



MINUTES
BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Monday, August 22, 2005
9:00 a.m.
CITY HALL
200 N. Spring St.
Room 1060
Los Angeles, CA 90012



Commissioners: Kathleen Riordan, President
Vacant 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 9:17 a.m. Present were Commissioners Riordan, Khero and Knaan and absent was Commissioner Brunson.

1. REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

Guerdon Stuckey, General Manager, reported that 117 animals were adopted at the South Los Angeles Shelter at an event co-sponsored by Best Friends.

2. COMMISSION BUSINESS

A. Approval of the Minutes for the Meeting of August 8, 2005

Commissioner Knaan requested that approval of the minutes for the meeting of August 8, 2005, be put over to the next Commission Meeting. Commissioner Khero seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 3-0.

B. Meetings/Events Attended

Commissioner Riordan attended a candlelight vigil at the Los Angeles Federal Building for all the animals that have died in the shelters. In addition, Commissioner Riordan attended the funeral of former Animal Services Commissioner Florence Jackson on August 15, 2005.

C. Consideration of Future Agenda Items

- Commissioner Knaan indicated that it was time for the election of officers for the Commission. However, due to the vacancy on the Commission, a vote has been postponed until the new Commissioner is approved by the City Council and takes her seat.
- Commissioner Knaan requested a voting item regarding the cage cards and ailments the animals are being treated for.

- Commissioner Knaan requested a voting item regarding a policy on employees discouraging the adoption of animals. Commissioner Khero also requested the item be placed on the agenda.
- Commissioner Riordan asked that upping the legal limits on the ownership of cats be placed on the agenda.

Public Comment

Scott Sorrentino: Asked that the license portion of the Adoption Partner Program be placed on the agenda, hopefully for the next meeting.

3. **GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FOR BOARD ACTION**

C. Board Report: Long Term P.R. Marketing Plan

Commissioner Knaan requested that the Board Report regarding the Long Term P.R. Marketing Plan be continued until the meeting of September 12, 2005. Commission President Riordan agreed and asked for a motion. Commissioner Knaan presented a motion to continue Agenda Item 3C, Board Report on the Long Term P.R. Marketing Plan be continued until September 12, 2005. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Khero and passed 3-0.

NOTE- Item D: Rescue Wagon was taken out of order due to the number of interested parties wishing to speak on the subject.

D. Board Report: Rescue Wagon

Captain Karen Stepp, Sr. Animal Control Officer II, reported on the "Rescue Wagon". Captain Stepp reported that the animals were Safer and temperament tested and sent to other shelters in Northern California. Commissioner Knaan indicated the Commission had read the report and there was no need to repeat the report unless there was additional information not contained in the report. Commissioner Khero asked how the animals were chosen. It was reported that the animals were tested using the Safer test. In addition, a medical test was also administered to the animals. Commissioner Riordan indicated that temperament testing is against Commission policy and she takes issue with the fact that it is occurring. Commissioner Knaan also asked Mr. Stuckey and Commander Diliberto the same question of why temperament testing was continuing to occur if the Commission had eliminated it. Commander Diliberto reported that he had instructed staff that under no circumstances would an animal be taken off the adoption floor for failing the temperament test or the information placed in the animal's packet. He indicated the test was only used for the PetSmart program and not the Department. Commissioner Knaan said that whether the testing was done for the program or not, it was not to be done and it is something the Commission wanted to know prior to voting to adopt the program. The question is why the information was not given to the Commission. Commissioner Riordan said she was under the impression that the program animals were those who were not being adopted. Mr. Stuckey indicated that it was never the intention of the Department to mislead the Commission. Commissioner Riordan said that the Commission policy (on temperament testing) must be upheld and the Commission must approve any deviation from policy. Commissioner

Khero said that it was just the proper role of the Commission as it makes the policy of the Department. Commissioner Riordan said that there is a communication breakdown and her information had to come from the rescue people. Commissioner Knaan asked about the status of the Animal Behavioral Health Program. Commander Diliberto reported that Captain Dedeaux was certified by Dr. Weiss to do animal behavior training. Commissioner Knaan said there was a problem because Dr. Weiss did not believe Capt. Dedeaux was certified since certification required more training than just the "Rescue Waggin". In response to a question by Commissioner Knaan, Commander Diliberto indicated that only Captain Dedeaux performed the testing.

