



MINUTES
BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Monday, October 24, 2005
9:00 a.m.
CITY HALL
200 N. Spring St.
Room 1060
Los Angeles, CA 90012



Commissioners: Kathleen Riordan, President
Tariq Khero, Vice President
Marie Atake
Erika Brunson
Deborah A. Knaan

COMMISSION MEETING, 9:00 A.M.

Commission President Riordan called the Commission meeting to order at 9:25 a.m. Present were Commissioners Riordan, Khero, Atake, Brunson and Knaan.

1. REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER – GUERDON H. STUCKEY

A. Breeder's Licenses

The General Manager clarified with the Commission about what they wanted accomplished, regarding the Breeder's Licenses. Commissioner Riordan expressed her interest on the Report submitted to the City Attorney's Office relating to the altered license increase. She advised that the report be resubmitted to CAO with further costs be taken into consideration.

The General Manager reported that he had attended the Latino Heritage Gala Dinner on Friday, October 21, 2005. He also reported that an article featuring the Harbor Center appeared in the Daily Breeze's weekend edition. The article spoke highly on the Center's staff and programs, and mentioned the Department's plans for their new and upcoming Center.

The General Manager said that he would update Commission President Riordan on the "Flicker" issue. Mr. Stuckey informed the Commission that there had been a news trailer from Dreamer, who spoke on the Department's role in an investigation. Mr. Stuckey said that he would meet with the AHA to confirm that conversations have not occurred with them, inferring anything relating to any investigations. He said that he would draft a letter to send to the AHA, addressing the Department's concerns. Commissioner Riordan expressed her appreciation for the Department in identifying the problem quickly, and asked that she be able to review the letter to be sent to the AHA.

2. OLD BUSINESS

A. Update: Status Report For The Volunteer Program

Mr. Ross Pool, Management Analyst II, distributed a packet of information on the Volunteer Program to the Commission. Commissioner Knaan wanted to note that the amount of information contained in the packet was quite extensive. She doubted that there would be sufficient time to discuss the material and suggested to table it for a later date. Commissioners Khero and Brunson agreed. Commissioner Brunson inquired why

Ms. Heidi Huebner, Volunteer Coordinator, had been absent at the last Commission meeting. Ms. Huebner responded that she was unable to attend due to personal matters, but reassured the Commission that a detailed update on all the current programs of the volunteer division was included in the packet to be reviewed, and that she would be available to answer any questions on the material.

A motion to continue the item on November 14, 2005 was made by Commissioner Knaan and seconded by Commissioner Brunson. The motion was approved 5-0.

Item 4 E was taken out of order.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

E. Update: Senior 4 Senior Program

Mr. Pool reported that the proposal would be held by the City Attorney's Office, until the Department reported on the costs of unaltered \$100 licenses and its effect on its constituents at the request of City Council Member Parks. Commissioner Knaan pointed out that the Commission had approved the Senior 4 Senior Program on May 23, 2005, and that a transmittal should have been sent to City Council to approve the fee waivers for the seniors. The General Manager responded that the transmittal had been sent on July 25, 2005. Ms. Huebner confirmed that she had worked on the program, and that she would provide a copy of the transmittal. Ms. Huebner also mentioned that City Council had rescheduled to approve the fee waivers at a later date than originally planned. Mr. Stuckey added that Mr. Pool had been in contact with the City Attorney's Office and with Council Member Parks, and that they could expect a vote to approve the fee waivers within the next 30 days. Mr. Pool indicated that the Senior 4 Senior Program and the Unaltered License Fees were tied together, and that Council Member Parks wanted the report on the Unaltered License Fees first, before reviewing the Senior 4 Senior Program. Mr. Stuckey said that he would work with Mr. Pool over the next few days to provide the information Council Member Parks had requested, and that he would update the Commission no later than Wednesday, October 26, 2005 on their progress in regards to completing the report. Mr. Pool assured that he would have the report done and prepared for the agenda by the next Commission meeting.

