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May 21, 2026

Los Angeles City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
City Hall, Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attention: Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

**Subject: Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP)
Recommendations for Charter Amendments – Security**

Dear Honorable Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide LADWP's recommendations for Charter and associated Administrative Code reform at the January 15, 2026, Personnel and Budget Committee meeting. LADWP appreciates many of the proprietary departments' recommendations being included as part of the April 2, 2026, Los Angeles Charter Reform Commission Staff Report (Staff Report). While the Staff Report provided important proposals, continued forward thinking is needed in a host of areas to bring transformational change to our City and those LADWP serves. This letter further highlights our key priorities, offers meaningful solutions, and stresses the need to improve upon legacy constructs.

As the largest municipal utility in the nation, serving over four million residents and businesses, LADWP is both an essential service provider and an economic engine for the region. Our operations are funded entirely by customer revenues, not the City's General Fund, and monies we receive are invested back into the system or transferred to the City's General Fund to support ongoing initiatives. Our \$9 billion annual budget funds critical operations, maintenance, and new projects to ensure safe and reliable water and power now, and into the future. The most vital aspect of our success has always been our dedicated workforce of over 12,000 employees.

Today, we are working diligently with our customers, communities, and co-workers to be the nation's most trusted public utility, delivering resilient and affordable carbon-free electricity and sustainable water through innovation, equity, and partnerships. Delivering on this promise requires transformational change in our culture and ways of working. We must continue to commit to continuous improvement, transparency, and accountability - and we will need changes in the current Charter and Administrative Code that undermine our efforts.

Why Reform is Needed Now

One year after the January 2025 wildfires, LADWP is proud of the progress we have made in recovery and rebuilding of the Pacific Palisades and strengthening resilience of our entire system. Looking ahead, we forecast that we will need to invest more than \$20 billion over the next five years to modernize our infrastructure for electrification, develop recycled water capacity, upgrade aging assets, and support the convention center upgrade, FIFA World Cup in 2026, and Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2028. Paired with this investment, we will need to hire a net increase of 4,200 employees.

To ensure safe, reliable, and affordable service, we are working to optimize our internal performance and efficiency. However, internal efforts alone will not lead to success. We also require system changes – several of which derive from Charter rules that were established based on historical conditions that no longer define our context. Specifically, we have identified a set of proposed changes that will improve customer affordability, enhance reliability and public safety, and unlock the full potential of our workforce while adhering to our values of continuous improvement, data-informed decision making, and accountability.

Security

LADWP operates critical infrastructure such as power generation facilities, electrical substations, reservoirs, and high-value cybersecurity assets across California and other states. In conjunction, the Department is experiencing a sustained and escalating pattern of criminal activity targeting its critical infrastructure. Incidents involving terrorism, drone threats, sabotage, copper and equipment theft, vandalism, and direct threats against field personnel have increased in terms of frequency, scope, scale, and determinantal impact. These occurrences not only undermine the integrity of Los Angeles' power and water infrastructure, but in severe circumstances could also pose grave public safety hazards, the impact of which could be significant.

To mitigate these threats, LADWP needs its own municipal police force to secure its critical infrastructure. Allowing LADWP to protect its own personnel, assets, and operations, is in alignment with other City proprietary departments, such as Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) and the Port of Los Angeles (POLA), both of which have similar security needs that merited the establishment of their own police authority. To enable this, LADWP needs a City Charter change to grant LADWP operational parity with the other proprietary departments. In addition to creating a new Charter section granting LADWP the authority to employ peace officers, an amendment to *California Penal Code* §830.1 would be needed as well to provide peace officer status.

LADWP currently has unarmed security officers at many of its facilities, however the existing security model is constrained by regulatory and operational limitations. LADWP security officers are not eligible for designation as peace officers under any current statutory provision, and function with limited authority as private security personnel. LADWP's unarmed proprietary and contract security are restricted to "observe and report" functions under Bureau of Security and Investigative Services (BSIS) regulations. They lack the authority to detain or arrest suspects, intervene in crimes in progress, conduct searches, or carry firearms for enforcement purposes. These limitations prevent LADWP personnel from taking meaningful action, such as stopping, detaining and/or arresting perpetrators, to protect LADWP infrastructure and employees. Additionally, contract security are not equipped or authorized to perform advanced security functions, including counterterrorism coordination, intelligence integration, or specialized threat response within the context of utility asset protection.

This vulnerability was underscored by a significant incident in early 2026 involving a deliberate terrorist attack on a critical LADWP facility. An individual drove a vehicle through a perimeter fence and entered the property while in possession of explosive materials and multiple weapons. Although the suspect died by suicide prior to initiating an attack, the potential consequences were severe. Had the individual detonated the materials or engaged personnel, the incident could have resulted in catastrophic infrastructure damage, widespread service disruption, and loss of life. This event demonstrates that LADWP infrastructure is a viable target for individuals seeking to inflict large-scale harm and highlights the limitations of the current security posture.

A critical gap also exists in the area of unmanned aerial systems (UAS). Under the federal *Safer Skies Act*, only sworn law enforcement personnel are authorized to detect, disrupt, or mitigate hostile unmanned aircraft activity. As a result, LADWP currently lacks the legal authority to deploy counter-UAS technologies, leaving reservoirs, power generation facilities, and other critical sites vulnerable to aerial surveillance and potential attack.

Currently, the Department is dependent on local law enforcement to respond in a timely manner, which can be insufficient for various reasons, including the fact that LADWP has critical infrastructure in remote locations. Further, regional agencies, while cooperative, are operating under significant demand which could impact their response times, and the availability of resources that specialize in infrastructure-related crimes. Delays hinder timely intervention, reduce investigative effectiveness, and contribute to repeat victimization of LADWP facilities. The current model leaves critical infrastructure exposed during the most vulnerable phases of criminal activity (e.g., preparation, reconnaissance, and initial access).