Commissioner Knaan asked what PetSmart has said about participation in the program without the temperament testing. Commander Diliberto said that the question has never come up. Commander Diliberto said that the program chose animals that looked as if they would pass. Commissioner Riordan asked about the process of choosing animals. In response, animals are picked from all shelters and sent to North Central Shelter where temperament testing and medical examinations are performed. The animals are then placed on a list and sent to PetSmart. Commissioner Riordan asked how long program animals are held in the shelter and if they take up space that other dogs could use. Dogs that are chosen by the program are not available for adoption by the public. Rescue groups are told the animals being held are not available for adoption. Commissioner Riordan said the program was counterproductive as the Department was giving away animals that otherwise would be adopted and leaving animals that would not be adopted. Commissioner Knaan and Khero questioned Captain Stepp about numerous dogs on the Rescue Waggin lists. Captain Stepp indicated that dogs are held up to seven days. Dogs who become sick while waiting for transportation are treated and may go on the next list.

Commissioner Khero said their questions were not reflective of the employees but rather had to do with the program itself and the implementation of Commission policy.

A representative of PetSmart, Suzanna Madaline explained the purpose of the PetSmart Charities. The program is to get animals adopted, identify shelters with space to accept dogs and help shelters with the animal overpopulation problem by increasing spay and neuter programs. Animals are guaranteed a home once they get on the wagon. The only reason an animal would not be adopted was if the animal became sick. The program has been a great success in the Midwest and expects to transport up to 7,000 animals per year, from the Los Angeles area, when the program is up and running. Ms Madaline indicated that Safer testing was not used to determine whether a dog would be euthanized. The Commission discussed the liability to the City regarding the Department not telling the public about animal's failing the temperament testing. In addition, the Commission discussed the issue of cage cards saying rescued, which created a deterrent to the public. Public and rescuers were denied the ability to rescue animals.

Public Comment

Lisa Edmondson: Commented on the behavior testing prior to transport and believes this item should be troubling to everyone in the room

Pam Wilkinson: Knows rescuers and adopts animals no one else wants as we live in a disposable society and rescuers are the ones who clean up the work. She urged the Commission to revamp the program rather than cancel it.

Tina Clark. This looks like a good program but it needs some fine-tuning. Temperament testing is troubling since if a dog is on the list for the program and is rejected the chances of the dog being adopted are not very good.

Marina Baktis: She urged the Commission to halt this program. Is a volunteer at North Central and the shelters are full and the public is told that these dogs are not available for adoption. Dogs are then getting sick and no one will adopt them. Rescue groups are then called to pay for care of the sick animals.

Randee Goldman: Thanked the Commission for addressing the program, as the rescue community is very concerned about it. There are a lot of issues that must be addressed. Dogs are getting sick and the program must be suspended until the Commission gets all the answers.

Christine Peters: Works closely with North Central Shelter and the Echo Park area has a lot of strays. Brings them to the shelter and gets them out in five days. North Central Shelter is overcrowded and the program creates the bottleneck. Wants to do everything she can to ensure the adoption of animals. If an animal is rejected because of temperament tests and is later adopted, the City is liable. The program should take dogs that are not adoptable and not the ones the rescuers or public will adopt.

Marsha Perloff: A volunteer with the North Central Shelter has so many concerns. Animals are not being quarantined for seven days. Puppies with the notation rescued and rescue wagon have been there for two weeks. Afraid people will turn away from the shelters.

Lisa Janes: While the concept of the program is good, the implementation of the program is poor. Ninety percent of the staff does not understand how it works. Tow poodles at West Valley had their records changed.

Phyllis Daugherty: Urged the Commission not to discard the program, as it is something that has been needed for a long time. Rescue groups have requested the shelters hold the animals for a long time. Temperament testing is the industry standard and the test is for the safety of the animals.

Melanie Pozez: Urged the Commission not to cancel the program. There is a momentum over the last month for change. This is just one example. The program has to be continued and changed if needed for improvement, as there is an opportunity to adopt more animals.

Scott Sorrentino: There was a meeting with the Department and there may be a way to resolve many of these issues. To continue the program without addressing some of the issues is irresponsible. There is an opportunity here to use the program to maximum efficiency.

Laura Beth Heisen: Completed a fiscal analysis of the program. In 12 weeks, 199 dogs were considered, 64% were rejected and 72 were adopted out. The average stay at North Central was seven days. The cost was \$64,000. 73 employee days were expended. Holding animal's longer means we will euthanize more. State law requires that animals shall be available for adoption; therefore, we must terminate this program immediately

Joyce Forest: Solution for seven-day hold period. Why not select animals for the program that have been there for seven days? Cited cases of dogs that failed temperament test that were euthanized.

