

# DAILY BREEZE

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Posted: 08/18/13, 12:49 PM PDT |



Nearly a decade after a former El Segundo councilman started pushing for public restrooms at the city beach, the facilities are in operation. A new building at the foot of Grand Avenue not only houses restrooms, but county lifeguard facilities. Photo by Brad Graverson 8-15-12

It was no simple feat constructing the new restrooms and county lifeguard building that sits off to the side of the El Segundo beach parking lot.

After all, nearly a decade has passed since a former city councilman started a campaign to bring bathrooms and other amenities to the city shoreline — an oftentimes lonely stretch of coast at the foot of Grand Avenue, just across the street from Los Angeles' Scattergood power generating station.

And even when the city secured money in 2009 — the county Board of Supervisors that year set aside \$1.7 million for restrooms and combined lifeguard facilities — the building plan hit some snags.

Designs were drawn up, a contractor was chosen, and then an insurance company took over and brought in a new contractor, **SBS Corporation** after the first one went bankrupt. Added into the mix were complications with power lines and sewerage connections, along with staffing vacancies at El Segundo City Hall.

“It took a long time, quite frankly,” said Stephanie Katsouleas, the city’s public works director. “As you went to each next step, you found out there was another hurdle you weren’t aware of.”

But this week the city is hosting an “official” opening for the long-awaited bathroom building that also provides the lifeguards and the county’s popular junior guard program with storage space, and boasts a second-story lookout tower.

Various speakers — including former El Segundo Councilman Jim Boulgarides, who campaigned for office in 2004 with a promise to push for new beach amenities — are scheduled to attend the 9:45 a.m. event Wednesday at the shore.

The list is long for a reason; to make the building a reality and the restrooms functional, El Segundo worked not only with the county, but also a host of other agencies: the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Southern California Edison, the state, Chevron and NRG Energy, which operates a power plant just south of the city beach.

The utilities got involved because of complications in bringing electricity to the building, which falls within Edison’s jurisdiction but will actually rely on a nearby LADWP line for power. Once that issue was resolved, the city found out it needed a special permit to carry wires across the airspace above a state beach, Katsouleas said.

In addition, the city negotiated a lease with Chevron to build bathrooms on a corner of its coastal property, and made arrangements to eventually link up to an NRG sewage system — a holding tank is in use in the meantime — to dispose of the waste, considering no municipal system is available.

All that coordination to offer beachgoers the convenience of bathrooms — which first became accessible to the public in early July.

Charlie Kissel, who serves as section chief for the southern section of the

county Fire Department’s Lifeguard Division, said the building is a welcome addition to the coastline.

During the busy summer season, the lifeguards stationed at El Segundo Beach have been operating from a nearby tower and “haven’t set up shop there yet,” he said of the facility. “(But) I know it will fulfill a lot of our needs.”

For Boulgarides, the former councilman who pledged to bring beachgoers a better place to do their business than parking lot port-a-potties, the building is a long time coming.

He credited Supervisor Don Knabe with obtaining the funding. And Boulgarides said that when he left the council, former El Segundo Mayor Eric Busch “really took the baton and made sure the will stayed there,” along with then-Councilman Bill Fisher, who recently was named mayor.

A part-time county ocean lifeguard, Boulgarides said he stayed involved in the design work even after leaving office in 2008, serving as a liaison between the city and the lifeguards.

And so it’s fitting that he’s been stationed for a few days this summer at El Segundo Beach, and that his son is now a member of the junior lifeguard program.

“My kid was eight years from being a junior lifeguard at the time” he started his push, Boulgarides said. “I was a dog with a bone on this thing. I wasn’t going to let this go.”