

**PALOS VERDES
ESTATES**

Fire trail plan doused

80 residents turn out

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For Jennifer Laity, defeating a proposal to realign the Paseo Del Sol fire road shows how much residents value open space. Laity helped spread the word that brought about 80 people to the Parklands Committee meeting last week where the plan to reroute a section of the popular trail in order to dampen noise from the hikers went down in flames.

"The original vision of the Olmsted brothers in the 1920's of a city characterized by public open spaces and trails is still very much alive," Laity said. "I hope that the tremendous show of support... will galvanize the community to work with the city to refurbish and improve our trails and parklands."

The city's Parklands Committee on Sept. 10 not only rejected

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Fire trail

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the plan unanimously, but Chairman Charles Peterson also directed city staff to crack down on setback violations by the seven applicants.

"There's nothing we can do," said one of the applicants, Jim D'Angelo, after the public hearing ended and audience members streamed out of the council chambers. "They went with what the majority wanted rather than the impact on a few residents."

The Via Elevado homeowners, fed up with noise from the nearby popular trail, offered to pay a total of \$50,000 to relocate a 1,900-foot section further up the ridge and away from their backyards.

Officially meant for emergency vehicles, enforcement has been relaxed for years on the crumbling fire trail, which stretches from Paseo del Sol to Via Campesina and veers near the 2700 block of Via Elevado in the Malaga Hills.

Since the city posted no-

tice about the proposed trail realignment about three weeks ago, the city received more than 100 letters in opposition. Peterson criticized D'Angelo for not withdrawing the application and reworking it amid such strong opposition, especially because the applicants' properties abut the trail by encroaching onto the public parklands.

"When you come into the city and you ask volunteer people and paid city staff to look into your proposal and spend hundreds of hours doing it, you need to come in with clean hands," Peterson said. "I'm urging the staff to make this situation on Via Elevado a code enforcement item priority. They've got hundreds of feet of encroachments. There's no good reason for this blatant encroachment to be allowed to exist any longer."

The conceptual proposal to reroute 1,900 feet of the trail included constructing 135 timber box steps and installing 300 feet of chain-link fence. The cost of the professionally constructed alternative trail was estimated at \$78,285, and the

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PV Homes Association had offered to help fund the project, according to the application.

D'Angelo claimed foot traffic on the trail has increased substantially because of social media, but many of the 14 residents who spoke against the plan had been using the trail for decades and dismissed claims of rude behavior on it.

The elderly, bicyclists and those pushing strollers would not be able to access the proposed, elevated trail. Several runners, including two cross-country coaches, said a 4-foot-wide "goat trail" would be unusable in the rain.

"This would be dangerous for my runners," said Chris Foster, Peninsula High School cross-country coach.

Kimball Wells of Rancho Palos Verdes, a member of "PV Runners" in Malaga Cove who run together on Saturday mornings, said he has been jogging on the fire trail for 20 years.

"I really think this is about the property owners wanting to insulate themselves from the public, and that is something that is happening over and over again in this country," Wells said.

"This is the Cadillac of PV Estates trails," said George Edwards, who has walked the trail for 16 years.

A resident of Via Ramon estimated that he has used the trail about 2,000 times over 41 years and mocked claims that the trail is full of "walkers of mass disturbance."

Others emphasized the value of the trails.

"The trails are the character of the city," said Jennifer Cody.

D'Angelo, who spoke for the applicants, responded in a final attempt to salvage the proposal.

He acknowledged that "a lot of nice people" use the trail, but he said since he and his family moved into their home in 2011 they have heard consistent foul language in their backyard. Some trail-users even flicked sticks over the fence while his children played basketball, D'Angelo said, and fruit was picked off a neighbor's tree.

"It is reasonable to recognize that our environment will only get worse as use increases," D'Angelo said.

City officials, however, said that the Palos Verdes Estates Police Department has no record of safety is-

ssues on the fire trail over the last several years. Committee members encouraged D'Angelo to offset the sound issues on his property with more barriers.

Peterson also faulted the applicants for proposing to close a portion of the parklands without addressing whether such action would violate land-use restrictions established in June by a Los Angeles Superior Court judge, who ruled that the city and homes association acted illegally in 2012 when they transferred Via Panorama parklands to two residents.

"If you are closing the parklands, you are going to run smack into the opinion of the judge in the Via Panorama case who said you can't do this," Peterson said.

Although the city considers proposed changes to the parklands to protect homeowners privacy, officials also take into account several other factors, including preservation of the environment and consideration of community input. The city council, which has the final call, is expected to endorse last Thursday's vote by the Parklands Committee.