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May 6, 2024

The Honorable Tim McOsker, Chair
Personnel, Audits, and Hiring Committee
Los Angeles City Council
c/o the City Clerk, City Hall Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

ATTN: Jason Lopez, Legislative Assistant

RE: Council File 23-0154 relative to hiring process related to the Park Gate Closure Program under the Security Services Division

Dear Honorable Councilmembers:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding the History and Background of the Park Gate Closure Program and update the committee on the current Park Ranger operations within the Department of Recreation and Parks.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND:

In 1989, the Los Angeles City Park Ranger Division became a certified law enforcement agency and was recognized by Police Officer Standard and Training (POST). Up until 2005, the Park Ranger Division had approximately 65 rangers, with a mix of sworn and non-sworn, interpretive rangers. At that time the Park Gate Closure Program (PGCP) was conducted by six full time rangers, (2 senior rangers, 4 park rangers and approximately 40 security officers and 4 dispatchers). The Park Ranger Division, at that time, was a 24-7 operation.

In 2005, the Mayor and City Council transferred all the duties of the PGCP and other related tasks to the General Services Office of Public Safety Police (OPS) and thereafter to the LAPD Security Services Division. The LAPD and Recreation and Parks entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) establishing the roles and relationship between LAPD and RAP. In the agreement, LAPD inherited from RAP: approximately 30 park rangers (currently recognized as municipal police), many park ranger vehicles, and several millions of dollars to fund the PGCP. The LAPD SSD also received the funding from RAP for the creation of 8 Senior Lead Officer (SLO) positions to collaborate and work with the remaining park rangers of the Park Ranger Division and share information with LAPD Divisional SLO's. RAP lost operational logistics after all communications staff and operational equipment were all transferred to GSD in the initial merger. RAP retained 19 Park Ranger positions who would only be able to provide halftime coverage for each of the regional parks during peak park usage hours (10am to 8pm). The Ranger Division was no longer a 24-7 operation. **The PGCP is specifically identified as an LAPD responsibility under the terms of the MOA between LAPD and RAP.** When the LAPD SSD



maintained their staffing levels for the PGCP with the funding provided to them, the PGCP had a 90 to 100 percent compliance rate, the compliance rate was beyond a satisfactory level.

CURRENT RANGER OPERATIONS

Staffing levels for the Park Rangers is currently at 29 which consists of the following:

- 1 Chief Ranger
- 2 Sr. Ranger 2
- 6 Sr. Ranger 1
- 1 Interpretive Ranger
- 18 Park Rangers

To emphasize the current staffing levels, when the management and supervisory rangers are removed from the count, the ranger division deploys 18 rangers to support park safety at the City's vast regional parks and support public safety response at all 490 parks citywide. Additionally, the Homeless Related Service Team (HRST), deploys 2 rangers from the 18 rangers to deploy full time on park homeless concerns and service requests. Although the Park Ranger Division responds to fires in parks, council office requests, citizen concerns, radio calls, rescues, criminal investigations and many other calls for service. The park rangers are currently deployed in the city's regional parks to include: Griffith Park, one of the largest parks in North America, Debs Park, Hansen Dam, Lake Balboa, Elysian Park and until very recently Ken Malloy Harbor Regional Park. It should be noted that Park Rangers must also cover dispatch operations due to limited communications positions.

The Park Ranger Division is one of key components of addressing park safety, particularly in regional parks, but RAP coordinates closely with LAPD to address law enforcement issues in city parks in all of their geographical patrol divisions and are jointly responsible for park safety. The current staffing levels of the Park Ranger Division makes it impossible to address safety concerns at all 490-city parks.

The Park Ranger Division operates seven days a week from 7am. to 8pm. After 8pm, there are no rangers or dispatchers deployed. The LAPD provides service to the city on a 24 hours a day basis. The PGCP requires that about 100 parks be secured at dusk and upon park closure hours of 1030pm., which requires that personnel be assigned to this program to work into the early morning hours.

Unfortunately, the hiring of security personnel throughout the city has been and continues to be a consistent problem for many city agencies, including the Park Ranger Division. The Park Ranger Division is currently under a hiring freeze due to the city financial status, while the LAPD is not. In fact, the Park Ranger Division is in a position where they stand to lose most vacant positions in the current proposed budget.

At this time, it would not be feasible for the PGCP to return to RAP. As noted above, RAP's Park Ranger Division is understaffed and unable to meet basic deployment to the Department's regional parks. That fact that the Park Ranger Division only has 18 park rangers, solidifies the fact that the Ranger Division does not have sufficient staffing levels to operate nor sustain this program. Transitioning this program back to RAP without the proper staffing levels and logistics would present major safety concerns to the park rangers and the operation as a whole.

As such it is strongly recommended that the PGCP remain with the LAPD SSD as agreed upon with the original Memorandum of Agreement signed in 2005.

Questions regarding this correspondence can be directed to Chief Joe Losorelli, at (213) 364-1485.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J/Kim', written in a cursive style.

Jimmy Kim
General Manager