

CITY OF CARSON

MINUTES
CARSON CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
OCTOBER 11, 2021
4:30 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 P.M. by Mayor Lula Davis-Holmes via Zoom Teleconference.

ROLL CALL:

Chief Deputy City Clerk John W. Carroll, Sr. noted the roll.

Council Members Present via Zoom Teleconference:

Mayor Lula Davis-Holmes, Council Member Jawane Hilton, and Council Member Cedric Hicks

Council Members Absent:

Mayor Pro Tem Jim Dear (Joined during Closed Session)

Also Present via Zoom Teleconference:

Monica Cooper, City Treasurer; Sharon Landers, City Manager; Sunny Soltani, City Attorney; David Roberts, Assistant City Manager; John Raymond, Assistant City Manager; Saied Naaseh, Director of Community Development; Faye Moseley, Director of Human Resources and Risk Management; Tarik Rahmani, Director of Finance; Robert Lennox, Director of Community Services; and Eliza Jane Whitman, Director of Public Works

FLAG SALUTE:

Council Member Hilton led the Pledge of Allegiance.

INVOCATION:

Council Member Hicks gave the invocation.

CLOSED SESSION (Item 1)

REPORT ON ANY PUBLIC COMMENTS ON CLOSED SESSION ITEMS (CITY CLERK) - None

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CLOSED SESSION ITEMS (CITY ATTORNEY)

City Attorney Soltani announced the Closed Session item.

RECESS INTO CLOSED SESSION:

The meeting was recessed at 4:34 P.M. by Mayor Davis-Holmes to Closed Session.

RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION:

The meeting was reconvened at 5:47 P.M. by Mayor Davis-Holmes with all members previously noted present.

REPORT ON CLOSED SESSION ACTIONS (CITY ATTORNEY)

City Attorney Soltani provided the Closed Session report as follows:

Item No. 1. 2021-796 CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL - ANTICIPATED

LITIGATION (CITY COUNCIL)

Recommendation: A closed session will be held, pursuant to Government Code

Section 54956.9 (e)(1), because there is a significant exposure to

litigation in one case.

ACTION: No reportable action was taken.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FOR MATTERS LISTED ON THE AGENDA (MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC)

Chief Deputy City Clerk Carroll, Sr. announced the City website was updated to show AB 361 as the order of the day. Moving forward, the General Public can call in comments for agendized items at the beginning of the meeting after the Presentations portion of the meeting and also for non-agendized items towards the end of the meeting after the Memorial Adjournments portion of the meeting. Written comments that are submitted will not be read but will be made part of the record. Copies will be provided to the Mayor and City Council.

He presented the following comments that were submitted electronically since the web page was still showing that public comments can be emailed for the meeting with no objection heard:

Jennifer Horcasitas-Glenn - Item No. 2

Resident of the Harbor Gateway area adjacent to Carson and Torrance; experiencing the daily smell of rotten egg/burning tire smell and high levels of hydrogen sulfide in the air; having daily nausea, headaches, lightheadedness, and the foul toxic odor engulfing homes even with the windows closed. On a daily basis, receiving notifications from Torrance Air Monitoring System alerts that show hydrogen sulfide at acute toxic levels 30ppb or higher. The areas being reported are the "Elm Avenue" site, "North High School" site, and "West High School" site. The odor usually occurs from the middle of the night through the early afternoon. The only reports being apprised of are the news reports and Los Angeles County notifications that the toxic levels of hydrogen sulfide are at minimal amounts in the water which is simply untrue.

Gabriel Villalobos - Item No. 2

Carson resident living by Sepulveda Boulevard and Wilmington Avenue; 23-year old recovering

cancer patient who had a total hip replacement on right hip a few weeks ago; trying to recover from surgery and noticed a foul odor seeping through the windows which has been happening since October 3, 2021; most of the rooms fill up with the smell; having horrible headaches, nostrils have been burning horribly, eyes burn keeping them open or just blinking, and the worst is the nausea, and the smell stops him from eating. It is good that the city is trying to solve the issue but there is another issue, people are getting hurt from this; the news says if low amounts of hydrogen sulfide, that is not harmful but, what about cancer patients who have low immunity and people who have asthma.