Public Comments

Phyllis Daugherty: Expressed her concern on vagueness of the issue. Council Member Parks needs to understand that the increase in license fees for unaltered animals gives owners incentive to spay/neuter their animals. Emphasized the need for clarity on the issue.

4. GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FOR BOARD ACTION

D. Board Report: Information on Request By Beverly Hills for Service

City Controller Laura Chick spoke in support of the City entering into contract negotiations with the City of Beverly Hills to provide animal care and control services. Commissioner Knaan asked if Ms. Chick had been able to evaluate if the program was "revenue neutral." Ms. Chick responded that the issue had to be approved by the Commission before she could evaluate its fiscal impact, but assured Commissioner Knaan that the program had to indeed be "revenue neutral" at the very least. Commissioner Atake raised the issue of setting a maximum cap in the contract, should the numbers on picked up animals dramatically increase.

Ms. Chick said that the City Attorney could help in advising to establish a cap. An annual review of the contract could also be made to verify if the numbers were within the contract.

Commissioner Riordan asked if the Department would receive additional staff as a result of providing services. Mr. Jeff Brill, Sr. Management Analyst II, explained that the staff salaries are paid by the City's General Fund. With the signed contract, the City of Beverly Hills would be billed monthly for the services provided by the Department. The money received from Beverly Hills would be reimbursed to the City's General Fund. With the money coming back in, the Department would be able to request for the additional positions needed to provide the services agreed upon in the contract. Mr. Brill said that he and Department staff would evaluate the additional duties the positions could perform. This evaluation would justify the need for the positions when presented in the budget process. The General Manager commented that he and Mr. Brill would enter into negotiations with the City of Beverly Hills to create a proposed contract that would be brought before the Commission for approval.

Ms. Maria Rychlicki from the City Manager's Office commented on the interest of the City of Beverly Hills in the Department's services. The City of Los Angeles would provide animal services within a closer proximity to Beverly Hills, gaining a resource in adopters as a result. The new contract would be based on what the City of Beverly Hills previously had with the County for the past 8 years, and assured the Commission that they would not be delinquent in payments. The City of Beverly Hills would continue managing their licensing issues and barking dog complaints as part of the agreement. Ms. Rychlicki pointed out that the City of Beverly Hills would adopt the City's Animal Control Ordinances and that their lawyers would work to revise or delete any sections not relevant to the City of Beverly Hills.

Paula Kent Mehan and Bill Crowe of the Pet Care Foundation reported on how the City of Beverly Hills advertises for their pet care/adoption events, and spread the importance of spay/neuter. They run a television program through Beverly Hills High School promoting adoption. The program is aired on the Adelphia and Comcast cable television networks throughout Los Angeles, as well as the Beverly Hills and West Hollywood city channels. In addition, they created a PowerPoint presentation that they plan to show at many other schools. Their presentation addressed the issues of euthanasia, homeless pets, and spay/neuter. They also showed their commercial, featuring country star Leanne Rhimes, promoting the City animals.

Public Comments

Melanie Pozez: Encouraged by the idea of a contract with the City of Beverly Hills to increase adoptions.

Teri Austin: Commented that many people believed that the Amanda Foundation was the designated shelter of Beverly Hills and that many are unaware of the Carson shelter. Wanted to reach out to more schools.

Commissioner Brunson motioned to approve the Board Report, that the Commission instruct the Department to seek permission of the Mayor and City Council to enter into negotiations with the City of Beverly Hills to provide animal care and control services, that the scope of services include only those determined through the negotiations, that the fee of providing the services to Beverly Hills be revenue neutral, that the fee be no less than \$100,000 for the contract year, and that the Department return to the Commission with the proposed contract terms for approval once the negotiations have been finalized. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Atake and approved 4-0. Commissioner Knaan abstained with the desire to table the issue to the following month.

