



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF VENTURA

GOVERNMENT CENTER, HALL OF ADMINISTRATION
800 SOUTH VICTORIA AVENUE, VENTURA, CALIFORNIA 93009

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November 10, 2020

Board of Supervisors
800 S. Victoria Ave.
Ventura, CA 93009

SUBJECT: Recommendation of Supervisor Bennett to Adopt an Ordinance Restricting Parking and Establishing a Safe Parking Permit Program Applicable to Portions of North Ventura Avenue, Crooked Palm Road, Canada Larga Road and Casitas Vista Road; Find Adoption of Ordinance Categorically Exempt from California Environmental Quality Act.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

1. Find that the adoption of the ordinance is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15308 as a regulatory action to assure the maintenance and protection of the environment, and further find that no unusual circumstances or other exception set forth in CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 preclude use of the exemption;
2. Adopt the ordinance; and
3. Direct the Clerk of the Board to publish a summary of the ordinance as required by the Government Code.

DISCUSSION:

The Board heard and unanimously approved a first reading of this ordinance on October 20, 2020.

In western Ventura County, on North Ventura Avenue and Crooked Palm Road, there have been a growing number of vehicles parking overnight. The number of vehicles have grown substantially since the COVID-19 crisis began. Vehicle owners report that they have been displaced from parking in cities and were told that the N. Ventura Avenue area was an alternative.

Local homeowners have contacted my office with concerns about appropriate waste and trash removal from these vehicles, concerns that individuals receive needed services, and some have complained the campers are unsightly.

I have visited the area and worked with the County's Transportation Department, Sheriff's Office, County Executive Office, Human Services Agency, and Health Care Agency to come up with a plan to address this complicated issue. Our goal is to find a solution other than just moving it to another area or into a neighborhood.

Recent federal court decisions have made it very difficult for local governments to prohibit use of certain public areas by those experiencing homelessness and lacking access to a housing alternative. We are making progress in our efforts to end homelessness, but there was still work to do before the current economic crisis put additional people at risk. The unemployment rate has gone from under 4% to 11.4% in July. Some people who were just getting by, are in dire circumstances and hanging on to the only shelter they have left – their vehicle.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and state government have requested that individuals experiencing homelessness not be forced to move during the COVID crisis. That said, it is important to maintain hygiene, protect our environment, and to minimize the impact to nearby businesses and residents. We are doing our best to balance all of these considerations.

My office has been working closely with the Sheriff's Office, which is making regular patrols of the area, alerting vehicle owners to applicable laws and enforcement measures. Sheriff Captain Rivera's staff regularly checks for raw sewage dumped, signs of drug use and other illegal activities. The California Highway Patrol has provided assistance patrolling the area and removing abandoned or non-functioning vehicles.

County staff has visited the area to do welfare checks, make sure that there is no dumping of toxic substances or accumulation of refuse from the vehicles, and to provide assistance accessing social services, if needed. Most recently the County has arranged for the availability of dumpsters for those living in RVs to bring their trash weekly during the County's shower pod/backpack medicine homeless services hours.

However, with more and more vehicles arriving, the ability to casually monitor environmental and social safety concerns is compromised. Therefore, after meeting with the Sheriff Captain Rivera, and staff with the Health Care Agency's Health Care for the Homeless One Stop program, Human Services Agency's Homeless Services Program, and CEO's office, we are recommending new parking restrictions and a pilot safe parking program that will require those who park overnight to obtain a permit by participating in the program.

The proposed parking restrictions will designate some areas “No Parking Anytime”, some areas “No Overnight Parking”, and some areas “No Parking Overnight, Except By Permit”. The permits will be provided through the Health Care Agency Health Care for the Homeless One Stop program to those who are actively participating in the County-run parking program. The program will connect participants with needed housing support services; ensure the responsible disposal of waste and the use of best fire safety practices (including by prohibiting open fires); require that permitted vehicles are operable and registered; and will require permittees to possess a valid driver’s license.

Ample notice will be provided to individuals currently parking in the area that a change in parking regulations and signage is coming and how they can participate in the parking program. The ordinance includes a one-year sunset clause so that the parking restrictions and pilot parking program can be revisited for continued need and effectiveness.

The ordinance designates the applicable restrictions by road name and mileposts and establishes the terms, conditions and requirements of the safe parking permit program. An informational map is also attached.

Staff has determined that adoption of the ordinance is categorically exempt from CEQA review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15308 as a regulatory action to assure the maintenance and protection of the environment, and that no unusual circumstances or other exception set forth in CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 preclude use of the exemption. As explained above, the ordinance contains rules and regulations to safely and responsibly manage vehicle parking in the program area, including by requiring the disposal of trash, refuse, gray water and other disposable materials in designated locations and by prohibiting open fires. The ordinance is anticipated to improve environmental conditions compared to the status quo.

This letter and ordinance have been reviewed by County Counsel. Please join me in approving the recommended actions to move diligently toward an outcome that addresses the concerns of the community while considering the plight of those who have fallen on hard times.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Bennett", written in a cursive style.

Steve Bennett
Supervisor, First District

Attachments:
Exhibit 1 - Ordinance
Exhibit 2 - Map