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Council chokes on high concessions charges

**By Rick Orlov
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City Councilman Dennis Zine saw red when he saw it cost \$4 for a 12-ounce glass of bottled water at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

"This is a rip-off," Zine fumed Friday, gesturing at his desk to the bottled water he purchased for less than a buck. "We need to look at what we are charging the public." The council agreed, calling for a study of how much the city charges people for bottled water, box lunches and other foods at facilities it operates such as the Los Angeles Convention Center.

"If you were an engineer who just came here for a convention, like many did, and you paid \$4 for that bottle of water, you'd say you were gouged," said Councilman Tom LaBonge.

Zine's complaints were prompted by the charges the city faces for a meeting today of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and members of local advisory councils.

In the past, the concessionaire charged the department \$15 a person for water, coffee and rolls and \$18 per person for box lunches for a total of \$65,000.

Those prices were negotiated downward to the point where, with donations, the costs for today's event are scheduled to be \$8,000.