The following individuals called in their comments regarding Item No. 2:

Dr. Sheilah O'Halloran with husband Mark, retired firefighter

Asked who she can talk to regarding a product that is environmentally safe used for public water waste

Mayor Davis-Holmes referred Dr. Sheilah O'Halloran to City Manager Landers who provided her email address.

Priscilla Brown

Inquired if there was a solution with the odor

Daryl

Inquired about the following: 1) Who is responsible for the spill?; 2) What are the chemicals that were spilled and the chemical reaction?; 3) Should the residents of Carson be concerned with health concerns and should they be relocated out of the area?; 4) Should all the residents exposed to the incident receive exposure reports from the City of Carson for potential future medical situations?; 5) Who is in charge of the incident for the City and what is the person's name, number, and title?

Mark Pestrella - Director of Los Angeles County Public Works

Stated he oversees the County's flood control system that serves the City of Carson and 88 other cities in the County. He spoke about the Dominguez Channel (Avalon Boulevard at the 405 freeway) nuisance odor and gave an update of their findings in partnership with the Los Angeles County Health Department, Los Angeles County Fire Department, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, other outside agencies, and scientists. The location has a high odor which is attributed to hydrogen sulfide, natural occurring gas. He noted two objectives: 1) Public Health - Dr. Muntu Davis provided a Notice of Nuisance Abatement which is directed to the department the source of the problem to abate the issue and to mitigate any potential human health affects; working to develop what the best approach for human beings is when they are exposed to hydrogen sulfide and what the residents can do to protect themselves as the event continues to go on; 2) Remediation – Scientists studying how to help mother nature accelerate the process for the decay and move to pass the odor; taking air quality samples but water quality samples all day long and expect to have a set of actions proposed by morning for an attempt to cease the odor.

Dr. Muntu Davis - Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Officer

Spoke about potential health effects that comes from hydrogen sulfide. He noted at low levels the nose can pick up hydrogen sulfide much more readily than higher concentrations. Typically,

when you do not smell the odor and away from the odor, the symptoms will go away. Try to leave the area if the symptoms go away. If the symptoms persist or worsen, contact your health care provider to get an evaluation; recommend keep doors and windows closed; change the filter on the air conditioner to a high-efficiency particulate absorbing (HEPA) filter preferably with activated charcoal or obtain a portable HEPA filter that has activated charcoal to try to limit the odor. He also noted that the odor can impact pets in the same way that it impacts people. If pets are having symptoms or nausea, contact the veterinarian for an evaluation.

Mayor Davis-Holmes asked what the Los Angeles County is going to do for the residents.

Director Pestrella stated the Los Angeles County specifically is setting up for residents to be reimbursed for any displacement or health issues and items that had to be bought, to take care of this in line with Dr. Davis' recommendations; working closely with the Public Health Department to define what is the best activity for people to make sure that their health is good and that they are not in discomfort related to this. There will be a Press Release tomorrow. Dr. Davis will provide specific recommendations and the residents of Carson and the unincorporated area west Carson can call the complaint line tomorrow morning at 8:00 A.M. There will be a Call Center open in Public Works with a specific phone number for residents to call who would like to make a claim or discuss relocation if they need to be relocated and the reimbursement process. The County is working with the Public Health to address the specific location of the odor and would like to communicate with the residents who have been impacted on how to be reimbursed for their cost due to the incident.

Mayor Davis-Holmes asked about those who cannot afford to purchase.

Director Pestrella stated the County is working on an upfront cash such as potentially arranging to have hotel rooms set aside and reserve for the residents.

Mayor Davis-Holmes asked about residents who cannot afford to put funds out for relocation.

Director Pestrella stated they are working to put cash up on the front end. A Call Center will be set up to take residents calls in the morning.

