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City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks
221 N Figueroa Street Suite 350
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Griffith Park Pony Rides & Petting Zoo

I'm Mary Cummins of Animal Advocates Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I've been involved in animal issues for over 35 years in Los Angeles. I've gone through the Police Academy and Humane Academy to become a Humane Officer and investigate animal cruelty and violations. I've worked positively with the City of Los Angeles for over 20 years including on the Prop F Committee and getting the current Los Angeles Animal Services Wildlife Policy passed in 2004 (Ref. 1).

May 29, 2022 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. I visited the Griffith Park Pony Rides and Petting Zoo (GPPR). The following is a report of my visit and a summary of my research including attached/linked photos, videos and references.

1. Petting Zoo

a. Sheep

The sheep's hooves were overgrown and needed trimming (Photo 1, 2). This is link to overgrown (left) and properly trimmed (right) hooves <https://cdn.outdoorhappens.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Diagram-of-Hoof-anatomy-tom-milner-1024x405.jpg> . His coat needed to be cleaned because he had feces matted to his wool. His coat needed to be sheared. This is a photo of Larry the same sheep from the official website of the GPPR. <https://www.griffithparkponyride.com/petting-zoo> You can see that Larry is clean, shorn and his hooves are properly trimmed. This shows that the owner knows how to care for sheep but has chosen not to give proper care. There are photos of children hugging animals with their faces touching the animals in GPPR's which is why they must be clean. This is a violation of California Penal Code 597, not providing proper veterinary and other care (Ref. 2). Also a violation of the Animal Welfare Act because these are exhibit animals under USDA permit Cert # 93-C-1163 Cust #502682 (Ref. 3).

b. Goats

The goats' hooves were overgrown and needed to be trimmed (Photo 3). Violation of CA 597 and AWA.

c. Rabbits

The rabbits' water bottle was empty. I asked the staff to refill the water bottle. They removed the totally empty bottle and refilled it (Photo 4). As soon as they did all three rabbits quickly drank water which means they were dehydrated. Violation of CA 597 and AWA.

d. Lack of Zoonotic Disease Control, Handwashing Stations

The item of greatest concern in the petting zoo and pony rides was the lack of concern for zoonotic diseases. Zoonotic diseases are passed from animals to humans such as SARS-CoV-2, plague, West Nile and rabies. Every year children are sickened from touching animals in petting zoos, pony rides with some children dying (Ref. 4). Petting zoo animals can carry E. coli, Cryptosporidium, Salmonella, ring worm and more. Humans can contract the diseases by hand feeding animals, petting animals, touching the fence rails, sitting on something the animals touched, the ground...

The California Department of Food and Agriculture offers hand washing information and signs for places such as county fairs when one would encounter agricultural animals (Ref. 5).

There should be warning signs at the entrance and exit of the petting zoo along with handwashing instructions and stations. Everyone who enters the petting zoo or even just touches the fencing must wash their hands. Children were hugging the sheep with feces on its coat. They were feeding the animals out of their hands. They were given brushes to brush the animals. The animals were licking the children. These same children will walk a few feet away and eat food with their hands. Many states have Hand Sanitation Laws for animal contact for these reasons (Ref. 6).

Food, drink, baby pacifiers, baby bottles, strollers, wagons should not be allowed in the petting zoo area. They were allowed in that area. Here is a sign from the California Department of Food and Agriculture (Ref. 7).

The City is exposing itself to lawsuits from sick and dying children besides harming its public image. Violation of the Health & Safety Code.

e. Animals in and Near the Food Preparation, Dining Areas

A staff member had two goats on leashes in the food preparation and dining areas, https://scontent-lax3-1.xx.fbcdn.net/v/t1.6435-9/86411826_3496341357073569_330790903599857664_n.jpg?nc_cat=105&ccb=1-7&nc_sid=9267fe&nc_ohc=llqmN3sHNfwAX85Osm0&nc_ht=scontent-lax3-1.xx&oh=00_AT9OMY0A5JrIO-XDKRaZBOP1RXXtfk94WNACX1kfetDF-A&oe=62B992B3 . This photo came from the GPPR website. These people even had a non-service dog. I witnessed the exact same. The three pony corrals are too close to the multiple food prep and dining areas. Animals can't be within at least 20 feet at the minimum of food prep or dining areas per California Food Safety and Health Codes.

Violation of California Retail Food Code, Sections: 114259, 114259.1, 114259.4, 114259.5 no animals are allowed in food preparation or dining areas except some service dogs, patrol dogs and pet dogs in

certain situations (Ref. 8). California Civil Service Code, Section 54.1, 54.25 covers these exceptions (Ref. 9). Weeks has no experience operating a business which preps and serves food.

