

NEWS CLIPPINGS

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If you have any questions, please contact the Department of Public Works' Public Affairs Office, telephone (213) 978-0330, or (213) 978-0333.

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BURBANK LEADER

Sewer report comes under public review

City encouraging residents to give comments to Los Angeles on sewer project that could be built going through Rancho District.

By Mark R. Madler
Dec. 14, 2005

RANCHO DISTRICT -- City officials are encouraging residents to send in their comments on a sewer project proposed by the city of Los Angeles that could be built through the Rancho District neighborhood.

Comments on the project's draft environmental report will be accepted by the Los Angeles Public Works Department through the end of February on the proposed Burbank-Glendale Interceptor Sewer project, which would extend nearly 6 miles, from the Los Angeles Zoo in Griffith Park to Toluca Lake.

Burbank city officials hope enough residents voice displeasure to keep the sewer project out of the city. .

Two alignments are under review for the sewer: one on the south side of Los Angeles River along Forest Lawn Drive, which Burbank officials prefer because it is outside city limits; and a northern alignment that would cut through a portion of Burbank and include vertical shafts near Riverside Drive and Bob Hope Drive and Valleyheart Drive and Reese Place.

Mayor Jef Vander Borghst stressed need to get involved.

The City Council is aware of their concern and so now those same concerns must be given to Los Angeles city officials, Vander Borghst said.

"If they get 100 letters from concerned citizens, that means a lot more than just one letter from the mayor," Vander Borghst said.

A formal response to the draft report will be discussed and approved by the Burbank City Council at a meeting in January and is expected to support a sewer alignment outside the city, Assistant City Manager Mike Flad said.

The interceptor sewer is part of an overall 20-year plan to address future capacity needs, because the existing sewers that parallel the Los Angeles River and the Golden State (5) Freeway are aging, said Adel Hagekhalil, a division manager with the Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation.

The project was initially discussed by the Burbank council in November. Since then, Vander Borghst has met with Los Angeles Councilman Tom LaBonge to voice the city's preference for the southern alignment.

A series of public hearings on the project will begin in January.

The meeting closest to Burbank takes place Jan. 12 at the Witherbee Auditorium at the Los Angeles Zoo, 5333 Zoo Drive.

The draft environmental impact report is available at the Burbank Central Library, 110 N. Glenoaks Blvd.; the Buena Vista branch library, 300 N. Buena Vista St.; the Northwest branch library, 3323 W. Victory Blvd.; the Burbank Public Works Department, 333 E. Olive Ave.; and online at <http://www.lacity-irp.org/>.

QUESTION

How do you feel about the prospect of a new sewer project in Burbank? E-mail your responses to burbankleader@latimes.com; mail them to the Burbank Leader, 111 W. Wilson Ave., Glendale, CA 91203. Please spell your name and include your address and phone number for verification purposes only.

###



Settlement struck over Bradley Landfill

odors

By Kerry Cavanaugh

Staff Writer

Dec. 14, 2005

For repeatedly failing to correct foul odors at Bradley Landfill, Waste Management agreed to pay \$20,000 in fines, fix its odor problems and donate \$75,000 to charities, according to a settlement announced Tuesday.

The agreement ends more than a year of negotiations among the landfill company, South Coast Air Quality Management District and City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo.

"Through this settlement Bradley has become a responsible neighbor, and the environmental resources of our community have been protected," Delgadillo said in a statement.

The settlement stems from odor, sewer and noise problems at the landfill from 2002-04.

Longtime landfill watchdog Jerry Piro said he was happy regulators were cracking down, but he wanted to make sure the settlement would mean real environmental improvements.

"I'd like to see something that's physical, that I can say that all these trees were put in or all these medians have been improved. Something that we can really look on it and say this has made Sun Valley better."

The agreement commits Waste Management to a \$25,000 donation for Communities in Schools, which runs anti-gang programs in Northeast San Fernando Valley schools and will expand its services in Sun Valley. A \$50,000 donation will go to Para Los Nios, an educational service agency that aids low-income children and their families.