City Attorney Soltani stated it came to her attention today that the Los Angeles County Public Health issued a Public Nuisance and that they came up with a three-tier approach to addressing and providing resources for the residents. There will be the appropriate HEPA masks available or reimbursement process, air purifiers available with the same process, either available for reimbursement or the County will provide or give cash up front and the relocation benefits. The City is concerned with the timing and pleased to hear that tomorrow morning residents can call and receive an immediate response. Since the issues have been addressed and after receiving public testimony, staff's recommendation will be that the City Council will declare its Public Nuisance regardless of what the County has done and that the City Council instructs staff to work with the County to make sure the process goes smoothly. There will be another hearing set by the Board of Supervisors. If the City Council would like to continue this Special Meeting until after their hearing which can be done because if the process is not going smoothly, the City Council can study its options and how the City Council can help the residents and seek reimbursement from the County. It seems like the County is coming up with a solid process that starting tomorrow there will be a live person answering calls which is very hopeful to hear. The

issue was none of the lines were working.

Mayor Davis-Holmes asked if the County established a phone number for the Call-In Center.

Director Pestrella responded the phone number has not been established at this time and will be sent to the point of contact with the City as soon as available.

Mayor Davis-Holmes requested the number be sent to the City Manager and herself.

City Attorney Soltani stated another issue the City Council is concerned about is for people with disabilities who cannot leave their home to receive their reimbursement. She asked if the County considered a delivery process for senior citizens or people with disabilities.

Director Pestrella stated they would consider delivery, visiting and working with Dr. Davis to assess the situation in which those residents are living and what the best approach is with respect to protecting their health. They will fund and work with the City to identify the residents in that situation.

City Attorney Soltani noted the timing is a concern and asked how soon the County will assist the residents since they have been living with the odor for a week and they need immediate relief starting tomorrow morning.

Director Pestrella asked Dr. Davis for the best advice for the situation.

Dr. Davis advised to continue to wear face masks and change more frequently especially if it gets wet in the inside. In general, keep windows and doors closed to keep the odor out of the house. Use HEPA filters which are high efficiency filters with activated charcoal should help to reduce the odor inside and should help to alleviate symptoms. Move out of the area where odor is. There will be a Press Release with the recommendations in addition to what he mentioned earlier regarding pets.

City Attorney Soltani asked if the residents can receive immediate relief.

Director Pestrella stated if a resident has a serious medical condition to not rely on the Call-in Hotline and to seek medical attention immediately.

Dr. Davis stated if symptoms worsen then should be evaluated. Do not avoid medical attention if feel needed.

Mayor Davis-Holmes asked about residents obtaining air purifiers if the City purchases them will the County reimburse the City. Director Pestrella stated can make arrangements between the Flood Control District and the City to create reimbursement for the City.

Council Member Hilton noted that between \$600 and \$1,200 was offered for air conditioners depending on the size of the home in El Segundo when they had the bad episode for smell after the spill. Also, \$182 per day plus meals and incidentals up to \$62 per day were offered to each person who lived in the house full time. He asked if that level of support will be available to most of the impacted residents in the City of Carson. If not, why? If yes, how soon?

Director Pestrella stated the objective is to take care of the residents of Carson who have been impacted by this event and will assess the situation depending on individual circumstances. Proposing the three levels of care as described by the City Attorney. County to identify locations and encouraged residents to relocate themselves and make a claim. Retrofitting a home; what makes sense in terms of retrofit. Dr. Davis mentioned earlier about HEPA filter for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) for air conditioning unit to mitigate the odor. It is a different event than the El Segundo event but it is a similar one in which public health nuisance abatement has been given. The County will follow the Health Department's guidance what should be provided. The Press Release will show what is being proposed and will be funded.

Council Member Hilton stated that Carson deserves equitable treatment and there was no requirements in El Segundo; would like the same swift response. Residents would like in the health order to pay for some of the doctor visits as some people cannot pay co-pays and should be outlined. Would hope to work in partnership to help mitigate and put the odor to an end in the City. Director Pestrella stated he agrees with Council Member Hilton.

Council Member Hicks expressed concern with the business community and their employees who are also impacted and inquired how can they be part of the process.

Director Pestrella stated the business owners should also contact the County to begin the process of reimbursement for their costs as well.

Dr. Davis stated the Public Health Team visited the City of Carson yesterday and today going door to door handing out information to the residents and answering questions. Currently updating their recommendations and will visit again and make sure to cover the area for people to have the information they need to safeguard against the odor. In the updated recommendations, the website was provided where to find the HEPA filters.

