



MINUTES

BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Monday, June 27, 2005

9:00 a.m.

CITY HALL

200 N. Spring St.

Room 1060

Los Angeles, CA 90012



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

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COMMISSION MEETING, 9:00 A.M.

Volunteer Coordinator Heidi Huebner called the meeting to order at 9:17. Present were Commissioners A. Rubalcava, D. Knaan, and K. Riordan. T. Khero, and E. Brunson.

1. REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

General Manager Guerdon Stuckey reported on the following:

1. Mr. Stuckey requested that Kathy Riordan give the certificate of appreciation to Teri Austin of the Amanda Foundation. Alex Rubalcava read the certificate. Teri thanked the commission and Department.
2. Guerdon reported the \$1,000.00 donation given to the DART team from a rescue for Mrs. Dombrowski.
3. Heidi Huebner reported on the lecture given by Cesar Millan for the staff, and volunteers.
4. Heidi Huebner reported on the adoptions at the Pomona Family Pet Expo.
5. Mr. Stuckey mentioned how the Department is working at a higher level with the LA County on medical collaborations on disease control.
6. Mr. Stuckey reported on the success of the 100 Dogs in a Day event at the South LA shelter.

2. COMMISSION BUSINESS

- A. A motion to approve the minutes for the meeting of May 23rd 2005 and June 13th 2005 was made by Commissioner Rubalcava and seconded by Commissioner Knaan. The minutes were adopted by a vote 5-0.
- B. Commissioner Brunson reported on the Beverly Hills Pet Foundation adoptions, TV show and newsletter.

Public Comments:

Teri Austin: Commented how she was asked to do the TV show for the Pet Care Foundation and that the show has expanded. Also complimented Lori Weiss on the 100 Dogs in A Day event and is looking to more events to be done like this in the future.

C. Commissioner Rubalcava is happy with the calendar the way that it is and asked if there is anything that needs to be added. Commissioner Knaan, requested to add the phone system to the calendar and Mr. Stuckey requested them to submit their concerns to him so it can be addressed. Commissioner Rubalcava gave 3 examples off the top. Commissioner Knaan voiced her concern that the recording should state the wait time, when you do get through the staff needs to keep checking in while you are waiting. Commissioner Brunson agreed. Commissioner Riordan would like to see stats on the unaltered out there animals. Commissioner Brunson agreed.

Public Comments:

Sue Taylor: Also wants to know the follow up on the unaltered out animals especially the cats. Would like the mission statement to say responsibly saving lives. Anytime Actors and Others can help to follow up we will.

Phyllis Daugherty: A person that knows me in the court system advised me and I'm just going to have to take their word for it when a number of our direct citations are brought in to be filed they are being rejected because they are not being written correctly. I think we should look into this.

Guerdon Stuckey: This is the first time I have heard of this. I would have appreciated having brought to my attention before hand so I knew this was an issue.

Bob Ferber: I'm aware that we have had a history of judges and commissioners in the down town courthouses that have taken the off leash violations and they have dismissed them. It has been said that the judges have no time for this.

Commissioner Riordan: Wanted to know is there a way we can create citations that don't have to go through the court system?

Melanie Poses: I would love to see calendared some discussion of the adoptions of sick animals going home, and to see more counseling going on or maybe medicine going home if the animal is sick. Maybe there could be a vet recommendation list that goes out specific to the shelter in the adoption package. Shelter Insurance?

Commissioner Riordan: requested that Melanie come up with a bullet point list of what would go out with the adoption, then I can go with that.

Teri Austin: I would like to be put on the agenda to make a presentation about another new spay/neuter project I have. I need 60 days to transition out of this and thought this would dovetail nicely. I would like to be tabled as soon as possible I would like to see something in writing on the in-term period.

Commissioner Riordan: We can discuss with Dov when he returns.

Commissioner Rubalcava: We can't make any decision right now we will look into it, thank you Teri.

Pam Holt: I'm a volunteer with the shelters and I thought it would be great to have the website set up for online donations. If it were set up as pay pal account it could bring in a lot of donations.

3. GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOARD ACTION

A. Board Report: Trap, Neuter and Return Procedures DRAFT

David Diliberto: I would like to say that I'm very excited about this. Feral and adult cats are the number one animals that we euthanize. If we can keep them from coming in and Spay/Neuter, make them healthy, and have them live out doors that is much better for them. TNR is working in a lot of other jurisdictions. I have to thank all my collaborators for this that are here today. They are willing to donate so much that will help make this successful. What you have is the first draft of ideas.

Commissioner Rubalcava: For the matter of record I would like for you to spend 2 minutes on the highlights of the report.