The AQMD will get \$20,000 in fines, and that could go up to \$80,000 if Waste Management does not follow the planned fixes at its smelly green waste facility. Waste Management agreed to install taller fences and add odor neutralizing misters.

The city also alleged that Bradley was responsible for discharges of oils, grease and volatile organic compounds into the sewer system in 2003 and 2004.

Waste Management District Manager Doug Corcoran disagreed with the validity of those charges, but said he wanted to settle to move forward.

"We're trying to put all of the past in the past and get focused on making things better in the future."

###



Massive rebuilding plan discussed

By **Lisa Mascaro**

Staff Writer

Dec. 14, 2005

Elected officials met Tuesday for the first public hearing on rebuilding California's roads, housing and water systems with a massive public investment in what's expected to be next year's top issue in Sacramento.

The state Senate's Transportation and Housing Committee convened to discuss SB 1024, an \$11.7 billion bond that would generate millions of dollars to alleviate gridlock and build affordable housing in Los Angeles.

But the Assembly also is looking for ways to fund \$10 billion in infrastructure improvements, and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is expected to decide next week on the scope of his massive rebuilding plan that earlier reports put at \$50 billion.

"The 2006 legislative year will be about how we get California moving again," said committee chairman Sen. Alan Lowenthal, D-Long Beach.

"Everything is on the table," said Vince Duffy, a spokesman for Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuez.

City and regional leaders described traffic-choked freeways and a dearth of affordable housing that could be eased with an infusion of cash.

"These are long-term projects, but we have to plan for the future. We can't do it without a significant investment," City Councilwoman Wendy Greuel said.

Sen. Tom Torlakson, D-Concord, who co-authored the Senate bill with Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, D-Oakland, said they're aiming to get the bond on the June ballot. It would be repaid from the state's general fund, at \$1 billion a year.

The Assembly Speaker's \$10 billion bond would be financed by lowering the gas tax at the pump but adding a one-quarter percent sales tax statewide, though those plans are being revisited, Duffy said.

The governor is looking at possibly a mix of general fund bonds, user fees or lease revenues to pay for his proposal, a spokesman said.

###

DailyBreeze.com

L.A. animal shelter chief may be out

Guerdon Stuckey, who was hired by former mayor and has been the target of activists, reportedly has been asked to leave.

**By David Zahniser
Copley News Service
Dec. 14, 2005**

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has decided to remove Guerdon Stuckey, the City Hall executive who oversees the city's animal shelters and who has been a subject of a yearlong campaign of harassment by radical animal activists, according to sources at City Hall.

Villaraigosa deputy chief of staff Jimmy Blackman informed Stuckey, who was hired last year by then Mayor James Hahn, that the new mayor wants him gone, said one high-level city official familiar with the situation.

Stuckey's employment status had been a subject of speculation among animal activists since Monday, when he failed to show up for a meeting of the animal services commission. A spokeswoman for the department would not provide access to Stuckey or say whether he is being forced out.

"We were advised not to disturb him today," said department spokeswoman Karen Knipscheer.

Stuckey is the latest official in the city's animal control agency to face calls for his removal, both from the Animal Defense League and the more extreme Animal Liberation Front, which set off a smoke bomb in the lobby of his apartment building earlier this year.

Villaraigosa would not say whether he had ordered Stuckey's removal -- or whether Stuckey had agreed to resign.

"I don't want to comment on a personnel matter at this time," he said.

Villaraigosa had been under fire for weeks from animal activists who questioned whether he had reneged on a campaign promise to remove Stuckey, one of four executives who have run the city's animal shelters over the past five years.

Animal activists had repeatedly questioned Stuckey's management skills and voiced frustration that he had not made more progress in achieving a "no kill" policy on the euthanization of cats and dogs in the city's animal shelters.

Stuckey also suffered a lack of confidence from the commission that supervised the department, said Phyllis Daugherty, who served last year on a focus group that developed the hiring criteria for Stuckey's post.

Daugherty had opposed Stuckey's hiring, saying the city should have hired someone with experience in municipal animal shelters. But she also voiced concern that the department is being destabilized by frequent turnover.

