



# MINUTES

## BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Monday, April 11, 2005

9:00 a.m.

CITY HALL

200 N. Spring St.

Room 1060

Los Angeles, CA 90012



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Commissioners: Kathleen Riordan, President  
Alex Rubalcava, Vice President  
Erika Brunson  
Tariq Khero  
Deborah A. Knaan

### COMMISSION MEETING, 9:00 A.M.

Commission President Riordan called the Commission meeting to order at 9:20 a.m. Commissioners Riordan, Rubalcava and Knaan were present. Absent were Commissioners Brunson and Khero.

#### 1. REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

##### A. Helen Woodward Center

Commander David Diliberto, Director of Field Operations, reported on the Helen Woodward Center. Twelve Department employees traveled to San Diego and attend a workshop at the Helen Woodward Center. Mike Arms provided information on how to become more customer service friendly and become a no kill facility. Although the Helen Woodward Center is not a participant of the rescue wagon, they do have their own version of the service. Commander Diliberto signed up with and last week the Helen Woodward Center picked up 10 animals from the Department. The Department is implementing many of the ideas put forth at the workshop, such as advertising in the yellow pages. Commander Diliberto mentioned an article in the Daily Breeze newspaper about a dog that had been covered in paint, thrown in a dumpster and abandoned. The animal was rescued by the Department and due to the press exposure, the dog was adopted. Commander Diliberto indicated that all the employees of the Helen Woodward Center were happy and smiling. In addition, the number of adoptions were posted in the lobby of the building. Commissioner Knaan indicated that she had been through the Helen Woodward training. She wondered why the Department could not have a store where customers could buy leashes, collars and other items, as this would be a source of income. Also, wondered why the Department charges so little for many of its services.

##### Public Comment:

Zsuzsa Blakely: The less a shelter kills animals the less you will have unhappy employees. The Department charges a \$5 intake fee that is usually waived, but never waive a fee to adopt an animal. Regardless of how high you raise the intake fee the Department will always waive it.

Phyllis Daugherty: Helen Woodward is a highly paid and highly funded private organization. They do not have the responsibility to take in any animals as municipal shelters. The job of this Department is public safety and law enforcement. If you up the intake fee you will end up with more strays because dog owners will say it is not their animal. If you want to compare the Department to a similar shelter talk to San Diego Animal Control because they are faced with the same problems.

B. Rescue Wagon

Commander David Diliberto, Director of Field Operations, reported on the Rescue Wagon funded by the Petsmart Corp. The wagon is to be delivered next week. And will be showcased at a Petsmart golf tournament in Phoenix. The Rescue Wagon will be housed at the North Central Shelter. It will pick up animals at overcrowded shelters and deliver them to shelters that are under stocked with adoptable animals. Four other states have similar programs. The Rescue Wagon's goal is to move 1,000 per month. Los Angeles County and SEACA along with about ten other shelters have signed up for the program. The program will be up and running in May. Commissioner Rubalcava asked if all of the regulatory framework in place to transfer the animals. Commander Diliberto indicated that they were in place.

Public Comment:

Zsuzsa Blakely: A vast majority of animals brought into the shelter in perfect shape and they are still killed. Curious as to where these animals are to go because all the California shelters, at least the ones she knows about, for instance Sacramento sends animals to be tortured to death in labs. L.A County, Kern County, Riverside County, San Bernardino County are all much higher kill and much more brutal than LAAS. Like to know where there are pounds that are better than LAAS.

Commissioner Knaan asked about Pound Seizure and animals that might be affected. Commander Diliberto indicated that this is a positive public relation effort by Petsmart. They have indicated that no more than 1% of the participating animals would have to be put down. Commissioner Riordan commented that our Participant Shelter program precludes any animals being euthanized. Commissioner Rubalcava requested a report at the next Commission Meeting on the disposition animals taken by Petsmart and not adopted.

C. Report on Coyotes in Angelus Heights

Captain Wendell Bowers and Animal Control Officer Greg Randall from the North Central Shelter reported on the problem of coyotes in the Angelus Heights area of the City. There have always been a lot of complaints of coyotes in the area. In January of 2004 a box trap was set in the area. The trap was at a property on Kensington Road for two months with no success. The trap was moved to a separate location for an additional two months with no success. The Department of Fish and Game came out but could offer no suggestions in that the area is very open. Officer Randall has hosted two meetings to discuss the coyote problem in the area and only 11 residents showed up. He has and spoken to many area residents and distributed wildlife brochures. Captain Bowers indicated one of the problems with the area is that it is a historical area. Homeowners are prevented from fencing their properties with coyote resistant fences and fences are one of the recommended deterrent against coyote intrusion. Department officers are aware of residents who are leaving food out for the coyotes. There are also some abandoned and hillside areas that are hard to secure and patrol. Letters have been sent to the owners of abandoned properties requesting meetings with no results. Mr. Pease, a complainant at previous Commission meeting indicated he had not seen a coyote in several months. Commissioner Riordan asked about copying videos and distributing them to the schools. She also asked about the cost of the video reproduction and offered to pay for it personally.

