

Public Comment #3
under Agenda Item 13.B

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CITY CLERK'S OFC

Becky Romero

From: LISA SCHMID <schmid_lisa_marie@student.smc.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, April 23, 2024 5:06 PM
To: Public Comment
Subject: "Public Comment"

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To the Deputy City Clerk Re 13.B on the Agenda for the Gardena City Council Meeting
Tuesday April 23rd, 2024

I am a longtime volunteer with several agencies and distribution programs associated with the Los Angeles Regional Foodbank. It was with a sense of shock that I heard from other volunteers in Gardena that Mama Rosa's Food Pantry had been essentially forced to close down by the City of Gardena, citing city permit issues for its location and distribution traffic at its twice-monthly distributions. It's my understanding that the City of Gardena is planning to expand its current City Food Pantry at a different location.

I cannot see why Gardena would not wish to continue to benefit its community by encouraging the continued operation of Mama Rosa's, in addition to whatever the City has in mind for its own Pantry

Mama Rosa's is renowned among volunteers in the food distribution community. It is a model for any pantry to attempt to emulate.

They have been operating from the same location since 1994, serving the greater community since 2015. They serve thousands of people and many tons of food, including frozen meats and fresh fruits and vegetables at each distribution. They continued to serve the community throughout the Covid Emergency shutdowns and food shortages. They have received numerous awards, including honors from the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank just months before the City of Gardena began citing these supposed permit issues.

Please see the attached link to a recent article describing the working operations of Mama Rosa's, detailing both quantities of distributed food and the enormous effort involved in conducting distributions on this scale. This article also highlights the incredible dedication of their skilled volunteer staff, and the multi-shift process necessary to run their bountiful and efficient food distributions, as well as praise from Gardena's own Police and LAFD

scc.adventist.org/stories/mama-rosa-food-pantry

The fee proposals and limitations classifying food distributions on church properties as "temporary events" contained in Ordinance 1865 are unlike anything I have ever encountered in any other city. They would obviously impact other nonprofit food distribution sites conducting drive-thru distributions as well. Page 6 of the revised ordinance, Clause B, indicates an exception has been added for walk-up distributions and certified farmer's markets. Why were drive-thru operations such as Mama Rosa's not included in these exemptions? Drive thru is the model of choice used at Los Angeles Regional Food Bank's own distributions, such as their Carson CSFP monthly distribution, which serves 1,500 - 2,000

plus at each. Distributions on this scale require a drive thru model, with much smaller capacities provided to accommodate walk-ups.

How would the City of Gardena finance its own expanded Food Pantry? Do they have the required refrigeration and freezer capacities to store food at the required safe temperatures? Do they have storage space which meets the health department standards for storing staple groceries at required temperatures, free from insect and vermin infestation?

Where will they obtain food for their Pantry? Their current Pantry operation , as described on on page 54 of Gardena's "Live, Work, Play" booklet, lists numerous requirements to apply for an appointment for food assistance, including proof of residency in Gardena, proof of income, birth certificates for minor children etc. Do they plan to purchase all of the food necessary for their private pantry? Most of the free food available from the LA Regional Food Bank is EFAP and TFAP USDA commodity food supplied to Food Banks by the Federal Government. This includes frozen meats, frozen fruit, some fresh produce such as apples, oranges, potatoes, onions etc, as well as canned goods and staples such as dry beans and rice. Requirements for ID Verification of residence, income verification documents etc are NOT ALLOWED for distribution of such foods. Posters stating this must be displayed at all locations -- to quote, in part "Completing an application or participating in an intake process is not necessary to receive just USDA food, clients need only to sign the USDA sign-in sheet." Pantries who accept USDA EFAP and TFAP commodities require that these products be stored separately from any other items that the pantry may purchase and MUST be distributed to anyone who asks for assistance. I suggest that the City of Gardena do a detailed financial study of the costs involved in running their own pantry, staffing it, picking up food from the Food Bank location in the City of Industry, then re-evaluate their commitment to opening a full scale pantry. Meanwhile, please make it possible for Mama Rosa's to immediately resume their operation which serves your community so well

Sincerely,
Lisa Schmid