Council Member Hilton asked how is it that have been gone a whole week and nothing is on social media, nothing on the Public Health's website about Carson. It is a public health crisis. Want to make staff aware that there are residents who are looking for direction from the Public Health Office and no one is yet to post anything about the public health in Carson. The last update was October 9, 2020.

Dr. Davis stated they are working with multiple agencies to coordinate one place for residents to refer to for information.

Director Pestrella stated in conjunction with Dr. Davis, Public Works is standing up a website specific portal for this specific incident along with the Call Center for residents to view tomorrow.

Council Member Hicks requested Dr. Davis and Director Pestrella to provide a link on the City's website for the residents and businesses to access information.

City Manager Landers stated she would like the City to be involved with distributing the information and requested Dr. Davis to provide the same information they are giving to the residents door-to-door to be synchronized in that regard. Dr. Davis responded in the affirmative.

Mayor Davis-Holmes noted the City Manager is the main point of contact to receive information for staff. She asked if a report will be ready with the timeframe correcting the problem at the next meeting. Director Pestrella responded to her question and that his office has been communicating with staff.

Mayor Pro Tem Dear asked if they identified a particular location where the odor is coming from. Director Pestrella stated the current suspect location is Avalon Boulevard at the 405 Freeway within Dominguez Channel near the IKEA store area, less than a mile stretch as the source of the smell. They believe has to do with decaying vegetation within the channel but have not confirmed definitively until receipt of water quality, sampling, and testing data.

Mayor Pro Tem Dear referred to previous speaker Dr. Sheilah O'Halloran who has a product as an idea for a solution that deals with the waterway issue. He asked Dr. Davis and Director Pestrella if their agencies are familiar with the product and what can be done to remedy of ridding the odor immediately. He asked if there is a process that can be initiated that has been done in other waterways that works.

Director Pestrella stated it has to do with water resource management and natural creek systems. He talked about the benefits of the Flood Control District to the community. He welcomed Dr. Sheilah O'Halloran who spoke previously regarding their product to contact the County hotline.

(Mayor Pro Tem Dear exited the meeting.)

Mayor Davis-Holmes asked who is the point of contact the City Manager or staff can reach out to. Director Pestrella stated he would be the point of contact directly for the City Manager.

Mayor Davis-Holmes asked if a resident has an increase of their electric bill because use of their air conditioning unit if they show proof from three months ago to current can they be reimbursed for the difference. Director Pestrella responded in the affirmative.

(Mayor Pro Tem Dear rejoined the meeting.)

Dr. Davis assured everyone that the experts are monitoring the situation and trying to come to a resolution as quickly as possible with no delay.

Mayor Davis-Holmes expressed concern that the City did not receive information for several days; lines of communication are open and to move forward as a team to address the concerns and remediate the problem.

Speaker

Asked if the air purifiers will be provided to the residents tomorrow.

Director Pestrella stated they will provide a Call Center tomorrow to start the process of reimbursement for those who made purchases to mitigate the smell within the homes and provide guidance on recommendations.

Dr. Davis recommended HEPA filter with activated charcoal for your air conditioner or a portable HEPA filter with activated charcoal.

Speaker

Asked if there is a limit on how many air purifiers can purchase; she already purchased two but they are not enough and would like two more

Director Pestrella suggested to do what it takes to mitigate and will review what the speaker will apply for; the portable air purifiers will have efficiency rating.

Porshe, Carson business owner at 550 Carson Plaza Drive

Reported employees having headaches and dizziness; contemplating closing the office for a few days and asked what can be done to ensure the safety of the employees

Dr. Davis advised the following: 1) Install filters in the HVAC system; and 2) Keep doors closed.

City Attorney Soltani reminded the public and City Council that it is not a question and answer period and that it is public comments and need to abide by the Robert's Rules of Order. Information has been provided and the hotline will be open tomorrow morning. There will be another special meeting.

