



Memorandum

To: Mayor and City Council

June 19, 2012

From: Suja Lowenthal, Second District *SL*

Subject: Utility Cables

REQUESTED ACTION:

Respectfully request the City Attorney determine whether existing city ordinances can be amended or a new ordinance created to regulate the aesthetics of utility cables or wires in residential neighborhoods and report back to Council within 60 days.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Whether in the ground or overhead, utility lines are generally regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission. The CPUC is a constitutional agency with broad constitutional and statutory powers to regulate investor-owned electric, natural gas, telecommunications, and water utilities. General Order 95 contains the basic requirements for construction of overhead utility lines within the Rules for Overhead Electric Line Construction. General Order 95 was established in 1942.

Title 21 in the Long Beach Municipal Code is intended to "promote and preserve the public health, safety, comfort, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the people of Long Beach", including permitted uses in the Public Right-of-Way.

DISCUSSION:

The Rose Park Neighborhood Association comprises two historic districts with an interest in preserving the aesthetics of its community. Over the last year, the community has observed the installation of cables by Verizon (see attached pictures). The new cables appear thicker than standard lines and include additional loops of wire midway between poles, utility boxes and "snowshoe" style elements to support their communications program.

Residents understand the need for utility wires to support the various functions in neighborhood and business corridors, however, there must be a balance between the needs of utility companies and the aesthetic value and historic integrity of communities. Public Utilities Code 7901.1(a) specifies that "local governments may exercise reasonable control as to the time, place, and manner in which roads, highways, and waterways are accessed." However, it is not clear if this particular code can be used by cities to regulate issues such as cabling.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No fiscal impact.

**ROSE PARK NEIGHBORHOOD
UTILITY CABLES ATTACHMENT**