Commissioner Knaan asked where the animals are being quarantined? Commander Diliberto indicated they were held at North Central Shelter in general population. Commissioner Knaan asked why the animals are held for seven-days. PetSmart indicated the holding problem is the same throughout the nation as illness is always an issue. Offered to bring in a specialist to provide advice on cleaning cages.

Commissioners Riordan and Khero indicated they had concerns regarding animals being held, but unavailable for adoption while participating in the program. Commissioner Knaan asked to view the temperament testing tapes. Commissioners Riordan and Khero asked for statistical information on staff time and cost for the program. Commissioner Knaan indicated that no one is to discourage adopters from adopting an animal until the program is changed.

A motion to continue the item until the next meeting was made by Commissioner Knaan, seconded by Commissioner Khero, and passed 3-0.

The Commission adjourned for a break at 12:45 pm.

The Commission re-convened at 1:10 pm.

A motion to reconsider the previous motion to continue the Rescue Wagon item until the next meeting was presented by Commissioner Knaan, seconded by Commissioner Khero, and passed 3-0.

Commissioner Knaan then made a motion to suspend the program for two weeks. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Khero and passed by the Commission 3-0.

A. Board Report: Protocol for Handling Evidence Animals

Mr. Bob Ferber, Supervising Attorney, City Attorney's Office presented the report on the Handling of Evidence Animals. Mr. Ferber indicated that he had discussed the protocol with the other attorneys and the consensus is that they are in agreement with the procedures. Commissioner Knaan asked when the City Attorney's Office would receive the cases. It was reported that the cases would be to the City Attorney's Office within ten days of the investigation being completed. Commissioners requested that a monthly follow-up on the status of evidence animals be presented monthly.

A motion to accept the Protocol was made by Commissioner Khero, seconded by Commissioner Knaan and passed 3-0.

B. Volunteers Driving Department Vehicles

Mr. Ross Pool, Management Analyst II, reported on the efforts to enable shelter volunteers to operate the Department's vehicles. Mr. Pool indicated that volunteers might drive provided they enroll in the Mayor's Volunteer Corp., Complete a Waiver and Release of Liability, and provide a copy of a valid

driver license, and complete drivers training. In addition, volunteers may complete the paperwork at mobile pet adoptions provided they have completed the Department's training course for paperwork and cash handling. Commissioner Knaan suggested volunteers would be able to complete the paperwork independently of Department staff. Mr. Stuckey responded that the volunteers would be able to work independently without Department staff being present.

Public Comment:

Melanie Pozez: Commented on the merits of allowing volunteers to operate Department vehicles and complete paperwork at spay and neuter events.

Commissioner Knaan then made a motion to accept the report of the General Manager that enabled volunteers to operate Department vehicles. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Khoro and passed by the Commission 3-0.

E. Board Report: Special Meeting for October 11, 2005 (Replace Columbus Day Holiday)

In as much as the October 10, 2005 Commission Meeting falls on the Columbus Day holiday and all City offices will be closed, the General Manager recommended that a special Commission Meeting be held on October 11, 2005.

Commissioner Knaan then made a motion to accept the report of the General Manager. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Khoro and passed by the Commission 3-0.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

F. Update: Transfer of Animals

Commander David Diliberto reported on the transfer of animals. A report was distributed indicating a total of 157 animals were transferred during the month of July 2005. (At this point the tape failed. If the Commissioners recall any of the discussion please let me know).

G. Update: Follow-up on Release of Injured or Unaltered Animals

Mr. Ross Pool reported that during the period of January 1, 2005 through June 30, 2005, a total of 2003 animals had been rescued by various organizations and had not been reported to the Department as being altered. Mr. Pool indicated that a notice had been sent to each organization requesting information on the spay and neuter of each animal rescued by them. The rescue groups were given 60 days in which to respond to the information. To date approximately half of the rescue groups have responded with the required information. The information submitted is being collected and will be checked against the original list.

Public Comment

Scott Sorrentino: Commented on the confusion over the paperwork among rescue groups. In addition some of the paperwork never arrives and is not entered correctly.