3. COMMISSION BUSINESS

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A. Approval of Minutes For September 26 and October 11, 2005

For the minutes of September 26, Commissioner Knaan requested Mr. Ross Pool, Management Analyst II, that the comment by Mr. Stuckey under 3-C. be changed to read as “that systemic change would occur over the next 5-7 years.” Commissioner Riordan requested that her comment under 3-C. include her suggestion to have an appeals process available for those feeling that they have been wrongly accused of abuse.

Commissioner Brunson motioned that the minutes be accepted with the recommended changes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Khero and was approved on a vote of 5-0.

For the minutes of October 11, Commissioner Atake requested Mr. Pool that the first item proposed under 3-C. be changed to read as “Commissioner Atake asked for the report on the phone system.” She also asked that the issue of animal auctions be listed as a future agenda item under item 3-C. Commissioner Atake noted that her motion to approve policy under item 4-B. did not include a mention of a no-fee waiver. Commissioner Atake mentioned that the minutes for Isolation Animals did not include Commissioner Knaan’s suggestion that the Department website include a link on the home page to the section labeled “Special Needs,” or that the website display a weekly featured animal on the home page.

Commissioner Brunson motioned that the minutes be accepted with the recommended changes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Knaan and was approved on a vote of 5-0.

B. Meetings/Events Attended

Commissioner Brunson informed the Commission of the upcoming No Kill meeting on November 5, 2005 with Mr. Nathan Wintergrad. Commissioner Atake volunteered at 2 dog adoption events held on October 15 and October 22. Commissioners Khero, Knaan, and Riordan had nothing to report.

C. Consideration of Future Agenda Items

- Commissioner Knaan asked for a written update on how board policy is distributed and implemented. To be placed on the agenda for November 14, 2005.
- Commissioner Knaan asked for an update on the extended shelter hours, and that it include hard copies of the printed advertisements and recordings of radio and television commercials. To be placed on the agenda for November 14, 2005.
- Commissioner Knaan asked for a statistical report on the number of animals rescued, euthanized, and adopted, dating back from 2000-2005.
- Commissioner Atake asked that a cover sheet be attached to the packets of information received from the Department as a way of providing a summary of its contents.
- Commissioner Knaan asked that the issuing of licenses beyond vaccination expiration dates be placed as a discussion item.
- Commissioner Brunson to review the Sam Simon Foundation, and to provide the evaluator’s summary and the intake forms of the animals spayed/neutered for the month of September. To be placed on the agenda for November 14, 2005.
- Commissioner Riordan asked for a report on the FIV testing costs for cats leaving the shelters.
- Commissioner Knaan asked for a report on the number of spay/neuter procedures performed by the Sam Simon Foundation for the month of November.

Public Comments

Mary Catalano: The Humane Society in Long Beach charges \$15 for FIV testing for cats.

Phyllis Daugherty: Need to have a plan in place to combat the Avian Influenza (bird flu). The animals with the disease need to be isolated.

The General Manager commented that there were protocols in place to respond to such outbreaks, and that the Department would work with the County to provide the appropriate medical services. The General Manager offered to present information on the protocols and procedures.

4. GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FOR BOARD ACTION

A. Board Report: On-Line Donations, License Renewal & Adoptions

Ms. Donyielle Holley, Sr. Systems Analyst, reported on establishing online license renewal and donation features on the Department's website. To create such features that allow payment by credit card, Ms. Holley would need to interface with the City's current proprietary database application Chameleon, as well as the City's financial systems and E-payment server. Commissioner Riordan asked what the projected costs and revenues from the online features would be. Ms. Holley responded that their research projected a 10-20% increase in revenues. The City currently collects \$2.5 million in license and permit fees. A 10% figure from this total was submitted in the budget package for FY 2006-2007. Commissioner Knaan asked why online features were not established when the License Renewal Project was approved as part of the 2003-2004 Budget Package. Ms. Holley explained that the significance of the 2003-2004 Budget Package was the approval of funding and support to implement credit card acceptance at the shelter and administrative levels. Although online license renewals had also been approved in that budget package, not all of the required resources to implement the online portion were approved, mainly the request for an additional systems analyst position. Commissioners Knaan and Khoro requested to have at the next Commission meeting the list of the projects Ms. Holly was currently working on to evaluate which projects should receive priority. Commissioner Khoro asked what impediments there were to online original licensing of animals as opposed to strictly renewals. Ms. Holley answered that the renewals would be easier to manage because the constituent's information is already known from their original application, but agreed that the ultimate goal would be to expand to include licensing online, not just renewals. Mr. Brill commented that the software/hardware to implement the online program, and the additional systems analyst position would be submitted in the 2006-2007 Budget Package as a high priority. He added that the implementation of the online project would involve other Departments such as ITA and the Office of Finance.

Commissioner Knaan inquired about the issue of placing online holds for animals. Ms. Holley responded that she would return to the Commission November 14, 2005 with a full report on the project, after evaluating the parameters, and what information would be required from the public in regards to placing online holds. She would also investigate the feasibility of the project with the City's service provider, and inquire with the Office of Finance in allowing credit card deposits to be made through the use of a temporary City PayPal account.

Public Comments

Teri Austin: Printing out the licensing form from the website is unreadable. Supported Ms. Holley's efforts.

Phyllis Daugherty: Opposed to the idea of the online holds. Preferred that individuals to come to the shelters to view the animals and make commitments.

Scott Sorrentino: Suggested that the Department host a roundtable discussion to gather ideas from the general public.

Mary Catalano: Agreed with Mr. Sorrentino. Concerned with providing proof of sterilization online. Questioned how donations would be appropriated for animal service purposes.

Curt Steindler: Commented that the City does not allow PayPal. Suggested that individuals place their information on renewal web forms and send it to Licensing on a secure email to be handled by a Department employee. This would be used as a temporary method until the online program could be put in place.

Commission President Riordan called Break at 12:20 P.M.

Commission President Riordan called the Meeting to order at 12:43 P.M.

B. Board Report: Legal Limit on Possessing Cats

Commander David Diliberto, Director of Field Operations, reported that according to Department research, changes needed to be made in the rules and regulations of the City of Los Angeles. Currently the City does not allow more than three adult cats at a location unless it is in a manufacturing zone and is permitted as a Cat Kennel or Boarding facility. Commander Diliberto said that the Department was considering allowing increases in this number. Anything over the new legal limit for cats would require a permit. Commander Diliberto drafted a set of permit guidelines that included requirements for housing the cats, where the cats could be housed, and what testing would be required. There would also be protocol in place for obtaining the permit. Additionally, the Department was considering expanding the number of cats per household for regular citizens based on the size of their dwelling and how well that dwelling was maintained. This would also be tied to a permit process. Commissioner Riordan asked if there was need to involve the Building and Safety Zoning Division, believing that the policy regarding indoor cats was a Department issue only. Mr. Lesel responded that the Building and Safety Zoning Division was involved and that an ordinance change would have to be forwarded to City Council for approval because the City defines a Kennel as having 4 or more cats. Commander Diliberto said that he would meet with the City Attorney's Office within the next 30 days to determine what would be feasible, and report back to the Commission with their findings. Commander Diliberto recommended that there be an additional officer appointed to enforce the permit policies, that an individual meet the requirements for having a suitable living environment for their cats.

Public Comments

Mary Catalano: Believed that having the permit conditions for size and maintenance was a good idea. Mentioned that most 501c3 rescue groups have separate isolation areas for their cats.

Phyllis Daugherty: Commented that housing a large number of animals was a community issue because it affects property value. Emphasized that there is a greater need for spay/neuter and microchipping. Said that many groups would be against increasing the number of cats.

