



Los Angeles  
World Airports

January 17, 2019

The Honorable Nury Martinez  
Councilmember, Council District 6  
Los Angeles City Hall  
200 N. Spring Street, Room 470  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

The Honorable Joe Buscaino  
Councilmember, Council District 15  
Los Angeles City Hall  
200 N. Spring Street, Room 410  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

LAX

Van Nuys

City of Los Angeles

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Mayor

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Dr. Cynthia A. Telles

Deborah Flint  
Chief Executive Officer

Re: Support for Motion 16-1433-S1, Special Event Permits for Hangars

Dear Councilmembers Martinez and Buscaino:

On behalf of the Los Angeles Board of Airport Commissioners, we write in strong support of Council Motion 16-1433-S1, which you filed, and which was seconded by Council President Wesson and Planning and Land Use Committee Chair Harris-Dawson, on December 11, 2018. This motion would allow for the safe continuation of important community events at Los Angeles International (LAX) and Van Nuys (VNY) general aviation airports.

For years, events have been held in the hangars at LAX and VNY. These events have ranged from special events for the Space Shuttle Endeavor and the Olympics to annual events hosted by community organizations and for children from local hospitals and schools. It is a common practice at airports, and some airports in neighboring cities even promote their hangars as exclusive event spaces.

As with everything we do at our airports, safety has been paramount in our approving these events. They have been carried out in close coordination with our Operations team, the Airport Police, and the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) – which routinely has granted permits for Temporary Special Events in hangars.

Nonetheless, beginning in November 2018 some of our tenants and lessees began having difficulty obtaining the required approvals from LAFD. We understand that the denials stemmed from LAFD and Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) reexamination of policy following the December 2016 Ghost Ship fire in Oakland that took 36 lives. Although we share LAFD and LADBS's commitment to safety and horror at this tragic event, we are concerned that the change in how policy was implemented came abruptly and failed to recognize the differences between hangars and warehouses.

For the two years following the fire, events in the hangars continued to receive approvals. Prior to the denial of permits for such events this past fall, no notice was given to sponsors of annual events who had received permits for many years. Nor was any notice given to Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) or any policy guidance issued prior to the denials.

Furthermore, there are important distinctions between warehouses and hangars. The Ghost Ship was a warehouse-like space being used as an artists' collective, and when a



fire broke out during a late-night rave, it lacked fire suppression systems and sufficient unobstructed exits. In contrast, hangars have fire suppression systems and ample means of egress.

This policy has had a negative impact on events at both VNY and LAX that have had to be modified significantly at the last minute – with safety implications. Specifically, after denying permits for hangar events at both LAX and VNY, LAFD suggested that portable tents be used on the airfield to hold the events. This is an unacceptable alternative that presents safety issues that should be of greater concern than events held in hangars. For example, an event that was moved to a tent at VNY created more safety issues than had the event been held in a hangar at the airport. The policy also threatens the cancellation of future community-serving events.

Your motion would permit the safe continuation of these events, by requiring:

- LADBS and LAFD to report on a system of allowing special events in hangars at LAX and VNY and other suitable spaces at the Harbor, and what safety requirements would be needed for such events; and
- The Chief Legislative Analyst, along with the City Attorney, LADBS and LAFD, to report on what state and local legislative changes would be needed to allow temporary special events at City-owned facilities.

We also understand that LADBS is working on a draft ordinance on this subject. We ask for your assistance in assuring that LADBS consults with LAWA in developing this ordinance, which should incorporate the requirements set forth in your motion and provide clear guidance for the allowance of temporary special events in hangars.

We look forward to working with you, LADBS and LAFD to allow our local community members to use our facilities safely. If we can be of any assistance, please contact Mark Adams, Government Affairs Director at (424) 646- 5030.

Sincerely,



Sean O. Burton  
President

SB:mds

cc: Mayor Garcetti  
Council President Wesson  
Councilmember Harris-Dawson  
Councilmember Bonin  
LAWA CEO Flint  
LAFD Chief Terrazas  
LADBS General Manager Bush