on consent on a motion by Supervisors Sheila Kuehl and Kathryn Barger (“Reducing the Risk of Fires Associated with Homeless Encampments in High Fire Hazard Severity Zones” – the BOS Motion): <http://bos.lacounty.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=kQedIaY5uUg%3d&portalid=1> (no. 18 on the consent calendar; motion text linked in the agenda). The motion calls for a **prohibition on homeless encampments in the Very High Fire Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) in Los Angeles County’s unincorporated areas.**

The BOS Motion declares: “PEH [People Experiencing Homelessness] in unincorporated County designated VHFHSZ pose a clear and imminent danger demanding immediate action to prevent or mitigate loss of, or damage to life, health, property and/or essential services. . . To mitigate the risk of fires, LACoF should prohibit homeless encampments in in Unincorporated County designated VHFHSZ’s.”

The entirety of Pacific Palisades, including WRSB, is in the VHFHSZ. The same compelling facts and reasoning underlying the BOS Motion are present in connection with this proposal involving WRSB – the fact that WRSB is in an incorporated County area is irrelevant in terms of the risk. In our many letters, we have alerted public officials to the risk of wildfires not only to the unhoused themselves but to the entire region of the Santa Monica Mountains – including state and federal parkland – should homeless dwelling of any kind be approved and sited at the WRSB parking lot. City officials should be *working to reduce the risk of wildfires* by taking actions proposed in the BOS Motion in the City’s VHFHSZ areas and prohibiting homeless dwelling in these dangerous areas – not *increasing the risk* by actually sanctioning such dwelling in VHFHSZ areas.

A “firebug” recently returned to the WRSB area

On Thursday, August 5, 2021, a homeless individual named “Israel” was spotted by volunteers with the Pacific Palisades Task Force on Homelessness at the WRSB parking lot. A photograph was taken and provided to law enforcement. He is known to volunteers, to LAPD and to park rangers in the nearby Santa Monica Mountains area to be a “firebug” – an arsonist – and has been observed starting numerous fires in the area. We have explained that this risk is constantly present and fires are often started on WRSB and in the nearby bluff and canyon areas, whether illegally by “firebugs” or by other activities of homeless individuals, such as starting fires for warmth. All of these actions pose a serious threat to the safety of the unhoused as well as the housed of the region – a threat expressly identified by Supervisors Kuehl and Barger which the BOS Motion sensibly seeks to minimize. Sanctioning homeless dwelling of any kind at WRSB will only exacerbate the threat.

Gov. Newsom opposes encampments in public parks

The Los Angeles Times reported on August 5, 2021 on an interview its reporters had with Governor Gavin Newsom. See: https://www.latimes.com/homeless-housing/story/2021-08-05/newsom-in-recall-fight-says-its-not-acceptable-for-homeless-to-camp-on-streets?_amp=true. They report that the Governor “expressed strong support on Thursday for increased efforts around California to remove large homeless encampments,” that he “**made clear that tents along freeways and in public parks are not OK,**” and that he “applauded the removal from camps in Echo Park Lake and Venice Beach,” while at the same time supporting more “humane processes” for removal and “creating more housing options.” “*You’ve got to be honest, this is not acceptable,*” Newsom said.”

To restate the obvious: **WRSB is a state park used by millions of people of all walks of life from throughout the region and beyond.** Gov. Newsom agrees that homeless encampments in public parks are unacceptable. He is thus in agreement with former Gov. Brown, Judge Carter, the LA Times, The People Concern’s John Maceri – and even with Councilmember Bonin, who publicly stated in his June 22, 2021 “note to neighbors” that “**all Angelenos should be able to enjoy our neighborhoods, beaches and parks.**” See his statement at: <https://11thdistrict.com/news/e2h-venice/>.

In light of these strong public positions and the continuing, concerning events and threats to public safety, under no circumstances should the City Council approve of housing for the unhoused at WRSB. Again, no further time should

be wasted on examining WRSB for this purpose. Let us all turn our attention to productive efforts to find humane solutions and to ascertain *suitable, non-dangerous* sites for homeless housing in Los Angeles – which surely exist among the thousands of public properties identified and currently being evaluated by Controller Ron Galperin.

Thank you.

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 (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, 33rd 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