Scott Sorrentino: The Rescue and Humane Alliance would support removing limit laws on cats. Mentioned that there was no significant evidence that should problems occurring as a result of removing limit laws.

Commander Diliberto said that he would attempt to work on the issue with the City Attorney and report back in 2 weeks.

C. Board Report: Licensing Program

Mr. Brill spoke on the canvassing program. Since July, the Department has been in negotiations with the union and City Jobs to fill the 5 full-time and 10 part-time positions with the canvassing program. SNAPP and City Jobs have posted bulletins. City Jobs will provide the Department by the end of the month with a packet of candidates to be interviewed for the positions. Commissioner Brunson commented on the steady decrease in licensing over the last several years. Commissioner Atake suggested that a policy be set, targeting breeders and those selling animals to require buyers to license their animals. Commissioner Knaan suggested that Mr. Brill speak with DWP to obtain information and target those households with dogs to increase licensing. Mr. Brill said that he would draft a formal request to DWP for a meeting to discuss biannual inserts at no cost to them, and a read-only access to their database in regards to addresses only. Commissioner Knaan suggested that Mr. Brill come back at the Commission meeting scheduled for November 28, 2005 with a more detailed report, listing the specifics of what has been done to increase licensing.

Commissioner Riordan asked if the Department investigates the legal status of individuals coming forward to spay/neuter their animals. The General Manager said that the Department does not look into legal status, but that the issue was problematic in that many individuals are discouraged out of fear to license their pets or have them spay/neutered. In terms of community outreach, Mr. Stuckey mentioned the implementation of focus groups among the Latino community to identify the solution to the problem. He said that he would include in the report for November 28, what specifically will be done in terms of the focus groups.

Public Comments

Phyllis Daugherty: The selling of licenses is restricted to veterinarians only. Spoke against the Amnesty Program because it was inconsistent and sent the wrong message. Felt strongly that lowering the rabies shot rate for one month during the year would do well to encourage licensing.

Scott Sorrentino: Partially agreed with Ms. Daugherty. Advised that offering incentives was needed to encourage people to obtain licenses. Most people view licensing as a penalty or a chore.

Curt Steindler: Suggested that the General Manager have a report on licensing every Commission meeting. The neighborhood councils would be a great resource to use in terms of targeting the individuals with pets.

Teri Austin: Having uniformed staff deters people from getting their animals spay/neutered at the vans. Offered her expertise with the focus groups. Believed in integrating licensing with spay/neuter full-time.

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

F. Discussion: Personnel Hiring Program and Staff Assignments

Mr. Bernie Leichter, Sr. Personnel Analyst II, reported on the City and Department's hiring practices. The

City for a particular classification offers a civil service exam, consisting of a written and oral portion. The exam is scored by the central Personnel Department, and the results are mailed to the candidates. An eligible list is formed, from which the Department can request candidates to fill vacancies. Interview panels and dates are established, and candidates are contacted. Panels make recommendations based on interviews, and the selected candidates are scheduled for medical exams, fingerprinting and background checks. Job offers are made, pending the information the Department receives from Personnel. Commissioner Atake brought up the issue of consequences, regarding employees discouraging adoptions. The General Manager responded that a Departmental memo had notified the staff. Commissioner Knaan believed that a training session would be needed for the staff on such behavior. Mr. Stuckey assured the Commission that the appropriate disciplinary action would be taken against the employee. Commissioner Riordan suggested that psychiatric evaluation be repeated for any staff members handling animals. Mr. Leichter commented that in order to terminate an employee, an investigation would be required on the incident, as well as the proper documentation. The accused employee would be subject to appear at a hearing. Based on the hearing, a recommendation would be made to the General Manager. Should the General Manager make the decision to terminate employment, the employee would be allowed to file an appeal with the Civil Service Commission. An independent hearing examiner would hear the case, and make a recommendation to the Civil Service Commission, who would make the final decision for the City.