H. Update: Phone System

Mr. Bob Perino, Sr. Systems Analyst II, reported on the phone problems (at this point the tape began recording). There are two issues, the technical issues and staffing problems. The technical problem was tied to an incoming line (the 888 line). The South Los Angeles Shelter experienced a breakdown in the technical system whereby an incoming call was heard to be ringing by the caller but was not ringing at the shelter end. This problem was corrected. To preclude this from happening again spot testing is being done on phone lines. Commissioner Khero asked how long the problem had existed for. The length of the breakdown was unknown. Commissioner Knaan asked how the rotary phone system operated. Mr. Perino provided a technical explanation on the operation of the phone system. In addition, Mr. Perino provided the cost of replacing the system. It was estimated that the replacement of the phone system would cost approximately \$160,000 to \$190,000. Commissioner Knaan commented on callers being placed on hold without any follow-up. Commissioner Khero asked if the phone system is ill equipped to deal with our needs. Mr. Stuckey commented that our way of doing business has changed since 2002. The department is encouraging people to call more often and thus overloading the existing lines. The staff is reviewing where the calls are coming from in an attempt to determine the best way to use the web-based system to address the problem. Commissioner Khero said the Department wants to reduce the calls without reducing the contacts by using the website. Mr. Stuckey indicated the Department would fix the phone system by better utilization of the website to search for animals, use the impound number to search for an animal, complete the entire transaction on the website with the only interaction being to pick-up the animal at the shelter. It is estimated that it would take a year to implement this program. Commissioner Knaan asked for a two-month follow-up on the implementation of the web based communication system. She asked for reports on searching by impound number and progress on online paying.

Public Comment

Laura Beth Heisen: The broken phone line was not the source of the problem and neither was hearing the busy signal. Ways to limit the number of calls: higher the volume of the paging system, put computers near the phones, add voice mail, offer better call center training, and put each animal's available date on the website. Also, include useful messages on the phone lines.

Phyllis Daugherty: It is not simple when you take a call at an animal shelter. People are confused and excited and there is often a language issue. Often it takes a long time to get the information for an officer to respond.

Bob Ferber: Is not happy with the entire phone system. Problems include the police department. The inside line is a joke. E-mail and voice mail are good ideas, however, you will end up with 300 voice mails at the end of the day.

Scott Sorrentino: Rescuers have all the inside lines. Requested a contact inside the shelter that would deal with the rescue community. This would free up a lot of phone lines as rescuers are calling over and over. A contact could answer the questions and cut down on the volume of calls.

I. Update: Unweaned Program

Commander Diliberto and Susan Greenberg (Animal Control Officer Trainee) reported on the Unweaned Program. Most of the feedback has been positive from the rescue community. Nine times the number of animals over last year has been achieved. Commissioner Riordan commented on encouraging of trapping, neutering and releasing of the unaltered mothers. Asked if there was any information on the number of unaltered mother animals that have been altered. Commander Diliberto indicated that a letter is sent out to groups to ensue they have altered the litters. Ms. Greenberg indicated that a lot of the public retain the litter rather than turn them in when they are given the unweaned kits. They are also given phone numbers for spay and neuter services.

Public Comment

Laura Beth Heisen: Does not think that enough is being done regarding the Unweaned Program. Hopes there is something that follows the letter in cases where the spay and neuter information is not returned. Hopes someone is sent out as follow-up as the handout is weak on spay and neuter.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Scott Sorrentino: Wanted to thank the Commission for doing the right thing with the Rescue Wagon program. Wants to mention the licensing issue with the Adoption Partner Program. It is the last little piece of the program that needs to be tweaked. Wants to mention the approval of the Anti-Tethering Ordinance. It is going to be finalized and wanted to encourage the Department to formulate a marketing plan for the new ordinance. Use the Animal Welfare Trust Fund for this purpose and look for matching funding from private organizations.

Jim Bickhart: From the Office of Mayor. Thanked the Commission for their hard work today. Mentioned that the Commission meetings are being broadcast within City Hall and will be on Councilphone in the near future in order to make the meetings more accessible to the public. The Mayor had declared Saturday, "National Homeless Animal Day", in Los Angeles. Introduced the new Commissioner designee, Marie Atake, who is going through the confirmation process and will take her seat at the second meeting in September.

Evelyn Walton: Would like to know why the increased adoption fee and mandatory sterilization fee for rabbits, approved by the Commission has not been implemented. On Saturday she attended the South Los Angeles Shelter Adoption event where she worked with the rabbits. Five unsterilized rabbits were adopted at \$8.00 per rabbit. Fortunately there were not many people who wanted rabbits. The fees encourage people to adopt rabbits to be used as for their snakes. The \$50 fee is not out of the ordinary as most veterinarians charge more than that.

Commissioner Knaan asked if the \$8.00 fee was the standard fee or if it was discounted. It was reported that the normal fee is \$17 and this was a discounted fee.

Barbara Trelease: The adoption day was traumatic for the bunny rescue people. We do need the \$50 fee. Adoption fees for rescue groups vary from \$65 to \$95 and responsible people will pay for it. Others will pay \$15. Private neutering fees range up to \$150. As the fee increase has been passed it should be implemented.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 3:20 P.M.