"Most of them have been there a very short time. No one has any institutional memory," she said. "There is no continuity in the staffing at all."

Stuckey arrived last year after a previous executive, Jerry Greenwalt, had faced a similar campaign for his removal.

The Animal Defense League widely distributed his home address and phone number and also picketed repeatedly outside Hahn's home in San Pedro, wearing skulls masks and holding oversized images of animal carcasses.

Representatives of the Animal Liberation Front did not respond to requests for comment. But in recent months, the group had taken credit for other harassment campaigns, including one in which prostitutes, pizza delivery men and gang members were directed to the home of an animal services employee.

Since Monday's commission meeting, animal welfare activists have been sending e-mails saying they believe Villaraigosa intends to hire Edward Boks, who has been heading New York City's Animal Care and Control agency. Boks' contract with the agency was not renewed last week, according to one report in the New York media.

A spokeswoman for New York City's animal control agency said Tuesday that she cannot confirm whether Boks is a job candidate in Los Angeles.

"In the next couple of days, I am going to call Mr. Boks and ask him what the status is and what the situation is," said Jean Tanenbaum, a partner with T.J. Public Relations.

"But as of this moment, that conversation has not taken place."

###

Union takes protest to steps of City Hall

By Rick Orlov
Staff Writer
Dec. 14, 2005

Hundreds of members of a city union rallied Tuesday at City Hall, chanting "Equal pay for equal work," in a continuing protest over stalled contract negotiations.

The demonstration was the latest for the Engineers and Architects Association - it also protested over Thanksgiving weekend at Los Angeles International Airport - which in is seeking a contract similar to that granted earlier this year to Department of Water and Power workers.

"Justice has not been served for my members," said Bob Aquino, business manager of the 8,000-member union. "We still don't have equal pay for equal work and we will continue to demonstrate until we get a fair contract."

The DWP workers' contract includes a 16 percent salary boost over five years, with an escalator clause that could increase it to 30 percent.

Aquino said the city is offering a total 5 percent over three years to the EAA, whose members work for a variety of city agencies, including airports and harbors.

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has said the offer is the same given other city workers paid out of the general fund and that the city cannot afford more because it is facing a \$245 million shortfall next year.

But Aquino said the city had a \$131 million surplus in fiscal 2004-05 that carried over to this year's budget.

"We are not going to sit idly by," Aquino said. "My members will become the sweet and dedicated employees they have always been once they are treated fairly."

City Administrative Officer Bill Fujioka said Aquino was confusing a one-time carry-over of funds with a surplus.

"That is truly one-time money that is already allocated," Fujioka said. "If we were to use that money for salary increases, it would increase our structural deficit."

Fujioka said he believes that union leaders have been misleading members about the city's contract offer.

"What we would like to see is have the offer explained to members and let them vote on it," Fujioka said.

###



DWP Workers' Pay Hike Divides City Hall, Other Employee Unions

Engineers demand same 19% over five years during council protest. And mayor hints DWP managers won't get the deal underlings got.

By Patrick McGreevy
Times Staff Writer
Dec. 14, 2005

As one city employee union flooded Los Angeles City Hall with protesters demanding the same salary increases won by Department of Water and Power workers, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa signaled to the department's managers Tuesday that they also were unlikely to get the same terms.

More than 250 members of the Engineers and Architects Assn. packed the council chambers and spilled into the halls Tuesday, warning the council that it will see "further disruptions and noise" if they are not given the same contract approved in September for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 18, which represents more than 90% of DWP employees.

"We're back because justice has still not been served for my members, your employees," said Robert Aquino, business manager of the 8,000-member engineers' union.

Aquino was cited by police officers Tuesday for creating a hazardous condition with the protest. The matter is being forwarded to the city attorney for a decision on whether to prosecute.

Aquino said a report by City Controller Laura Chick that found that the city had increased its reserve fund this year cast doubt on the city's plea of poverty at the bargaining table. He also said that city tax revenue was higher than the city had originally estimated.

The IBEW contract, negotiated by then-Mayor James K. Hahn and approved in September by the council, guarantees raises of 19% over five years; salaries could increase 31% if inflation spikes.