David Diliberto: That the Board of Animal Services Commission (Commission) accepts the Department of Animal Services' (Department) proposal to implement a Trap, Neuter, and Return (TNR) policy. The Department finds that (i) a large population of homeless and stray (feral) cats resides in the City of Los Angeles, (ii) that the interests of humane treatment of animals, public safety and preservation of natural habitats dictates that no cat should live outside of a domestic home, (iii) that it is impractical, inhumane and not cost-effective to attempt to exterminate such populations, (iv) that there exists in the city a large number of individuals and organizations implementing the practice known as Trap-Neuter-Return, where feral cats are humanely trapped, then sterilized and vaccinated, then returned to their colony and cared for until the end of their natural life, and (v) that such practice is the most effective way to address this problem and to achieve, in time, the goal of No More Homeless Cats and Saving Animals' Lives. Based upon these findings, the Commission does hereby declare that TNR is deemed to be the preferred method of dealing with feral cat populations as its official policy. The following are areas David will work with: collaborations, staff, animal service centers, outreach, trapping permits, feral cat voucher, citizen complaints, veterinary procedures, change in laws.

Commissioner Riordan: Do we need to do a code for TNR? I want to make sure that feral caretakers are safe and covered. Mr. Ferber, can you meet with the collaborators?

Commissioner Knaan: This is an excellent report. When will phase one start? Do we have a time frame of when the policy will be completed? Also please tell me what is phase one and what is phase 2? So we can start everything after Aug 15th? I like the ideas you had about advertising like the press conference, attaching notices to city employee paychecks and the DWP bill. Also I want to add the licensing issue to the agenda for July 25th. We need to make sure to advertise the program.

David Diliberto: Phase two will begin in 2006 when we get more staff and can assign one person to be the expert on this. The reason people call to complain is not for one cat; it is when that feral has kittens and they can't deal with the litter. If we explain to them that we will TRN just the one cat, I think they will be ok with that.

Bob Ferber: Wanted to apologize for not returning phone calls. As I'm a prosecutor, my office would rather have me not communicate with the board. As a citizen, and rescuer I'm for TNR. As a prosecutor I want to make you aware of some problems that we may have. We have many people in the community who do not support this. We need to educate the community who is opposed to this how a colony is maintained. We need to work out the laws

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and rules. We will have to wait for Dov to see what he says. Commercial properties are for this as they know that the feral's help keep the rodent population down, the example with the police dept down town, I think the homeowners are the ones who will have a harder time excepting this. Used the example of the fruit fly, which is a proven technique.

Commissioner Riordan: Has requested to be involved in future meetings regarding TNR. It is hard to sell a politician on a humane approach on not killing. The goal of this program is to control the population and not kill them.

Commissioner Khero: It is counter intuitive if someone calls and complains about a cat and then we say trap, neuter and release. We need to explain to them why this makes sense. The training is so important.

Commissioner Rubalcava: Since we have a lot of public speakers may I suggest we will hold all questions till the end of the speakers.

Public Comments:

Phyllis Daugherty: There are some legal issues under the civil and penal code the homeowner and resident has a right to remove a nuisance from their property, and they have the right to destroy it if they want as long as it is in a humane way. This discriminates that you are giving special privilege to the TRN collaborators who are nothing but private citizens, against the private citizen who owns the home pays for the traps and pays their taxes for animal control.

Lisa Edmonson: I'm thrilled to see this draft.

David Diliberto: I appreciate the collaborators, as they help when we have asked for help. A lot of people say they will help and when we ask for it we have never received it. A lot of people are so quick to come in and criticize the Department and when we ask them for help the help never comes. This group responds to every email and gives feedback; I want to point out Mark and Karn for all of their assistance- thank you.

Mark Dodge: If a case needs to be made we will make it. There are many issues in TNR. There are strong feelings on all sides. The details will be worked out. We need to act now and let the world know that we have a basic policy.

Sue Taylor: We need to work out all the details for the public not those of us in the community.

Liz Cava: I would like to thank the Department for embracing this.

Commissioner Riordan: I have heard rumors that rabies may be required for cats. The public safety is for the cats and the trappers. Who wants to make a motion?

Commissioner Knaan: I motion to carry this on till August 15th, I think this is great.

Commissioner Khero: The commission directs staff to continue to formulate the policy and collaborate with the TRN experts who have come forward. The commission requests that a formal presentation on implementation be made for a vote on the date of their choice on August 15th.

Commissioner Knaan: Motioned to accept the recommendation.

Commissioner Khero: Seconded the motion

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All in favor 5-0 motioned passed

3. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

A. Update: E-Mail Euthanasia Blast

Bob Perino: Reported on how the email blast is done for the pre-euthanasia list. The blast seems to be doing really well. We run the report each morning and send it out to all the members on the list. There are currently over 100 people and groups on the list in the month and a half we have started this.

