

# La Quinta decides not to add medians

Council votes to install traffic signals instead

Written by  
Nicole C. Brambila

The Desert Sun

LA QUINTA — Following a public hearing that drew an overflow crowd, the La Quinta City Council voted 4-0 to maintain the status quo.

City staff originally supported raised medians that prohibited left turns on Madison Street in PGA West between avenues 54 and 58.

About 900 residents signed a petition opposing the medians and spent months lobbying the city.

With its vote Tuesday, council approved traffic signals instead at the gates at Winged Foot and Legends Way.

Councilwoman Kristy Franklin recused herself from the vote.

The city has secured \$2.1 million for the improvements.

Tuesday's vote means signals will be put in once warranted by increased traffic, which could be 10 to 15 years in the future, Mayor Don Adolph and others noted.

The city engineer estimated in a report to council that traffic in the area will quadruple by 2035.

Homeowners opposed the medians saying it would add up to 4 miles to formerly quick trips and send residents out of the city.

"We don't want any changes on that road until traffic warrants it," said Karen Pelletier, a member of the Madison Street Access Committee, a group opposed to the medians.

"We didn't want to have to make U-turns in traffic that's going 60, 70 mph. That's like doing a U-turn on the (Interstate) 10."

More than 100 people crammed into the La Quinta City Council chambers Tuesday for a public hearing on the controversial proposal.

Staff had to add chairs to accommodate the overflow crowd.

In June, city staff proposed less-costly medians that prohibited left turns.

But on Tuesday, staff instead supported the traffic signals.

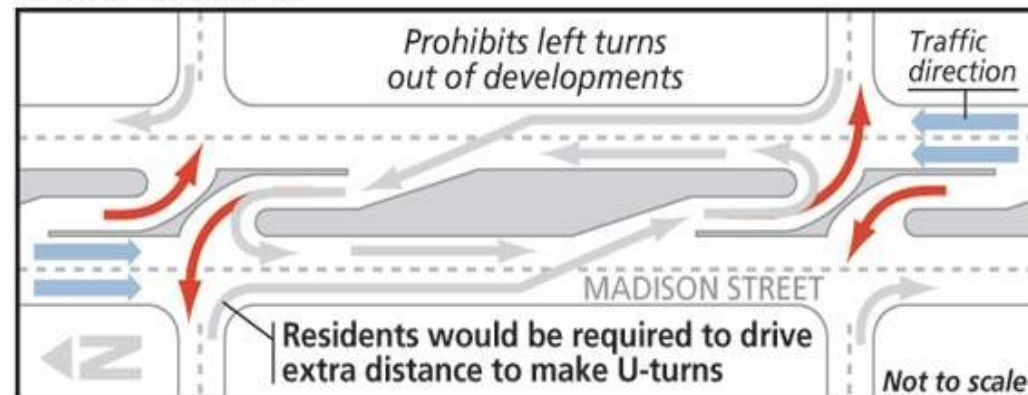
PGA West developer KSL Land Corporation had pressed for medians, saying traffic signals were not necessary because planned neighborhoods were not fully built and fewer people are traveling down Madison Street.

## Making U-turns

The city of La Quinta held a public hearing Tuesday on a proposed project to put several raised medians along Madison Street in PGA West. More than 800 people opposed the plan, saying it would add up to 4 miles on their trips.



### WORM MEDIAN



THE DESERT SUN

"Traffic signals are not a cure-all for everything," said Tim Jonasson, Public Works director. "We don't want to put them in unnecessarily."

The cost of a raised or "worm" median is about \$62,000 compared to \$430,000 for a traffic signal.

KSL Land Corporation is responsible for the cost of the project.

Had council members opted for the less-costly medians and increased traffic flow necessitated signals later, then the city would have had to pick up the cost of the traffic signals.

In other business, the council interviewed three firms to conduct a search to replace longtime City Manager Tom Genovese, who died just before Thanksgiving.

Mark Weiss has been the interim city manager since Dec. 6.

The cost of the firms that turned in proposals ranged from \$39,000 to \$46,000.

Council unanimously approved hiring the Sacramento-based Peckham and McKenney to conduct the search, which will be paid from reserves.

Council also approved extending contracts with LQ Hospitality owned by Dick Oliphant and Embassy Suites Hotel that reimburses to the hotels 40 percent of the transient occupancy tax they collect.

The contract extensions did not raise the cap each can receive — \$300,000 for Oliphant's Homewood Suites and \$1 million for Embassy Suites.