In comparison, Aquino's union has been offered 6.5% over three years.

Aquino has organized demonstrations at City Hall, at a downtown intersection and at Los Angeles International Airport. He also has called on the city to fire six employees who have refused to pay union dues for religious reasons.

Villaraigosa is chairman of the city's Executive Employee Relations Committee, which met Tuesday with representatives of the bargaining union that is representing 280 DWP managers and offered to begin talks on a new contract.

Jerry Pfefferman, head of the Management Employees Assn., said he would like a contract similar to the one given to the IBEW.

The mayor and other city leaders signaled, however, that the managers probably would not get the same deal, Pfefferman said.

"The mayor said that was then, this is now," Pfefferman said.

He warned the mayor that nearly 10% of his bargaining unit had petitioned to join the IBEW in hopes of receiving that union's contract, because otherwise managers would see their salaries end up much closer to those of subordinates represented by IBEW.

"My message to the mayor was, if the managers feel short-changed there is a danger of the whole" bargaining "unit slipping into IBEW," Pfefferman said.

Councilman Dennis Zine, a member of the committee, said he did not see any union, including the managers, getting the IBEW deal.

"The mayor is being fiscally responsible," Zine said.

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Zoo report advises more space for elephants

By Dana Bartholomew

Staff Writer

Dec. 14, 2005

Elephants at the Los Angeles Zoo deserve larger quarters and should not be shipped off to a sanctuary, according to an independent review released late Tuesday.

The much-anticipated report by the Chief Administrative Office recommends that L.A.'s three elephants stay in L.A. - and their new exhibit be increased from two to three acres.

The roughly 75-page CAO report consulted more than 30 zoo professionals, biologists and activists worldwide in order to respond to Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's contention that the city's elephants need more space.

City officials will soon decide whether to heed the report's recommendation or resort to other options such as closing the exhibit and packing the elephants off to a sanctuary. Until then, nearly \$11 million needed to complete the exhibit has been put on hold.

Adding one acre to the Elephants of Surin, as proposed in the report, would increase its cost from \$19 million to \$33 million - a \$14 million increase.

"We have received the study and are reviewing it," said Los Angeles Zoo spokesman Jason Jacobs.

While animal activists say the proposed two-acre exhibit would be too small to humanely keep elephants, zoo officials say it would exceed national standards.

Citing excessive costs, the CAO report rejected such options as building a four- to six-acre elephant exhibit near the Los Angeles Zoo in Griffith Park, or sending Ruby, Gita and Billy to one of two national sanctuaries for elephants.

The report also said the elephants in their current environment were deemed to be healthy to moderately healthy.

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Elephants' Elbow Room Is Big Issue

The L.A. Zoo had planned to double the pachyderms' living space, but a city report calls for more acreage, and activists still more.

By Carla Hall and Steve Hymon

Times Staff Writers

Dec. 14, 2005

Elephants may be an unlikely star in a political drama, but the ones who inhabit the Los Angeles Zoo are taking center stage — and that stage may get a lot bigger.

A long-awaited report by city officials on whether the elephants should stay at the zoo or be retired to a sanctuary declares the elephants to be well-tended but in need of more space.

The zoo, which is a city department, has been gearing up for several years for the elaborate "Elephants of Surin" exhibit. However, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, fulfilling a campaign promise to animal welfare activists, put the plans on hold while he instructed city staffers to research whether it should go ahead.

The proposed exhibit would have at least doubled the elephants' space, from a little more than half an acre to 1.06 acres. Animal welfare activists criticized that plan as still being woefully too small for creatures who can roam tens of miles a day in the wild.

Some activists believe the elephants should retire to one of the sanctuaries in this country where they could wander on hundreds of acres.

Earlier this year, city officials decided they needed 1.84 acres, at a cost of \$25.3 million. By then the mayor had gotten involved, and the City Council put off a decision, waiting for the report issued Tuesday.

Now, the report calls for even more space — as much as three acres, which could boost the cost to nearly \$50 million.

The report also concludes that there would be costs associated with moving the elephants to a sanctuary because the city would still be partly responsible for their care — and the city might have to pay back money the county provided to expand the exhibit.