Public Comment:

Phyllis Daugherty: Lives in Echo Park and goes by Angelus Heights daily. At 2:00 A.M. saw a coyote near Echo Park with a cat in its mouth. No longer have a stray cat problem in Echo Park. They have met a different type of death. Angelus Heights is a very nice area surrounded by gang areas and very low income. Maybe what you may want to do is post signs and tell people not to get pets. It is the low-income

people who breed the cats and dogs and distribute them through the community. Perhaps you should post coyote notices throughout the lower areas and encourage people not to get pet's period. That would help us a lot.

D. Spay and Neuter Event at South Los Angeles

Dr. Cassandra Smith, Chief Veterinarian spoke on the spay and neuter event held at the South Los Angeles Shelter. Best Friends and Cat Nippers sponsored the event. Dr Mackey and volunteers from the organization completed 49 sterilization of dogs and cats. The event was open to all income groups.

Public Comment:

Terri Auston: The City's spay and neuter van too part with Best Friends as well. The van completed an additional 28 spay and neuter surgeries and included several large breeds such as pit bulls.

**2. COMMISSION BUSINESS**

A. Approval of Minutes For March 14, 2005

Commissioner Knaan recommended approval of the minutes for March 14, 2005 and Commissioner Rubalcava seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes was passed 3-0.

Approval of Minutes For March 29, 2005

Public Comment:

Phyllis Daugherty: Commissioner Knaan called to her attention the minutes of March 29<sup>th</sup> and her comments regarding the blessing of the animals. The minutes are totally incorrect. The Department did have an allotted table there as the always do and have had for the last 10 years. They have always been there and it has always been well manned with Mary and Jackie always went on their own time and at least three officers on duty there and was very successful table. They had it this year, it was appropriated to them. The Department was notified, Emily told me they were notified as always to the Public Relations Department. But the Shelter was told they did not have a table therefore the personnel did not go. That was an instruction. They asked, are we going? Officer Clegg came, not as part of that as he did not know there was a table. He came to make sure the animals were under control and everything was all right on the premises and safe. He had his citation book in his hand and he was a very, very good deterrent if people allowing dogs to get into trouble or run loose. That is the comment, they did have the table, that they did not respond and they did not have to staff it, as they did not have a table. It was a problem with management and not a problem with the shelter.

Commissioner Knaan questioned the waiving of discussion on item 3. A Evidence Animals Held at Shelters. Commissioner Rubalcava recommended the minutes be changed to read the item was discussed in conjunction with the cruelty case statistics.

Commissioner Rubalcava recommended approval of the March 29, 2005 minutes with the changes. Commissioner Knaan seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed 3-0.

Public Comments:

Zsuzsa Blakely: There have been no minutes posted on the website subsequent to February 14. She looked on Saturday and there was still nothing posted since February 14. Please post the minutes.

B. Meetings/Events Attended

Commissioners reported no meetings or events attended.

C. Consideration of Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Knaan requested a report on training for Veterinarians in reporting of forensic documentation. Commissioner Rubalcava requested the Report at the May 23, 2005 meeting Dr Smith reported that there are standardized forms on reporting animal abuse cases and attended training at other animal care conferences. Animal forensics is a relatively new field. Vets have training in pathology as part of the course work. There has been training by the Office of the City Attorney.

Commissioner Riordan requested a report on Traveling Animal Exhibits at the May 9<sup>th</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Commander Diliberto will provide a report at the May 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

Public Comment:

Zsuzsa Blakely: Questioned why the Shelters were still charging the \$100 adoption fee to 501(C)(3) and the public. Mr. Stuckey has sent a letter to stop charging the 501(c)(3) but not the public.

Commissioner Riordan and the General Manager indicated the waiver was for sick or injured animals only that have not been altered.

**3. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS**

A. Report on Spay and Neutering Staffing

Dr. Casandria Smith, Chief Veterinarian reported that a veterinarian has been hired for he South Los Angeles Spay and Neuter Clinic. He will begin late this month and we hope to have the clinic open within a week or so after that. The Department is also trying to open the East Valley Spay and Neuter Clinic, an existing clinic that needs some renovation. We are seeking funds to put some equipment in there. Commissioner Riordan asked if we had a list of equipment that could be handed over to a guardian angel. Commissioner Rubalcava asked what the approximate cost of opening the clinic. Dr Smith reported the cost as approximately \$5,000. Commissioner Knaan asked if private citizens could bring animals to the clinic for services. Dr. Smith indicated that the program would be evaluated and a decision on private citizens services would be made in the future. Commissioner Rubalcava requested an update during the second Commission meeting in June.

B. Fee Report

Staff requested clarification from the Commission regarding the scope and detail that was to be included in the Fee Report. Commissioner Riordan indicated many of the fees are outdated. For example, horses are going out for \$35 when a slaughter will pay \$400. Commissioner Rubalcava presented a motion to waive discussion to a future Commission Meeting. Commissioner Knaan seconded the motion. The motion to continue the Fee Report to a future meeting passed 3-0.

**GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FOR BOARD ACTION**

C. \$5.00 License Fee Increase for Altered and Unaltered Dogs

A discussion on increasing the licensing fee for altered and unaltered dogs took place. Commissioner Riordan was curious as to whether the Department supplied information to the CAO on the services that were used to calculate the fees. She feels the Department may have overlooked services that could have been used to calculate increased licensing fees. Commissioner Knaan indicated that it might be a good idea to knock out the altered license fee increase and save the discussion on unaltered fee to another meeting. Commissioner Rubalcava indicated he did not see a need to increase the unaltered license fee, as it was sufficiently high to be a sufficient deterrent. He believes getting a change through will be a monumental task.

Public Comments:

Zsuzsa Blakely: Every time someone wants something done it is increase the fees and basically or kill more animal. These solutions are uncreative and unworkable. Raising fees on altered or unaltered animals will deter people from getting their animals licensed. If your were really smart you would not charge any fee. In this way the Department would have a record of animals. If you make it more costly for people to license their animals, you are punishing them and they will not license their animals. Don't increase the fees, decrease them.

Pam Wilkerson: Believes we should get wild and increase the unaltered dog license fees. This would reduce births and the number of dogs on the street. Everyone can afford another \$5 for a license. Does not feel it is fair to raise the license fee at this time.

Mary Catalano: Recommend they raise the unaltered dog license fee because the people who alter their animals should be rewarded.

Sue Taylor: Agreed with everybody here. When working on passing the ordinance the \$10 fee would be a reward for people who do the right thing because we can not have a mandatory spay and neuter law and the \$100 was large enough at the time. It was as large as we could go. The County would love to raise it to \$100, but they can't because the county goes into municipalities. When you use other agencies fees as a reason to raise the altered fees you must also use the unaltered fee and they are nowhere near the \$100 fee as we are.

Phyllis Daugherty: Ambivalent as to whether you raise the altered fee. The county has done it successfully and bringing in more income and have not lost any number of licensed animals. Adamantly against raising the unaltered dog license fee because we had a terrible time in the medial and council and the only reason it went through is because we promised the spay and neuter vans would be out there.

Commissioner Knaan asked if our spay and neuter van had the ability to issue licenses on the spot. Teri Austin addressed the Commission and indicated there was no rule that said it could not be done. It is something she would like to do. It is something that could be done at the time the animal is redeemed. Commissioner Rubalcava commented that many of the spay and neuter van customers are undocumented aliens and would resist being registered. The van gives out licensing application to every dog owner who uses the spay and neuter service and they are told the fee for an altered dog is only \$10.

Commissioner Rubalcava recommended that the General Managers recommendation be adopted. The motion died for lack of a second.

Commissioner Knaan agreed with the public speakers. Increasing the fee should not penalize people who are paying the \$10 license fee. Commissioner Rubalcava commented that the Department has taken on additional tasks such as spay and neuter services when these current fees were set. The increase in the fee increase is less than the rate of inflation over the past years. Commissioner Knaan indicated that the interest of the CAO and Committees are different than the Department and they don't understand what our problems are. If we want more money we are running after the wrong fee. Commissioner Riordan indicated that in our Code 53.15.2 that prices are set based on encouragement of spay and neuter.

Commissioner Rubalcava withdrew his motion and suggested the item be held until all five commissioners are present.

Commissioner Knaan motioned to reject the recommendation of the General Manager to raise the altered license fee by \$5. Commissioner Riordan seconded the motion. The motion passed with Commissioners Riordan and Knaan voting yes and Commissioner Rubalcava voted no.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD - (Comments from the public on items of public interest within the Board's subject matter jurisdiction.)**

Pam Wilkerson: The City is working toward a no kill policy while the county has euthanized about 43,000 per year. The City has decreased from 40,000 to 29,000 in the last three years. Thanks to the Commission for understanding our goal is to get animals spayed and neutered. Likes the idea of going after the people who are not altering their dogs. The van did have officers there to license dogs and people did run the other way.

Zsuzsa Blakely: Was at the Public Safety Committee when they passed the fee increase and questioned how that impacts what happened here. Is appalled at the number of animals being killed prior to the end of the holding period. Some are being killed for mange, parvo and being old before the four-day holding period is older. Complained about employee.

Phyllis Daugherty: Commented on argument about the \$5 that caused law-abiding people to turn their animals into the shelter. Also the Department has always provided humane services and used to have spay and neuter clinics in the shelter. So we have reduced some of our services. A lawsuit has been filed against a department in Ohio because they tried to force pet shops to spay and neuter animals from their shops. Questioned who is responsible to check on animals that go out for injuries to ensure they are altered. Ms. Daugherty reported on an animal attack on another animal and the property owner denied ownership of any of the animals. If we are not checking on this type of cruelty, we are not doing our job.

Mary Catalano: Brought up the fact that people turn in animals and immediately adopt another. Although it is legal, it is disturbing. Also, she never found out what happened to the matted cat. Spoke to Dr. Smith about animals in the medical room and the need to keep the paperwork with the animal. Questioned why an officer was not called when a person turned in an eyeless cat. Suggested that people be charged more when turning in animals.

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned at 11:10 p.m.