Commissioner Knaan: Thanks for doing this. I have heard a lot of positive things. I want to ask Mr. Stuckey that I have heard a few times an animal is on the list more than once. If they are on the list more than once I feel they need to be honored for the 24 hours. I would like to see the animals not labeled as fractious on the list.

Commissioner Riordan: I do not think a rescuer will be mad if they come down to the shelter and say why didn't you tell me this was a feral cat. Maybe we can label it as stray, I don't want to say feral.

Commissioner Rubalcava: Won't this be wasting people's time if they come down intending to adopt a cat that can be placed and they come down and find out it is feral. I think we can state the animal is feral.

Mr. Stuckey: We need to take in to account at the shelter it is a time issue. How do we help the new owner to understand that there is something that we saw? We have that responsibility to do that. Is there any concern with the commission that we identify a behavior that we see, like food aggressive?

Commissioner Khoro: Maybe it is better to define this category in medical conditions. The most troubling label is normal.

Commissioner Rubalcava: It sounds like given the disagreements of the board as the how to disclose information that Commissioner Khoro recommendation to be only used for medical or physical conditions. Do you agree? So we have an agreement on this column to label as medical and physical conditions is the appropriate level of disclosure.

Commissioner Brunson: Can we put this list on the website?

All agreed

Bob Perino: The soft wear company is coming up with a new version.

Public Comments:

Sue Taylor: I think the blast is a great idea. Can we send this out once a month to the newspapers? This is a way to educate the public on how many animals are put down.

Commissioner Brunson: This was a very good idea from Sue Taylor. Can we have our PR person do this?

All agreed great idea.

Mr. Stuckey: We can have the newspapers added to the list.

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Commissioner Riordan: Can we have you report back to us that adding this to the website and the newspapers have happened? It does not need to be an agenda item just to let us know what has been done.

Teri Austin: I know there are other comments that came from this as I had sent one too. It is interesting to see where the problem areas are, if you see for the dogs it is the large breed dogs that are being put down. This will help us target what we are doing with spay/neuter, vouchers and programs. I agree we should not label animals fractious.

B. Update: Veterinary Forensic Report Writing

Dr. Smith: Veterinary Forensic and shelter medicine are both very new. There is not a lot of information out there on that. At this point there is one old textbook that is hard to find. We had a lecture about 3 years ago we have a basic outline to follow when writing a report. Bob Ferber and other sources have been avail if we needed help. The commercial labs charge anywhere from \$350.00 for a kitten and \$700.00 for a 50lb dog, that does not include the testimony of an expert witness which 2 years ago it was \$1500.00 a day. They do not want to get involved in court cases. We as vets rely on our experience. It is not out there so we have to pool our resources together. This is a very new field. We need more training if it is available. We have had a turn over of vets. We need to have ongoing training.

Commissioner Knaan: Please know that we are all here to see if there is a problem and how are we are going to fix it we are all working together. There seems to be a problem with the vets being able to properly document evidence in such a way that the city attorney or DA can file a case based on what's presented to them. Mr. Ferber is the one who presented this problem to us. This is good so we know this. If you need help let me know as I can have access to people to train you.

Bob Ferber: Complimented Dr. Smith on the great improvements from the last training. The reports are important. It is time for training. The weakness in the reports, are in the conclusion. I will commit to having a meeting with the vets to help in this area. One of the areas we will focus on is the ACO's probing more with the defendants.

Commissioner Rubalcava: Came up with what they will be looking for and would like it to be added to the manual. The logical outcome is for the board to request a report to us on new forensic training and standard including communication between all parties involved. A procedure for communicating that information, a revised check list based on new learning's any new technologies needed. That is what I would like to see. I would like to calendar this in the future. This is a great opportunity to set some new policies and to set new standards.

C. Update: City Attorney Case Status

David Diliberto: I can get you this list by email. This is the current list.

Bob Ferber: One of the problems is that there are some animals that the case has been resolved the animal was not an evidence animal anymore and the system keep saying it was. One of the problems was that if it is an office hearing it would take 3 to 4 months. My office has now made these a priority so it can schedule it for 3 weeks later. We developed a system in my office now that when the case is resolved I will be notified by email immediately. There were problems on many levels and we are resolving this. The hearings were the big problem. Our 2 agencies do the tracking by 2 totally different computer systems. 2 areas that I do not have control over are follow up and the courts.

Commissioner Knaan: Mr. Stuckey wrote up a really good protocol on how are department will be handling cases from our end, and it included a timeline. Who is the person in your office who could agree to the protocols that Mr. Stuckey came up with. Please meet with Mr. Stuckey regarding this. Can we come back to this in 6 weeks?

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

No public speakers

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned a 12:48 P.M.