

10-0529

MOTION

BUDGET & FINANCE

MAR 30 2010

For many years, some outdoor advertising companies and building owners have chosen to flagrantly ignore City sign laws by illegally erecting or modifying billboards and giant supergraphic signs. The actions of these scofflaws have endangered the safety of the public and exposed us all to a bombardment of unregulated visual clutter and aesthetic degradation. Illegal billboards and supergraphic signs negatively impact vast portions of our City.

Last August, the City Council took a bold and aggressive step in stopping out-of-control outdoor advertising when it enacted into law an outright ban on any new billboards and supergraphic signs. Additionally, over the past month, the City Attorney's Office initiated a crack down on those who violate the City's sign laws. The aggressive enforcement efforts of the City Attorney's Office have already made a significance difference. Giant illegal supergraphic signs are starting to come down. We hope that the City Attorney's stepped up enforcement is just beginning, but we have learned that a critical resource to this enforcement effort is lacking -- experienced investigators.

In order to continue these enforcement efforts, the City Attorney's Office needs experienced investigators as soon as possible to support the investigations and prosecutions. Some of the critical functions performed by investigators include: 1. identifying, locating and interviewing witnesses; 2. organizing and conducting undercover operations; 3. documenting sign installations for use as evidence in court; 4. researching the identity of those who install, own and manufacture illegal signs and those who contract to allow the signs to be installed on their buildings; 5. performing record and background checks on individual and corporate suspects and defendants and conducting asset searches; and, 6. locating defendants for service of process and/or arrest, serving subpoenas and assisting in executing search warrants.


Fortunately, there is an available source of funding to assist the City Attorney's Office in getting the experienced investigators that it needs to continue the office's successful crack down. The funds come pursuant to a settlement that the City entered into in 2003 to allow continued signage at the Westwood Medical Building by the supergraphic sign company Skytag. *WW Westwood v. City of Los Angeles*, US District Court Case No. SACV 01-294 DOC (ANX). Approximately \$600,000 is presently available from this settlement. Additionally, the City continues to accrue revenue from this settlement. It is only appropriate that this money derived from signage be dedicated to the City Attorney Office's stepped up enforcement against sign violations.

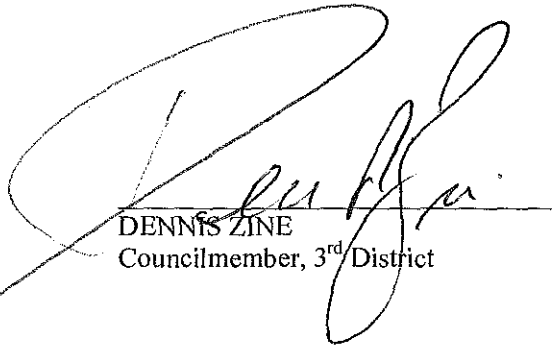
In addition, these funds will allow this Council to rehire recently laid off employees and/or save jobs of employees facing imminent lay off, particularly 1) investigators in various departments around the City and/or 2) current Building and Safety employees or inspectors in other departments facing lay off.

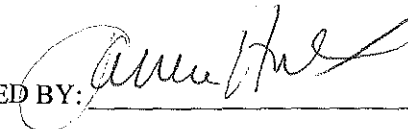
I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council authorize the Chief Administrative Officer and the City Controller to transfer the funds as necessary from the Fund 100, Department 12, Balance Sheet Account 2200 Miscellaneous Deposits to the appropriate account to support the investigative staffing needs of the City Attorney's Office.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council instruct the Personnel Department with the assistance of the Chief Administrative Officer work to determine which recently laid off employees and/or employees slated for lay off are available to perform this work.

PRESENTED BY:


PAUL KORETZ
Councilmember, 5th District


DENNIS ZINE
Councilmember, 3rd District

SECONDED BY: 



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ORIGINAL