

Good afternoon. Ann Cantrell, I am a volunteer at the El Dorado Nature Center, a contributor to Friends of the Nature Center and one several organizers of Save the Nature Center. Many volunteers have been circulating the following petition, which reads:

PETITION TO THE CITY OF LONG BEACH FROM SAVE THE EL DORADO NATURE CENTER

Long Beach has 160 PARKS, 6 DOG PARKS, ONE NATURE CENTER. The Nature Center is used by families from all over So. CA. I am pleading with the Council not to cut the current staff, programs and protection for this irreplaceable, revenue-making asset. Use Infrastructure Funds for maintaining the Nature Center, not for another dog park near sensitive habitat.

Over 550 people have signed this petition in the last 19 days. They live in every zip code and council district in Long Beach, from 90802 to 90815. They come from all over Los Angeles and Orange counties, from Lakewood to Whittier; Los Alamitos to Santa Ana.

I thank the council and Parks Department for listening to the public and suggesting ways of avoiding the budget cuts, not only for the Nature Center, but for all of the recreation programs throughout the city. I support Councilwoman Schipske's proposal for using upland oil money and making cuts in other areas to fund the parks, libraries, police and fire. I am not in favor of charging additional fees for after-school and sports programs, swimming pools and Nature Center entrance, as this limits access for many of those most in need of these activities.

I would be in favor of charging a higher fee for an annual entrance pass for El Dorado Park for those from outside of Long Beach. There is already a fee reduction for seniors. If the city can charge more based on age, why not on residence? Over half of the 150 people, who signed the petitions they were entering the Nature Center on Sunday, were from outside of LB. Several said that since they don't pay taxes in LB, but enjoy this one of a kind facility, they would be willing to pay more to use it.

Another big concern is safety for the Nature Center. With no park rangers, Mon-Thurs., the center will be open to vandalism, vagrants, illegal fishing and smoking in a high fire-risk area. Many women who walk alone on the trails have voiced concerns about their safety. I urge you to include full-time, well-trained Park Rangers in at least El Dorado Regional Park, if not the other parks needing ranger protection.

Lastly, since the Nature Center in the fourth district, I request that Councilmember O'Donnell give any extra infrastructure funds from the 2012 budget to the Nature Center, not to another dog park. All the signers of these petitions, even dog owners and lovers, were incensed that \$65,000 has been promised a dog park instead of going to needed infrastructure repairs in the Nature Center.

