

WESTWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

August 10, 2022

Agenda Item # 11

MOTION TO DESIGNATE THE WESTWOOD BRANCH LIBRARY AND WESTWOOD GARDENS PARK UNDER MUNICIPAL CODE SECTION 41.18

MOTION

"Whereas:

The Los Angeles City Council voted on August 3, 2022 to prohibit homeless people from setting up tents within 500 feet of public and private schools and day care centers under authority of LAMC 41.18.

Whereas:

Councilmember Joe Buscaino submitted a motion requesting the City Attorney present an ordinance amending LAMC 41.18 and 56.11 to prohibit lying, sleeping and storing personal property within 500 feet of all 73 LAPL libraries.

Whereas:

The members of the Westwood community and the users of Westwood Park and Westwood Recreation Center (1350 Sepulveda Boulevard) are appreciative that Councilman Paul Koretz introduced a 41.18 motion to protect Westwood Park and Westwood Recreation Center and the surrounding public rights of way from the presence of encampments that had prevented the general public from safely using the entire park acreage facing Veteran Avenue for many years.

Whereas:

While this has been very beneficial for Westwood Park and its users, it has had the unfortunate effect of a significant number of homeless individuals who were previously trespassing and living in Westwood Park to decamp a few blocks east, and now take up residence in nearby Westwood Gardens Park, as well as on or near the adjacent Westwood Library, and the surrounding public rights of way.

Whereas:

The West LAPD Captain and Senior Lead Officer are well aware of this significant increase in the presence of homeless individuals inside Westwood Gardens Park past the posted park hours and in violation of several posted park rules as well as in the nearby public rights of way.

Whereas:

This has had a direct and immediate negative effect on operations of both the Westwood Library and adjacent Westwood Gardens Park. One such impact is that it has suffered from chronic, deliberate, and highly disruptive vandalism of the public restrooms in the library. This has resulted in repeated closures of the restrooms to the public, flooding of the library (from the second floor to the first floor lobby and

down to the subterranean garage), sometimes causing a biohazard situation that has resulted in the closure of the entire Westwood Library on several occasions.

Whereas:

This has been such a serious and ongoing problem that the Senior Librarian has been instructed by her supervisor to lock ALL of the public restrooms in the Westwood Library (both on the first and second floors) to prevent further vandalism to city property.

Whereas:

This is extremely inconvenient and unacceptable for library patrons, including parents, children, and seniors, who now have nowhere to use the toilet or even to wash their hands for themselves or their children (especially during an ongoing pandemic and public health emergency).

Whereas:

The Senior Librarian has had to waste countless hours documenting each of these incidents of deliberate and malicious vandalism, and she has had to spend many hours studying security tapes in order to try to determine which individuals are responsible for these despicable acts of vandalism of city property.

Whereas:

There is a direct correlation between the increased presence of homeless individuals who populate the adjacent Westwood Gardens Park, the increased presence of homeless individuals in the library, and the increase in incidents of vandalism of library property and facilities.

Whereas:

Inside Westwood Gardens Park, it has been repeatedly observed that certain homeless individuals are illegally storing their luggage, bedrolls, sleeping bags, blankets, and other personal property actually INSIDE the children's "jungle gym" play equipment in the upper part of the jungle gym. This is despite the fact that this area is clearly marked with signage that says "KIDS ONLY" for very young children ages 2 to 5. Several homeless individuals are sleeping in and near the children's play area and camping in the park every single night. This is a blatant violation of posted park rules and clearly marked signs. One female homeless individual has been seen defecating in front of children.

Whereas:

The Senior Lead Officer and Captain have advised that a 41.18 ordinance for both Westwood Gardens Park as well as the Westwood Library would be very helpful to LAPD, as it would give them a necessary tool to enable them enforce city rules, park rules, and library rules. The park has posted hours of sunrise to sunset, but every single night, individuals can be found camping, storing personal belongings, and sleeping overnight in Westwood Gardens Park. This is a clear trespass on city property in violation of the law. During the daytime, many of these individuals who illegally trespass and sleep and camp overnight in the park then drift in and out of the Library throughout the day.

Whereas:

As these incidents continue to plague the branch, the stress is wearing on librarians and library staff. For example, two months ago, the Senior Librarian was assaulted and physically battered on the premises. Some incidents will be inevitable, but some of the unhoused are causing a disproportionate number of them. This minority is enough to endanger the Senior Librarian, the entire library staff, and close the restrooms.

THEREFORE, The Westwood Neighborhood Council requests that Councilman Paul Koretz introduce a motion before the Los Angeles City Council to designate both the Westwood Branch Public Library (1246 Glendon Avenue) and the adjacent Westwood Gardens Park (1264 Glendon Avenue/10853 Wellworth Avenue) under section 41.18(d) of the L.A. Municipal Code for enforcement of the prohibition against the various activities and behaviors described in section 41.18(c) on the public rights of way located within 500 feet.

If the motion by Councilman Buscaino passes, implement the ordinance immediately at the Westwood branch library and Westwood Gardens Park. If the motion does not pass, take steps to implement the City's existing 41.18 authority at the Westwood branch library and Westwood Gardens Park.