By establishing its own municipal police force, LADWP would have the standalone ability needed to protect its personnel and operations while simultaneously freeing up LAPD to respond more expeditiously to their existing calls for service. Staffing is projected to range between twenty and fifty sworn officers, supported by essential functions including dispatch, crime analysis, evidence management, and administrative services. This structure will allow LADWP to develop a small but fully integrated, professional police organization tailored to the unique demands of critical infrastructure protection. It will be a targeted force focused only on protecting critical infrastructure and therefore will not infringe on other law enforcement agency jurisdictions or mission sets.

A LADWP sworn police force would provide immediate law enforcement response on LADWP property, reduce dependence on external agencies, and enable proactive patrol, criminal enforcement, and investigative capabilities. It would also position LADWP to participate fully in regional and federal intelligence sharing networks, strengthen counterterrorism readiness, and implement counter-drone operations consistent with the *Safer Skies Act* of December 2025 all in an effort to protect critical infrastructure.

LADWP would implement this capability through a phased, controlled staffing model over a five-year period. The department will prioritize internal recruitment from its existing security workforce, particularly those who already possess Peace Officer Standards and Training (“POST”) certification. Retired police officers from other agencies will provide an additional pool of seasoned talent. This approach will deconflict recruiting efforts so that LADWP does not compete with LAPD staffing. In fact, by creating its own LADWP police force, LADWP’s officers could augment LAPD through mutual aid during large scale events or disasters.

The risks facing LADWP have evolved beyond the capabilities of its current security model. Unarmed personnel and contract services are not equipped to address increasingly sophisticated criminal and potential terrorist threats. Continued reliance on external law enforcement agencies, given current demand constraints, is not sustainable given the level of responsiveness or specialization required. Establishing a dedicated LADWP Police Department is essential to ensuring operational continuity, protecting personnel, mitigating risk, and safeguarding the City’s vital water and power infrastructure.

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Our specific reform recommendations are as follows:

LADWP Charter and Administrative Code Reform Recommendations

1) Proposed Charter Reform Recommendation: Authorize LADWP Municipal Police Force

Authorize LADWP to establish and operate a sworn, autonomous municipal police force, modeled after existing Charter authority granted to the Los Angeles World Airports (Charter §§631 & 636) and Port of Los Angeles (Charter §657). The reform would create a new Charter section granting LADWP the authority to employ peace officers with powers under *California Penal Code* §830.1, enabling full law-enforcement capability to protect critical water and power infrastructure.

Issue Area: Security		
Charter or Administrative Code: Charter		
Issue Name	Section	Proposed Change
Security	Add new Charter section authorizing municipal police force to LADWP, consistent with LAWA and POLA ¹	Sec. 685. Water and Power Police. The Los Angeles Water and Power Police shall remain under the independent and autonomous control of the Water and Power Department.

Responding Department: LADWP

Administrative Impact(s): LADWP will be required to draft and adopt new departmental policies, procedures, and training standards consistent with POST requirements and municipal police operations. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) must be established with LAPD, LASD, District Attorney, and other partner agencies for investigations, mutual aid, use-of-force reviews, and coordination. LADWP will restructure its existing Security Services Division to integrate sworn operations, command staff, dispatch, investigations, and administrative support.

¹ See Charter Section 631, 636, 657. Formation of a LADWP Municipal Police Force would also require *California Penal Code* changes, such as Section 830.1.

Fiscal Impact(s): The estimated three-year startup cost is approximately \$9.7 million, including personnel, fleet, equipment, technology, and facility buildout. The annual personnel cost upon full operation would be approximately \$5–6 million. These increases could lead to potential offsets in the \$14 million LADWP spends annually on private security contracts and \$32 million supporting unarmed proprietary security. The investment also ensures faster response, improved investigations, reduced theft losses (over \$1M annually), and enhanced infrastructure protection. Further, as a Proprietary Department, LADWP generates and utilizes its own funds; therefore, any LADWP expenses will not affect the General Fund.

Administrative or Charter Amendment Required: Charter

Advantages/Disadvantages of Proposal(s): Advantages include: aligning LADWP with peer municipal infrastructure agencies (LAWA Police, POLA Police, Metro) that already maintain autonomous police forces, provides peace officer authority needed to detain, arrest, investigate, and respond to crimes targeting water and power systems, enables immediate response to copper theft, sabotage, threats to employees, drone incursions, and domestic terrorism incidents, reduces heavy reliance local law enforcement, enhances field crew safety during outages, wildfires, and emergencies where crews currently face aggression without sworn protection, integrates LADWP into federal and state homeland security networks (FBI, DHS, JRIC), enabling proactive threat mitigation. Disadvantages include: requiring multiyear implementation and state legislative support to amend the *California Penal Code* § 830.1 for LADWP police authority, requires sustained investment in facilities, POST training, and operational oversight.

Additional Concerns: The creation of a sworn LADWP Police Department is a critical modernization step for the nation’s largest municipal utility. Rising threats including copper theft, terrorism targeting substations and aqueducts, drone incursions, and aggression toward LADWP field crews require fully empowered law enforcement capabilities embedded within utility operations. This Charter amendment mirrors existing frameworks for LAWA and Port Police and ensures parity, public safety, and continuity of essential services.

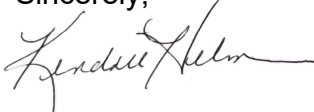
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Department Liaison Contact: Paul Habib, Director of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs • Los Angeles Water and Power, paul.habib@ladwp.com, (213) 367-3846.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kendall Helm".

Kendall Helm, Ph.D.
Chief Strategy and Sustainability Officer

KH:fv:sk