Before filing the report, the city brought in an independent veterinarian, who concluded that "it is unlikely that any staff or facility could offer a better level of care and management than the elephants receive at the Los Angeles Zoo."

John Lewis, director of the L.A. Zoo, said he had just gotten the report and would have to go over it with staff before he could comment. But he noted that he had always emphasized that it's not the size of the exhibit that was most crucial for elephants. "It's what's in the space, it's how the animals are able to use the space, it's how the staffs are able to encourage them to use the space," he said.

The fate of the elephants will ultimately be up to the City Council and Villaraigosa. Tom LaBonge, whose district includes the zoo, has made it clear that he doesn't want the elephants to go — his reasoning is that the zoo is the only place most people will ever see a live elephant.

He jokingly said that he and the mayor would have to go "mano a mano" if Villaraigosa tried to get rid of the elephants.

"We need to do the right thing for the elephants and just as important for the children and millions of people who visit the zoo over time," LaBonge said. "It's worth every cent, and it's going to be tough."

Elephants — Earth's biggest land mammals — have thrown their weight around in this city's zoo and in others. The issue of whether these giant creatures can thrive in the confines of any zoo is something that zoo professionals as well as animal welfare activists have been wrestling with for years. On one hand, the L.A. Zoo provides state-of-the-art veterinary care and safety. On the other hand, argue activists, the confined spaces are frustrating and unhealthy for animals.

Two years ago, the L.A. Zoo's decision to transfer its African elephant, Ruby, to another zoo so that she could be a maternal role model to other African elephants stirred up protest — and even a lawsuit — by animal welfare activists who contended the move would break Ruby's 16-year bond with the L.A. Zoo's female Asian elephant, Gita. (Female elephants are social in the wild.) Eventually the L.A. Zoo decided to bring Ruby back.

But that wasn't the end of the tension between the zoo and the community of activists. Gita's chronic serious foot problems have been a source of consternation for activists who say that she would be healthier in a sanctuary.

The mayor's decision to put the proposed exhibit on hold raised the stakes in elephant care for all involved — activists, zoo staff, city politicians and the elephants — and gave a spotlight to all those with a passionate point of view. Since the mayor's decision to review the exhibit, the zoo has been the site of protest, debate and rallies.

"Building a two-acre exhibit is not planning for the future. It's merely a Band-Aid approach and a waste of taxpayers' money, and it certainly does not provide a high quality of life for these elephants," Les Schobert, a former curator at several zoos who has been critical of zoos' management of animals, said at a highly charged Zoo Commission meeting in September. "You will hear some people say it's not how much space you have to give elephants, it's how that space is used. Balderdash. You can't take a studio apartment and fit a family of six into it no matter how hard you try."

The zoo has three elephants. Only one — Billy — is on exhibit. Gita and Ruby were moved off-exhibit to adjacent quarters while the area was cleared for construction. Gita is recuperating from foot surgery.

Activists argue that without sufficient space, elephants engage in repetitive behavior such as bobbing or swaying.

"How do you decide how much space is enough?" Zoo Commission President Kimberly Marteau asked at the September meeting. "You could give them the entire golf course out here."

"OK," Schobert responded.

It is unclear how the City Council would vote on the issue. Several members surveyed during their meeting Tuesday showed they were hardly speaking with one voice.

Councilman Bill Rosendahl said he wanted to see a large sanctuary created next to the zoo.

Jan Perry said the 40,000 people who were homeless in her district was a bigger issue for her. Ed Reyes said that perhaps he was being "soft-hearted" but that his sympathies tended to rest with the animals.

"If I was an elephant, I wouldn't want to be caged up," Reyes said. "I think as a society we could do better for the animals."

Councilman Dennis Zine said he would balk at spending an additional \$20 million or so, because the city has so many pressing needs for people. He also said the welfare of the animals is an issue.

"We want to show people nature, but we don't want to harm nature showing it to them," he said.

The zoo has had elephants since it opened in 1966. Twenty-five elephants have lived at the zoo over the years.

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