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Budget Committee Item 13- Support Funding to Defend the City Against Venice Dell Lawsuits

1 message

Patricia Procter

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Members of the Budget and Finance Committee,

I strongly support the request for this funding to fight the Venice Dell lawsuits. It is ironic that the parties who stand to benefit from the City's giveaway of public land and public funds are now criticizing the City for spending public funds to defend against their baseless lawsuits. The City **must** defend itself against these bad actors and correct a pattern of lack of accountability and fiscal irresponsibility.

Regarding the Venice Dell project, the project is now dead and cannot proceed, based on the binding decision of the City's Transportation Commission (and supported by the Housing & Homelessness and Transportation Committees earlier this year). Members of Council had the opportunity to appeal that decision but did not. Reversing this dead project would inevitably lead to more litigation resulting in further delay of the Council-approved option of a feasibility study on the adjacent lot #701 to build a sensible affordable housing project, and a mobility hub on public lot # 731 to promote connectivity in Venice and welcome all visitors from LA and throughout the world. If the developers are genuine in their intent to help those in need, they should proceed with a housing project on the alternative adjacent public lot #701.

Make no mistake, the Venice Dell project was a land grab proposed for the most unsuitable site for the proposed project on one of the City's most valuable pieces of land a block from its #1 tourist attraction, Venice Beach.

The building of these outrageously expensive \$1.2 million, 400 sq ft units would drastically impede public access to the beach for all Angelenos and worldwide visitors. **What should be of extreme concern to all involved is the highly questionable appraisal of \$3.349 million in 2020 for 40 lots a block from the beach.** The same land was appraised in 2016 for \$34 million and, based on realistic comps, today is worth well over \$70 million. It seems the appraisal was used to deliberately undervalue the land in order to unconstitutionally "gift" this public land to preferred developers for a lease of \$1/year for 99 years, of which only 55 years would be restricted as "affordable," meaning the last 44 years can be market rate housing. This appraisal is still being used to solicit both federal and state funding for a project that is dead.

In addition, this heavily utilized recreational parking lot # 731 brings in \$1 million annually for the City, the loss of which is yet another cost to the City of the Venice Dell project.

This flawed project has been an embarrassment from the outset. The out of control costs were demonstrated repeatedly; for example, the architect was paid \$3.9 million but it was later found he did not qualify under funding guidelines, and had to be replaced. The developers' mistakes must not be the City's liability.

Those now suing the city to cover their mistakes are recruiting outside organizations to intervene via email and social media campaigns. These groups do not speak on behalf of Venice residents or the millions of visitors to Venice Beach. It is unfortunate that the City must defend itself against litigation full of mistruths and deceitful accusations from developers and their related parties who seem intent on extorting more money and land from the City, rather than facing the project's denial and moving forward in their mission of building "affordable housing."

I strongly support the funding for outside counsel to defend the City against the Venice Dell lawsuits and commend our elected officials for standing up to the graft. Please approve the legal funds needed to put an end to this bad faith exploitation of public policy that undermines both public trust and the integrity of Los Angeles' affordable housing policies.

Thank you-

Patricia Procter