



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mayor Elaine Gennawey is “extremely disappointed” that the County Board of Supervisors summarily rejected the South County Association of Mayors proposal for temporary homeless shelter

Laguna Niguel, CA – At the urgent request of Federal Judge David O. Carter, the South Orange County Association of Mayors (SOCAM) convened in an effort to identify a location for a temporary homeless shelter. On Thursday, April 19, the South County Mayors voted 10-1, with Laguna Niguel Mayor Elaine Gennawey voting with the majority, to ask the Board of Supervisors to consider County property in Silverado Canyon as a potential South County location for a temporary homeless shelter. The property is located within the South Orange County Service Planning Area.

Unfortunately, on Tuesday, April 24, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to oppose the coalition of Mayor’s recommendation to study the location further and determine whether or not it might be viable.

“It was our understanding that Judge Carter was asking the South Orange County Association of Mayors to identify a potential location for an immediately available temporary emergency homeless shelter in South County,” said Mayor Gennawey. “We did that and the location on County property in Silverado Canyon was selected as the preferred location by 10 of the 11 South Orange County Mayors.”

“Certainly, we recognize the site had challenges, including accessibility through public transportation networks,” said Gennawey. “But we suggested potential solutions through non-profit and private partnerships such as Uber, Lyft and the County’s Yellow Cab contract. We were extremely disappointed that the Orange County Board of Supervisors rejected this location out of hand without doing the due diligence necessary to determine if it could overcome some of the challenges we all acknowledge.”

According to Mayor Gennawey, SOCAM understood their direction from the judge was to identify a location for a temporary emergency shelter with each city addressing the long-term goal of permanent supportive housing in their communities. The Mayors worked collaboratively with the County CEO, who assured them before the vote occurred that all necessary services needed on site could be provided by the County.

At the April 19 SOCAM meeting, the Mayors also discussed the need to work together to develop a longer term plan to be a collaborative partner in the solution for homelessness. Although SOCAM typically meets only quarterly, the Mayors recognized the urgency of the matter and agreed to meet on May 10 to discuss next steps.

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