



BOB BLUMENFIELD

Councilmember, Third District

Sent via email: candecrane@roadrunner.com

January 4, 2021

RE: Your Feedback Regarding Cabin Community Costs

Dear Ms. Crane:

Thank you for contacting me about the cabin communities and expressing your concern over the cost. Like you, I want to see our homeless folks sheltered humanly and in a manner that provides the services necessary for their unique needs — but at a sustainable cost! I share your outrage and have been outspoken about the high costs of these cabins and other homeless interventions.

The cabins themselves cost about \$5,000 each. However, as you surmised, the total cost per unit includes bringing in electricity, sewer pipes, plumbing, and other health and safety costs the City is obligated to pay. It also comes from the related infrastructure (shower/restroom facility, service provider offices, laundry facilities, food area, picnic benches, storage area, guard shack, fencing, paint, etc.)

The City Attorney does a good job of outlining the reasons for these high costs in the attached PDF. His document does explain why these cabin communities are not comparable to those installed in other cities with volunteer labor or cities where they ignored standard housing rules. However, just because the costs can be rationalized or logically explained does not make them right. I believe there are reasonable ways to safely bring down these costs. For example, I am trying to push the LAFD Fire Marshall to accept alternatives to the required and very expensive fire alarm system - a system that adds more than \$1 million dollars to the cost of each cabin community!

I am adamant that the current housing rules, designed for traditional housing, can be adapted to meet the unique housing of cabin communities and bridge housing without posing a health and safety risk. These discussions are in the works, and I hope to get the City to revise its public call for bids. It is incredibly frustrating as the Council can set policies but does not control the bureaucracy. Nonetheless, as stated in my [cabin community meeting Q&A](#), I have asked the City Controller to conduct a comprehensive review and cost analysis, and, working with the Mayor, I will do everything I can to push the bureaucracy to cut costs. Also, working with the City Attorney, I will find legal ways we can use emergency powers to avoid some onerous State building requirements that shouldn't apply to temporary shelters but are currently being applied in part because the City legitimately fears losing costly lawsuits on the issue.

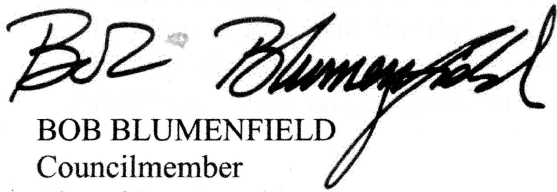
That being said, some of the construction cost is strategic as it will reduce operational costs — installing sewage pipes rather than paying high monthly costs to pump/maintain mobile

bathrooms and showers actually saves money after several months. Further, not every cabin community will cost the same as in the LA Times article; for example, the West Valley cabin communities are significantly lower, and the costs will come down as the City gains more experience in putting up these cabin communities and as folks like you and me keep pushing to wring out excess costs. But, the crisis is urgent, and we cannot wait for the perfect to move forward on the good — hence the first batch of cabin communities will be too expensive.

The City alone cannot stem the flow of people into homelessness nor provide all of the services to rehabilitate people living on the streets. It will require long-term support from each level of government, our communities, and the private sector. I encourage you to reach out to your County Supervisor, Shiela Kuehl, and your State and Federal representatives about homelessness. They each play an important role — whether it is providing mental health and drug addiction services (County), passing laws defining who is eligible to be forced into treatment via a conservatorship (State), or not cutting critical Federal housing dollars (Congress).

Again, thank you for contacting me about the high costs. These are trying times, but we will get through them. Thank you for contacting me. Stay safe. Stay healthy. Take care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BB Blumenfeld", with a stylized flourish at the end.

BOB BLUMENFIELD
Councilmember
City of Los Angeles

BB: cmg