The issue is again zoonotic diseases. Children pet a goat, pony then eat food with their hands which could transfer disease. It's very possible that many children have already been sickened but their parents assumed it came from the food and not the animals. In cases where many people were sickened investigations revealed the exact cause of the infections and knew it was the petting zoo and not the food.

2. Pony Rides

a. Algae, Scum in Water Troughs

Algae were visible in all of the horse water troughs, (Photo 5). Violation of 597 for not providing proper care, not providing potable water.

b. Loud Noises Used to Scare Ponies to Run

The staff members told the children not to yell or scream at the ponies. Then the staff members ran behind the ponies and made loud clapping sounds that sounded like a whip being cracked in order to get the ponies to run. They also yelled and made other loud noises at the animals. The staff did this every time they wanted the ponies to run. This is harassment and cruel treatment which is a violation of CA 597. I have many more videos and photos. Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2CA15u9cXI&feature=youtu.be>

c. Ponies too Close to Food Preparation, Dining Areas

There are four pony corrals, one large one which is the main track, one small carousel and two smaller ones called Party Corrals which are generally rented out for birthday parties, see GPPR website. <https://www.griffithparkponyride.com/birthday-parties> They offer the Party Corrals with cooking area, picnic tables and ponies. Again, animals can't be within 20 feet of food prep or dining. The animals are directly next to the food prep and dining areas (Photo 6).

The main corral is within 20 feet of the food prep, dining area of a Party Corral. People were seen eating and drinking right next to the small carousel. There are two small corrals in the two Party Corrals which have food prep and dining. I witnessed ponies in the two Party Corrals. The goats are defecating in the food prep, dining area. The ponies defecate in the Party Corrals. Violation of Health & Safety Codes.

3. Stephen "Steve" Allen Weeks, Los Angeles Pony Rides Inc, Traditional Equitation School, The Loan Consultants Inc.

Per the 2016 Request for Proposals For the Operation and Maintenance of the GRIFFITH PARK PONY RIDE CONCESSION "Mr. Stephen Weeks, owner of Los Angeles Pony Rides, Inc., has twenty-two (22) years of experience in the horse and pony business. For the past six (6) years (since 2010), he has owned

the Traditional Equitation School (TES) and developed a pony ride and lesson program serving children as young as four (4)." This statement does not appear to be true.

Stephen Allen Weeks controls Los Angeles Pony Rides Inc. an active California corporation # 3867428 (Ref. 10). Weeks is the CEO, CFO, Secretary and Director.

Traditional Equitation School was a California corporation # 1302280 which was terminated in 2012. Weeks is not the current owner. He owned it 2010-2017. <http://www.traditionaleq.com/home> <https://www.ridetes.com/> The business claims "TES is the oldest and largest continually operating horseback riding school in Los Angeles." TES was established in 1979 at Bell Canyon Equestrian Center in Canoga Park, California, by Patricia Kinnaman and the late Lilian Van Dahn. TES moved to the Los Angeles Equestrian Center in 1986. The TES programs did not change from the ownership by Kinnaman to Weeks. They offered horses and no ponies to children. The minimum age was six not four. http://web.archive.org/web/20140315000000*/traditionaleq.com In 2017 it was sold to Tori English a movie editor. In a 2020 lawsuit an employee claimed the horses were unfit and unsafe to ride. Weeks history appears to include owning and breeding race horses.

Stephen Weeks owns The Loan Consultants Inc <https://loanconsultants.com/> California corporation 1163479 which was suspended by FTB. The business claims to be "The Oldest and Largest Loan Affiliate Program in the World." They offer a two day class to become a loan broker for about \$13,800. They don't bother to tell students you actually need a license. Based on the complaints I personally believe the school is akin to Trump University.

Weeks stated he was the founder of Sterling Bank of Beverly Hills. That does not match up with records. Earlier when he ran for political office he stated he was merely a shareholder. Weeks stated he ran two other "successful" finance corporations, Weeks & Associates, Century Capital Corp. Century is suspended. I can find no Department of Real Estate licenses for Weeks or his businesses. You need a license to be a loan agent.

Issues of greatest concern are the multiple personal injury lawsuits against Los Angeles Pony Rides, Griffith Park Pony Rides (under Weeks) and Traditional Equitation School. It appears children were injured and sued the companies. The Defendants appear to have settled then the Plaintiffs dismissed the cases which is normal protocol in PI cases. The Loan Consultants and Stephen Weeks were also sued. There is a restraining order granted against a Stephen A. Weeks which I believe is Weeks. I will be going to the courthouse to get the full record to be certain as it's not available online unlike the others. Below are a few of those cases taken from Los Angeles County Superior Court <http://lacourt.org> .

