

Communication from Public

Name: Diane Valencia
Date Submitted: 08/27/2019 04:25 PM
Council File No: 19-0050

Comments for Public Posting: While communities across Los Angeles continue to struggle with the homelessness crisis, mitigating fire risk associated with trespassing, loitering, camping and other illegal activities within the VHFHSZ must be a priority. We also must decrease the exposure of the unsheltered who are living in the path of fires. The Sylmar Neighborhood Council, per a letter dated February 1, 2018 (link to the letter: <https://www.sylmarneighborhoodcouncil.org/productphotos/2018-02-01%20Homeless%20Encampments%20VHFHSVs.pdf>) asked that the City enforce its laws with regard to trespassing within the VHFHSZ. Though not all fires that communities have dealt with over the past few years have been related to homeless encampments, a significant number have been. Though residents have continued to report hillside encampments through all reasonable means (Council Office, LAPD, LAFD, etc.) we often see encampments within the VHFHSZ, even when it is known that cooking stoves, propane or other combustible items are being used, being allowed to remain for days and sometimes weeks. One particular encampment, which was in plain view from the road and had been reported multiple times, was allowed to remain for approximately 6 weeks though several agencies visited the occupants during that time. It was only after that encampment caught fire that the problem was resolved. That particular fire spread and came very close to running up to homes and could easily have destroyed homes if the wind and weather conditions had been less favorable that day. Many residents who have had to deal with multiple large scale brush fires in the NE San Fernando Valley - Marek, Sayre, Station, Creek, etc. do not share the view that there are many days when there is "no imminent fire danger" within the VHFHSZ. Residents and property owners can do all they can to mitigate their own risk, but if encampments are allowed to remain in the brush and not removed expeditiously, it puts everyone and their home, business or camp at risk. With respect to Tier 1 in the Operational Guidelines, perhaps the LAFD could comment further on how the category of "no imminent fire risk" was determined. Only this week, there was a fire in Glendale/Los Angeles which was not on a Red Flag Day and that fire grew quickly with evacuations of nearby homes noted at one point. Fire behavior cannot be precisely predicted and weather conditions can quickly change. Under the Operational Guidelines, it is noted that data will be gathered from only five sources: LAFD Windshield Surveys (meaning what only can be seen from the road), Recreation and Parks information, LASAN which has limited responsibility, LAPD which, other than HOPE is not currently gathering formal data and Caltrans whose controlled areas are hands off for almost every City department. No data will formally be collected from LA County, Metro, Caltrans, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and others. No data will be collected from private property owners. Encampments are often hidden from the road due to occupants seeking privacy so the data collected will likely be incomplete. Will the UHRC data be published so that area residents can verify that problem areas they are aware of have been mapped? LAHSA will engage with individuals encamped in brush area that are accessible to their fleet. What about the majority of the encampment in the brush areas that "the fleet" cannot drive to? Areas needing Trespass Letters on file should be identified and the letters requested well before a Red Flag event. Large parcels in the VHFHSZ are often vacant with the owners in another city, state or even Country. Identifying and removing trespassers in the VHFHSZ prior to a Red Flag Event may well help to prevent a fire during which the First Responders will end up needing to rescue trespassers in known problematic areas, thereby potentially putting additional pressure on already stretched public safety resources. Property and lives may be put at risk as resources, particularly in the early stages of a fire, are directed to verifying that vacant land, covered with brush, is actually vacant or evacuating occupants of known encampments. Most encampments will not be located until at least a Tier 2 event. Many will still not be located making it impossible for the UHRC to assist with targeting resources to the area with the highest likelihood of having inhabited encampments during a Tier 3 event. I respectfully ask that this Tier system and response protocols included within each Tier be reconsidered to ensure that the City is taking a stronger approach with regard to enforcement of No Trespassing within the VHFHSZ, thereby mitigating a significant and known hazard to the people and property within these areas of the City.

Communication from Public

Name: Jennifer Granger

Date Submitted: 08/27/2019 06:52 AM

Council File No: 19-0050

Comments for Public Posting: I support the approval of this measure as the homeless encampments in high risk fire areas are dangerous and pose a serious public threat of wild fire during fire season. Frequently the residents of these encampments cook with an open flame in areas with an abundance of dry brush that can easily catch fire putting their lives and many other lives at risk. I have been caught in a wildfire and they are unpredictable and move with terrifying speed.

Communication from Public

Name: Nancy Shannon

Date Submitted: 08/27/2019 11:35 AM

Council File No: 19-0050

Comments for Public Posting: Council File: 19-0050: I live in a high risk area, where we experience encampment fires on a weekly basis. I am still traumatized by back to back fires from 2017. It is vitally important that our law enforcement be able to act in an expedient manner to rid our canyons, hill sides, etc of transient squatters without jumping through hoops. We lose valuable time when there are so many steps just to ensure not only our safety, but the safety of the squatters. We are all now well aware that there has been an increase in the homeless tampering with the fire hydrants in addition to stealing the copper wire out of our city lighting. At what point do we say "enough" and do something that actually benefits us all?

Communication from Public

Name: Matt Maxon

Date Submitted: 08/27/2019 08:51 AM

Council File No: 19-0050

Comments for Public Posting: This is a long time coming. The city needs to protect lives and property of the Citizens and Taxpayers of the City of Los Angeles and has been turning a blind eye to this very serious problem for years. While home and property owners along with renters have to deal with fire threats to their lives and property. All the while the city sits on its hands saying there are court orders that the city attorney didn't contest and just rolled over for. Don't really need another law when the ones already on the books are not enforced due to policies handed down to the Police and Fire Departments. I see this as a ploy to say you the city council and mayor's office are doing something while actually doing nothing

Communication from Public

Name: Paul M. Papp

Date Submitted: 08/27/2019 11:22 AM

Council File No: 19-0050

Comments for Public Posting: As someone who lives in a high fire area of Sylmar and who was a victim of the Creek fire. I believe the ordinance should be changed so that homeless encampments can be removed that prove to be a threat for fire. And I also believe that signs should be posted in these areas. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that removing the encampments will save time, money and resources that could be best used to elsewhere. Thank you, Paul Papp