



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Department Name:** Community Services  
**Department No.:** 057  
**For Agenda Of:** June 18, 2024  
**Placement:** Administrative  
**Estimated Time:** N/A  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:** N/A  
**Vote Required:** Majority

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors (Board)  
**FROM:** Department  
Director: Jesús Armas, Community Services Director (805) 568-2467  
Contact Info: Jeff Lindgren, Assistant Director, (805) 568-2475  
**SUBJECT:** Vandenberg Space Force Base, SpaceX, County MOU to support Federal Aviation Administration waiver allowing visitors to remain at Jalama Beach County Park during launches.

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Risk Management**

As to form: Yes

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board:

- a) Approve, ratify and authorize the County Executive officer to execute the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as part of an application for waiver along with Vandenberg Space Force Base (VSFB), SpaceX and County application for a waiver from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) allowing visitors to remain at Jalama Beach County Park during launches (Attachment A).
- b) Determine that the above recommended actions are exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5), because of the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. An MOU is not a project under CEQA.

**Summary**

This item is on the agenda so the Board may consider ratification of an MOU between Vandenberg Space Force Base, SpaceX and the County to support application for an FAA waiver allowing visitors to remain at Jalama Beach County Park during launches from VSFB. On May 15, 2024, County Executive Officer, Mona Miyasato, signed an MOU partnering with SpaceX and VSFB on an Emergency Response Plan that

would allow for application to the FAA for a waiver allowing visitors to stay at Jalama during launches. The Boards action would ratify that MOU. The Emergency Response Plan is included as Attachment B.

**Background:**

Since 1992 the County and VSFB have worked under an evacuation agreement which required the County to evacuate Jalama Beach County Park during VSFB launches for public safety reasons. That agreement stipulated that the County would evacuate up to twelve times per year for launches. Each launch has required the physical evacuation of visitors from Jalama Beach, reservation cancellations, refunds, rescheduling and assistance from County Sheriff to enforce road closures. With growing interest in private corporation launches we now see corporations like SpaceX planning 50 launches this year and proposing 100 launches per year in the coming year. At a rate of 100 launches per year, an evacuation would be required about every three days, severely impacting public access to the coast and County business interests in operating a popular public campground.

Dating back to late 2020, Parks staff have been working with Vandenberg Space Force Base (VSFB) to minimize or eliminate our requirement to evacuate Jalama Beach during VSFB launches. In working with VSFB, and more recently SpaceX, we have been able to establish a pilot protocol, approved by the FAA which regulates private launches, to set an occupancy threshold where if the park was under a specific number of visitors then the park would not need to be evacuated. Under this protocol we have not evacuated Jalama Beach since last August 2023.

This pilot protocol is no longer feasible as changes in summer atmospheric conditions and the onset of the busy summer camping season mean that the occupancy threshold cannot be maintained. The available option now is for SpaceX and VSFB to apply for a waiver through the FAA. The waiver requires SpaceX and VSFB to establish an Emergency Response Plan and an MOU between SpaceX, VSFB and County stating that each of the entities will abide by the Emergency Response Plan. The Emergency Response Plan does not require additional capital, equipment or staffing costs to the county.

The MOU and the Emergency Response Plan were reviewed and have concurrence from County Counsel, Risk Management, County Fire and Sheriff. The MOU can be terminated by any party at any time without cause.

Jalama is a significant revenue source for CSD Parks generating about \$2.8 million in revenues per year and provides the primary public coastal access for North County residents. Launch related evacuations require significant resources for the physical evacuation of the public and staff from the park, road closure by the Sheriff, reservation cancellations, refunds and rebooking. Customer convenience is important in the hospitality and recreation industry and interruption of visitor vacations undermines the desirability of Jalama as a vacation destination and is a burden on concessionaires who rely on visitors for sales at the store and restaurant.

The County is named as an additionally insured, with endorsement, on a third-party liability insurance policy held by SpaceX and the County is named as a contractor in the MOU to confirm applicability of indemnification per Title 14, Appendix B to Part 440 of Code of Federal Regulations.

**Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Budgeted: Yes

There is no cost to ratifying the MOU, however, there are significant direct and indirect costs for resources used on evacuation and loss avoidance if Jalama Beach visitors can remain in the park during launches. Lost revenues would be substantial should evacuations proceed at the rate expected for 100 launches per year.

**Special Instructions:**

- 1) Please send an electronic copy of the Minute Order to Jeff Lindgren at [jlindgren@countyofsb.org](mailto:jlindgren@countyofsb.org).

**Attachments:**

Attachment A – Memorandum of Understanding between VSFB, SpaceX and County  
Attachment B – Jalama Beach Launch Emergency Response Plan