Isa Pulido

Stated the hydrogen sulfide odor has been ongoing for two weeks and not good for the health; need to propose an environmental emergency action plan; must protect the children and senior citizens; need air purifiers and H2S gas detectors; HEPA filters donated to the city and residents; no resident should have to pay for the masks, purifiers, and gas detectors; recommend need of an environmental leadership 24 hours on site team working diligently with the city; proposed to create an Environmental Emergency 24 hour Resource Center in Carson

Robin

Reported the stench is bad at the light on 190th Street under the 110 Freeway; concerned with family also being exposed to the odor

Antonio

Concerned how the hydrogen sulfide will affect the health of the residents, relocation, reimbursement program with multiple agencies; HEPA filters; concern not knowing after one week the source of the odor; solution to problem

Dr. Sheilah O'Halloran

Stated she emailed information and would be happy to help

Speaker

Concerned about sulfur or anything settling in the water or tap water and if the schools are being taken care of

Mayor Davis-Holmes stated staff will share information with Superintendent Romero and Dr. Hemphill.

Liz Foisia

Need solutions now to alleviate extreme discomfort and health issues arising from the odor; any health discomfort is a huge concern; recommendations from the County should be realistic, affordable and information easily available

Speaker

Expressed concern to leave Carson now due to the bad odor

Mayor Davis-Holmes asked Director Pestrella to clarify the measures mentioned earlier.

Director Pestrella stated residents within the Carson area should take measures to protect their health; if feeling discomfort should take the measure that was discussed earlier about the filtration with HEPA filter, relocation would be reimbursed by calling in to the hotline which will be available tomorrow morning and will assess the situation. The matter can be resolved if you can filter the air or consider relocation.

Mayor Pro Tem Dear stated the City is capable of reimbursing the residents with proper receipts and asked if the City can be reimbursed by the County. Director Pestrella responded in the affirmative.

Michelle

Asked if the reimbursement program is limited to a certain area in Carson

Mayor Davis-Holmes stated the reimbursement program is for all Carson residents and to call the hotline.

City Manager Landers stated the expenses to be reimbursed need to be reasonable.

Speaker

Asked for immediate solution for long term to not happen again

Speaker

Smell is horrendous going on two weeks; family is sick; need immediate solution and communication

Speaker

Asked for immediate fix to the odor

Erica Tarell

Appalled by the lack of urgency and the outrage that has been needed to bring this issue to the surface; received inconsistent answers about relocation; would like clarity on the reimbursement

William Koons

Requested a filtration unit for his home; suggested the County provide the filtration units for the residents to pick up at City Hall or County to suggest where to purchase them; requested the County to check possible pipe leak on 213th Street and Chico Street

Speaker

Confirming that a number will be provided to call tomorrow morning for reimbursement

Mayor Davis-Holmes responded in the affirmative.

Speaker

Received reports from the Torrance Air Quality Monitoring System of high levels of chemical in the air; why is Los Angeles Public Works downplaying the effects of the incredibly toxic chemical that has reached Carson, City of Torrance, and Harbor Gateway; asked about the unincorporated areas receiving notifications of the harmful chemical

Monique Alvarez

Threshold is not emergent based on what criteria; need to know what level is now and what time being conducted; need to know what being exposed to

Director Pestrella and Dr. Davis responded to the speaker.

Imelda Perez

Reported can smell odor now and if the area should be tested and confirm if report will be available tomorrow Tuesday

Mayor Davis-Holmes responded in the affirmative.

Speaker, on behalf of the residents of Imperial Avalon

Would like to make sure the city takes care of the senior residents who are suffering from the bad smell

Speaker

Asked where she can find the data of the numbers of the hydrogen sulfide and the place where the numbers are updated; is there a reason why the information is not currently available for the residents

Dr. Davis responded working with AQMD, Fire Hazmat and Public Health staff.

Speaker

Asked about the fluctuation of numbers, between what numbers are fluctuating and getting; not being able to breathe, affecting her asthma, not able to go outside because of nauseousness, mother has asthma, migraines, will the County reimburse for those inconveniences

Mayor Davis-Holmes stated may address concerns when calling the hotline.

Speaker

Has a two-month-old baby who has colic; very upset with the air and do not know what to do; nothing is happening to help; very scary for the kids; hope to push the issue very concerning for the little ones and hope to be given the same treatment as in El Segundo

Speaker

Asked how often the levels are tested; smell is worse in the early morning hours with the marine layer and what areas are being tested

Dr. Davis stated he would provide information at a later time.

Mayor Davis-Holmes closed the Public Comments session.