Public Comments

Mary Catalano: Asked for information about an incident in which a shelter employee beat a cat to death. Agreed with the need for a psychiatric evaluation for employees handling the animals.

G. Discussion: Hiring of AGM & Qualifications

Mr. Leichter reported that the Department was working with the main Personnel Department in establishing the requirements for the AGM position. Personnel are responsible for preparing the bulletin and advertising the deadline for the position. Currently Personnel are reviewing the applications and will forward the applications of the best candidates to the Department. Mr. Leichter said that he would speak with the General Manager to set up an outside interview panel to select the top three candidates, among whom they would further discuss the position. Mr. Stuckey commented that the AGM would be someone who possessed a Masters degree with a background in business, focused on marketing, advertising, and public relations. The selected person should also have a good understanding of dealing with executive level staff, including the City Council. A shelter background would not be necessary. Commissioner Atake asked what the expected timeline would be for filling the position. Mr. Leichter responded that they expect the selected candidate to be working in the Department within 4-6 weeks after the interviews have taken place.

Teri Austin: Agreed that the Commission should have input on whom the General Manager should hire.

Mr. Lesel commented that the Mayor appoints the General Manager, and that the AGM may or may not replace the General Manager in his absence or dismissal. The Commission currently does not have involvement in the selection of the AGM. Commissioner Riordan suggested that there should be consideration in changing the code to allow the Commission to assist the General Manager in the selection. Mr. Lesel responded that he would look into the matter and return with an answer to the Commission.

Scott Sorrentino: Disappointed with the qualifications required for the AGM. Believed that many in the humane community would be qualified for the position.

H. Discussion: Change in Commission Meeting Time to 10:00 A.M.

Commissioner Knaan suggested that there be more evening meetings to allow the public more opportunities to attend. Commissioners Brunson and Khoro agreed. Commissioner Brunson suggested that every 3rd meeting take place in the evening. Mr. Pool said that he would contact the Districts and look into scheduling more evening meetings to take place in the near future.

A motion to move the Commission meetings to begin at 10:00 A.M. was made by Commissioner Knaan and seconded by Commissioner Atake. The motion was approved 5-0.

I. Presentation: New Shelter Plans for Isolation and Quarantine Areas

Commissioner Riordan said that the Report would be moved to the following Commission meeting, November 14, 2005 due to time constraints and the absence of Dr. Cassandra Smith.

Public Comments

Teri Austin: Pointed out that several organizations have sent out notices about puppies being put into the same areas with the general population animals, which has put them at greater risk in acquiring diseases.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Teri Austin: Request that there be a future meeting regarding information on spay/neuter about what is available on the Website or on phone lines. Not clear on the policy of the Department in distributing printed material on spay/neuter.

Curt Steindler: Reptile enthusiast. Questioned the General Manager's issued directive concerning the feeding of live animals to other animals at the shelters and whether there was a violation of the Brown Act by the Commission. Suggested that there be public hearing on the issue. Commented that the Southwestern Herpetologists Society recommend in feeding reptiles dead animals as opposed to live ones.

Laura Cochrane: Former veterinarian at the South Los Angeles Center. Commented on her firing and the case of a cat she was treating. No diagnostics were performed on the cat to treat its illness. There were no holds place on the cat, and it was killed without the approval of two other veterinarians.

Phyllis Daugherty: Concerned about the Avian flu issues with the City and the picking up of birds. City needs to put a policy in place to prevent the spread of the flu. Commented on the areas across the country that are supposedly No Kill areas.

Scott Sorrentino: Responded to Ms. Daugherty that Los Angeles should not be concerned with other areas of the country, but focus on what they need to do. Encouraged everyone to attend the Nathan Wintergrad presentation. Also reiterated the need for the Website roundtable. Suggested that the General Manager look into why cat rescuers were being required to give their names and addresses by the Department.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 2:35 P.M.

