



November 17, 2022

Los Angeles Department of Recreation & Parks
221 N Figueroa Street Suite 350
Los Angeles, C.A. 90012

Sent only via email to Jimmy.kim@lacity.org; Noel.Williams@lacity.org;
Cathie.SantoDomingo@lacity.org; AP.Diaz@lacity.org; Matthew.Rudnick@lacity.org

RE: Stephen Weeks pony rides contract

Dear Los Angeles Department of Recreation & Parks,

I am writing on behalf of Los Angeles Alliance for Animals (LAAA) and Animal Protection and Rescue League (APRL) regarding the upcoming contract renewal for Stephen Weeks' pony rides in a City park.

Please take notice that if the City renews its contract with Weeks, LAAA and APRL will file suit against the City for facilitating animal cruelty and ongoing First Amendment violations of protesters.

On July 1, 2021, LAAA began the documentation process of geriatric ponies providing rides at "Griffith Park and Pony Rides." Through this ongoing process of months of documenting, LAAA discovered elderly ponies on the turnstile not receiving water for almost seven hours in 90 degree heat, elderly ponies being overworked with no protection against 100 degree temperatures with no adequate periods of rest, elderly ponies being prodded for several hours to provide rides to children when they refuse to move any further, a sheep dealing with heat stress, geriatric ponies with unknown wounds on their body, geriatric ponies with algae in their water, geriatric ponies with lameness providing rides to children disregarding her instability/medical needs, and rabbits sitting in the hot sun with no shade or water in the petting zoo over the summer.

LAAA's equine expert has confirmed that the geriatric ponies have severe depression, yet they are forced to carry children on their back for almost seven hours, six days a week. The Los Angeles City Council and Los Angeles Recreation and Parks renewed the Griffith Park and Pony Ride recent contract during the midst of violations of animal welfare laws, and has been advised that Stephen Weeks continues to break the new provisions of his new contract of geriatric ponies not being allowed to work in temperatures above 95 degrees, and slowing down at 90 F yet the geriatric ponies worked in Los Angeles heat waves of 100 degrees over the summer of 2022,

while the geriatric ponies were being hit to provide a ride. Despite all of this, the pony operator Stephen Weeks remains open.

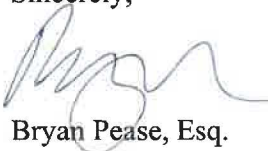
The following is a list of what LAAA has documented of geriatric ponies working in hot temperatures over the Summer 2022:

On August 7, 2022 geriatric ponies worked in 100 F (rides were not shut down)
On August 7, 2022 geriatric ponies worked later in the day in 97 F (rides were not shut down)
On August 12, 2022 geriatric ponies working in 93 F (rides were not slowed down)
On August 13, 2022 geriatric ponies worked in 97 F (rides were not shut down)
On August 17, 2022 geriatric ponies worked in 91 F (rides were not slowed down)
On August 31, 2022 geriatric ponies worked in 96 F (rides were not shut down)
On September 1, 2022 geriatric ponies worked in 100 F (rides were not shut down)
On September 2, 2022 geriatric ponies worked in 97 F (rides were not shut down)
On September 25, 2022 geriatric ponies worked in 90 F (rides were not slowed down)
On September 27, 2022 geriatric ponies worked in 98 F (rides were not shut down)
On September 28, 2022 geriatric ponies worked in 95 F (rides were not shut down)

In response to protests by LAAA, park rangers and LAPD have required protesters to stand in a "First Amendment Zone," not hold signs on a public sidewalk, not speak to family members in order to pass out materials, not chant or sing in public, "do the Park Rangers a favor" and not take video footage, and then recently the head of LAAA was arrested for free speech at the rides.

LAAA and APRL will be paying close attention when the Los Angeles Recreation and Parks decides on renewing the contract, and if it does so, I will be filing suit on these organizations' behalf to shut down these cruel and illegal pony rides and protect protesters' First Amendment rights. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Bryan Pease, Esq.

Los Angeles Equestrian Coalition Remarks: Lisa D. Baca
September 16, 2024 Special Meeting Pony Rides
RAP COMMISSION

Good Morning Commissioners and GM Kim:

The journey from December, 2022 and the closure of the 75-year-old Griffith Park Pony Rides, to September 16, 2024, has been a LONG one!

SUPPORTERS of live pony rides at Griffith Park have walked this journey EVERY step of the way with you. We have followed RAP's two-year public process, attending meetings, investing thousands of hours of public comments, writing statements, preparing the formal Pony Experience 3.0 proposal and watching while over \$200,000 taxpayer dollars was invested with the PLACEWORKS consultants.

On page 84 of the final report, you can see the EXTENSIVE outreach efforts of: pop up booths, focus group meetings, online survey public comments and an online survey of Los Angeles residents to reach today's results.

The efforts made by WENDY NOWAK and PLACEWORKS to be open, transparent, fair and most of all inclusive of ALL opinions are to be recognized and commended.

The findings are now IRREFUTABLE.

BOTTOM LINE: Page 21 of the FM3 Research report clearly states that "7 in 10 respondents" who are CITY OF LOS ANGELES RESIDENTS are IN FAVOR of bringing back the Pony Rides at Griffith Park.

In 2022, RAP gave Steve Weeks 6 weeks to clear his business off of the Griffith Park Pony Rides site. It is our sincerest hope that today, RAP will move forward with the SAME 6-week urgency and put a new plan in motion to RESTORE live ponies to the historic Griffith Park Pony Rides.

THANK YOU.

Outreach Completed

Statistically Valid Telephone and Online Survey of Residents

February 2024

- Over 500 residents
- Telephone and invite-only online survey

Pop-Up Booths

December 2023 through January 2024

- Talked to over 350 park-goers
- Locations across the city including:
 - Shane's Inspiration Playground at Griffith Park
 - Griffith Park Railroad #1
 - Discovery Cube
 - Lincoln Park
 - Pan Pacific Park
 - Westchester Recreation Center
 - Griffith Park Railroad #2
 - Sherman Oaks Castle Park
 - Westwood Recreation Center
 - Soboroff Sports Field at EXPO Center

Focus Group Meetings

September through October 2023

- Seven meetings:
 - Los Angeles Equestrian Coalition
 - Los Angeles Equine Advisory Committee
 - Los Angeles Alliance for Animals
 - In Defense of Animals,
 - PETA
 - Animal Legal Defense Fund
 - Griffith J Griffith Trust, Friends of Griffith Park
 - Griffith Park Advisory Board
 - Los Feliz Improvement Association
 - Los Feliz Neighborhood Council
 - Hollywoodland Gifted Park
 - Motherhood Alliance Equity Village Empowerment (MAEVE) Los Feliz

Online Survey Public Comments

December 2022 through June 2023

- Over 1,000 comments
- Summaries and comments posted online

When asked directly, 7 in 10 respondents favor offering pony rides at Griffith Park again — just 16% oppose it.

Would you favor or oppose offering pony rides for children in Griffith Park again?