WEEKS STEPHEN A. Civil Harassment (Unlimited) 06/20/2012 Michael D. Antonovich
Antelope Valley Courthouse Case Number: MS008721 SAMUEL NAVARRO VS STEPHEN A. WEEKS
Plaintiff Navarro got a restraining order on a Stephen A Weeks.

WEEKS STEPHEN Case Number: BC406289 STEWART PRITIKIN VS THE LOAN CONSULTANTS INC ET AL
2009 Wrongful Termination.

WEEKS STEPHEN A. Other Compl-not Tort or Complex (Unlimited) 03/07/1996 Stanley Mosk
Courthouse Case Number: BC145770 ENRICO P. TUVERA, ET AL VS THE LOAN CONSULTANTS, INC., ET AL

LOS ANGELES PONY RIDES INC., GRIFFITH PARK PONY RIDES Civil (Limited) 08/12/2019 Spring
Street Courthouse Case Number: 19STLC07449 KOURTNEY HOLMES, ET AL. VS LOS ANGELES PONY
RIDES, INC. Case Type: Other Personal Injury/Property Damage/Wrongful Death (Limited Jurisdiction)
Case Number: 20STCV13934. A seven year old girl who'd never ridden a pony or horse previously was
riding a fast pony in the Griffith Park corral on her birthday. The corral fence collapsed which startled
the pony causing the pony to rear up and the girl fell off. Her foot was stuck in the stirrup so she was
dragged upside down around the track on the ground while the pony continued to run. The staff had to
chase down the pony then they took a while to get her untangled from the pony while she screamed.
Witnesses were also screaming. Case was settled. I can provide a copy of the complaint, answer and
settlement order.

TRADITIONAL EQUITATION SCHOOL Other Employment Complaint Case (Unlimited) 04/09/2020
Stanley Mosk Courthouse 26 Case #20STCV13934 TES is allegedly the DBA for Tori's
Equitation School who is Victoria English. They board horses, give riding lessons. Employee Kelly Fielding
sued for multiple labor law violations. I can provide a copy of the complaint and answer.

TRADITIONAL EQUITATION SCHOOL Other Personal Injury/Property Damage/Wrongful Death
(Unlimited) 07/19/2006 Burbank Courthouse

TRADITIONAL EQUITATION SCHOOL Other PI/PD/WD (Unlimited) 07/19/2006 Glendale
Courthouse

TRADITIONAL EQUITATION SCHOOL Other Personal Injury/Property Damage/Wrongful Death
(Unlimited) 02/17/2004 Stanley Mosk Courthouse

TRADITIONAL EQUITATION SCHOOL Other PI/PD/WD (Unlimited) 02/17/2004 Burbank
Courthouse

TRADITIONAL EQUITATION SCHOOL PI Other -DO NOT USE (Unlimited) 04/28/1995
Burbank Courthouse

TRADITIONAL EQUITATION SCHOOL Other PI/PD/WD (Unlimited) 05/15/1991 Burbank
Courthouse

Some of the lawsuits against TES may be from before or after Stephen Weeks owned the business.

Weeks has a history in Los Angeles. He ran for City Controller in 1981 against James Hahn and lost by a
wide margin. He ran for County Tax Assessor in 1982 and again lost. During those campaigns he made
false accusations against his opponents. Recently Steve Weeks posted on Facebook "These militant
animal rights protesters are lying to the public about the welfare of our ponies to promote their own
agenda of eliminating horse ownership." "These are militant protesters, many of which are being paid to
picket us." "The Park Rangers and LAPD often cite and arrest these people." "ALL HORSE OWNERS in Los

Angeles County face an imminent threat. A small group of the most radical animal rights activists are picketing and protesting weekly at the pony rides. They believe that to own or ride a horse is slavery. That no horse should be owned or ridden." "The pony rides are just the protesters first step. They could soon be at any training barn or boarding facility trying to ban even private horse ownership and riding."

The protesters are not being paid. They aren't trying to eliminate horse ownership or horse riding. Weeks is clearly trying to incite horse owners against protesters for his own business agenda of making money.

Based on my inspection and research I don't believe that Stephen Weeks is the best candidate to run the Griffith Park Pony Rides and Petting Zoo. He has not been honest with the Commission. I feel there are other activities that could be offered in the park which would not be cruel to animals, would not be a danger to public health and safety, would not harm the City's public image, would be more beneficial to children and the citizens of Los Angeles while still providing income to the City.

Sincerely,

Mary Cummins

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Animal Advocates Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

www.facebook.com/AnimalAdvocatesUSA

cc: County of Los Angeles Public Health

USDA Inspector for Petting Zoo permit

California Department of Food and Agriculture

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References

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https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=CIV§ionNum=54.1.
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Photos



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3.



4.



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