Council Member Hilton stated the residents reported that the stench is strong during the evening and asked if anyone is monitoring at night and if working around the clock.

Dr. Davis stated he will check with AQMD and Fire Haz Mat.

Council Member Hilton asked how has the Los Angeles County partnered with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) for the kids in school and in the geographical location who may be affected by this.

Dr. Davis stated he would talk with the folks at LAUSD and have information with same recommendations in their Press Release. He will coordinate and provide the information to all the schools in the impacted areas.

Council Member Hilton asked if the Press Release is available that the city can be privy to release tomorrow morning. Dr. Davis stated he would check if it was sent to the city that was available this evening.

Mayor Pro Tem Dear asked about the terrible odor that comes and goes only a factor of the wind or is there another factor possibly the tide. Are there other factors other than the wind? Why does it smell horrible at certain times of the day? Director Pestrella responded to his question.

Mayor Pro Tem Dear asked about marine life and bird life in the water which seems to be an absence of them and is it reported to the County. Director Pestrella responded to his question.

Mayor Pro Tem Dear stated all agencies should be in the same page to make it an environmentally healthy waterway and find a solution.

DISCUSSION: (Item No. 2)

Item No. 2. 2021-792

CONSIDER THE ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION NO. 21-136
DECLARING A PUBLIC NUISANCE DUE TO FOUL ODOR
FROM DOMINGUEZ CHANNEL AND ITS NEGATIVE IMPACTS
ON RESIDENTS LIVING WITHIN ITS CLOSE PROXIMITY

ACTION: It was moved to adopt Resolution No. 21-136 declaring a public nuisance due to foul odor from Dominguez Channel and its negative impacts on residents living within its close proximity and the people visiting and working in Carson on motion of Dear, seconded by Hilton.

During discussion of the motion, City Attorney Soltani stated she is deleting Section 3 of the resolution that was trying to define an area for the affected residents. Section 4 will become

Section 3 and would add in the new Section 3 where there are blanks 1, 2, 3, and 4 based on the discussion this evening if Mayor Pro Tem Dear is willing to entertain this perhaps you add that for all senior citizens and disabled residents if they contact the city. The city can assist and deliver the air filtration system recommended by the County and/or the masks recommended by the County and develop a process to seek reimbursement from the County or the City can order on Amazon and coordinate for the residents who cannot physically go to the County who can get it. The City can get reimbursed from the County. If there are financially challenged residents, they should try to work with the County through the reimbursement program set up. The City encourages the residents to call tomorrow and if the County is not responsive to call the City and the City can follow up but in unique circumstances. May be the City Council wants to give staff the discretion to base upon income qualification evidence may be if the County is nonresponsive may be staff can help advance those funds also and seek reimbursement from the County.

City Attorney Soltani stated she is trying to define what she heard in the City Council's dialogue and resident concerns so there is no confusion later about what the role of the City was and what the role of the County was. She can add those under the new Section 3 of the resolution declaring a public nuisance.

Mayor Pro Tem Dear agreed to add the two aspects to the motion as a staff recommendation and add to utilize City staff to deliver to certain residents who need it to be brought to them the necessary masks, filters and can purchase the proper filters.

Mayor Davis-Holmes stated to make sure delivery for those physically challenged.

City Manager Landers requested to add allocation of funds to be provided. Subsequently, Mayor Davis-Holmes stated staff can add the allocation of funds at the next meeting with no objection heard.

Council Member Hilton accepted Mayor Pro Tem Dear's friendly amendment to the motion as stated by City Attorney Soltani. He requested to activate the Emergency Operations Center. City Manager Landers confirmed the Emergency Operations Center has been activated.

Council Member Hicks expressed concern of the quality of life of the residents and the urgency.

The motion, as amended, was unanimously carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Mayor Davis-Holmes, Mayor Pro Tem Dear, Council Member Hilton, and Council

Member Hicks

Noes: None Abstain: None Absent: None

Mayor Davis-Holmes requested City Manager Landers to invite a representative from AQMD and other related agencies to the next meeting on October 14, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 P.M. to an adjourned special meeting to be held via Zoom on Thursday, October 14, 2021, at 6:00 P.M. by Mayor Davis-Holmes

Holmes