



**BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS  
CITY OF LOS ANGELES**



**MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, August 26, 2014 at 10:00 AM**

**LOS ANGELES CITY HALL  
200 NORTH SPRING STREET  
Room 1060  
Los Angeles, California 90012**

Audio MP-3 Recording is available at [www.laanimalservices.com](http://www.laanimalservices.com)

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David Zaft, President  
Alana Yanez, Vice-President  
Jennifer Brent  
Larry Gross  
Roger Wolfson

Meeting called to order at 10:10 AM by Assistant General Manager, John Chavez. Roll call. Commissioners present were Zaft, Yanez, Brent, Gross and Wolfson. Also present: General Manager Brenda Barnette and Assistant City Attorney Dov Lesel.

1. **PUBLIC COMMENT SPEAKERS:** Lisa Edmondson: Wanted follow up on property evidence animals and exercising them. Wants volunteer greeters. Whitney Smith: Wants evidence animals walked. Why hold "mom" and puppies that were impounded. Send them to a rescue. "Old" SLA shelter is still getting abandoned animals. Put up signage to prevent this. Sue Mattson: Noted what incentives work and what don't relative to New Hope adoptions. And, what factors drive trends. Need to lower intake, that drives the reduction of euthanizations. Lower the "intake" denominator to increase the live-save rate. Sean McCarthy: ACO; speaking as a resident and member of Local 721; Animal Services needs more Animal Control Officers; animal cruelty investigations don't get enough attention because of lack of staff; ACOs need more training; need to promote safety; need to take ACOs out of Special Operations and put them in the field. Michelle Kelly: Supports ACOs, especially to respond to rabbit calls; alleges that there is rabbit "dumping" in the Ballona Wetlands; put signage there to warn against dumping; Animal Services should appoint a lead volunteer to schedule greeters. Phyllis Daugherty: Glad ACOs can attend Commission meetings; do Special Operations staff take field calls? The Commission should get a report on Special Operations. Mark Salazar stated that ACOs can rescind citations. They cannot, must go through the proposed Administrative Citation Enforcement (ACE) process. Marla Tauscher: State law requires evidence animals to be exercised. Evidence animals are being kept too long, causing high impound fees for owners. Marc Peralta: In Pennsylvania, evidence animals can be fostered. Glad to share his experience re: evidence animals and the law relative to exercising/fostering them.

2. **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

- A. Approval of Minutes for August 12, 2014. AGM Chavez noted that he made Commissioner Brent's changes; these were underscored in the minutes. Chavez noted that he did not note that Commissioner Wolfson was present at August 12 meeting, but he would make that change. Commissioner Yanez stated that the minutes should reflect Sycamore Park as the potential location for the proposed North Central night meeting; Chavez noted he would add that to the minutes. The minutes, as amended, were moved by Commissioner Gross, seconded by

Commissioner Zaft. Approved with five votes for acceptance.

### **3. ORAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER**

- The Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee approved two report backs: 1) Veterinarians reporting to the Department about unlicensed dogs, and 2) The creation of an animal services foundation. The Committee also approved a CAO report that would allow First Class Vending to provide vending machines at our six shelters and Figueroa Plaza.
- Over 900 postcards were mailed on August 15 to owners of dogs with \$100 intact licenses who did not provide proof of exemption from the mandatory spay/neuter requirement. Those without a valid exemption are required to pay for a \$235 breeding permit. The Department is experiencing higher call volume and more returned mail as a result. Owners have until September 1 to pay the extra amount or to prove that the dog qualifies for an exemption under the City mandatory spay/neuter ordinance.
- On August 18, she and the Directors of Field Operations (DFOs) began a discussion to spend Animal Welfare Trust Funds dedicated to specific shelters and to unrestricted AWTF. This proposal will be presented at the September 9 Commission meeting.
- On August 15th, Animal Control Officers served a search warrant on the 5300 block of Willis Avenue. The warrant resulted in the impound of 272 fowl and four guinea pigs. The case started in April 2011 as a possible distance violation involving fowl in a residential neighborhood. The case evolved into numerous notices and further complaints. Officers learned of fowl being kept inside the residence and concerns for the welfare of the fowl were raised by the City Attorney's Office. A warrant was sought and both the fowl and guinea pigs were rescued from deplorable conditions. Cruelty and neglect charges will be pursued.
  - This is the third large impound since July 1st. The shelters are required to hold, maintain and care for (extensive medical care for many) evidence animals until they can be released from the case. The total of all animals impounded in these three cases is 401. These numbers are significantly impacting our shelters and the space available for adoptable animals. Investigations of this magnitude obligate dedicated field personnel to each case until they are filed. This severely impact field services as well.
- Senior Clerk Typists interviews were held August 6th and 7<sup>th</sup>; unfortunately there were not enough interviewees to make an offer. Of the 12 scheduled, seven cancelled, so a third day of interviews is scheduled for this week. We continue to be short staffed, especially at our North Central shelter, where clerks from other districts have been assigned to help out for now.
- Ross Pool's retirement will leave us short-handed in processing California Public Records Act requests, overseeing the Administrative Hearings program, and in supporting the Board. A part-time public records clerk is being sought and his MA II position is being back-filled. The Personnel Department is assisting in these recruitment efforts.
- The General Manager reviewed the WOOFSTAT report. She noted that the request to show the "redemption" rate of issued vouchers is not suited to the monthly WOOFSTAT

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report. A better representation is one of *yearly* redemption rates. The Department will provide this at the September 23, 2014 Commission meeting.

Public Comment:

Phyllis Daugherty: Act faster on cruelty/hoarding cases. This would “space out” impounds and lessen the impact on shelter operations. No need to have 401 impounds at one time.

#### **4. COMMISSIONERS’ ORAL REPORT AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Commissioner Gross: August 26 is “National Dog Day.” The Department should put this on its calendar for next year and use this to leverage adoptions. After the Napa earthquake, wants the Department’s emergency operations plan on the agenda, as previously requested. GM Barnette noted that Mark Salazar will present that, and other matters, at the September 23 meeting.

Commissioner Yanez: Found a cat trapping notice in public. Would like Salazar to address this on September 23.

Commissioner Zaft: Spoke at the joint B&F/PAW Committees on August 15. This was to support ACE.

Commissioner Brent: Stated that AB 1965, “Dining with Dogs” passed. Met with COO of Centinela Feed. They want to give coupons to licensed animals. She and Commissioner Yanez attended “Healthy Pets, Healthy Families” meeting.

Commissioner Wolfson: While on a trip to Rhode Island, visited a shelter and was surprised to see it empty. Interesting compare and contrast to Los Angeles. He is now an official volunteer. Asked the Department to consider naming shelters based on the community it serves; possible future agenda item. Would like Department to spell out green, yellow, red, blue labels. Wanted an ETA on music in the shelters. Waiting on the City Attorney to opine on humane treatment of evidence animals. Salazar should present response times, and response time goals, at his upcoming presentation; use this as justification to request more staffing. Proposed commendation/recognition ceremony for volunteers based on hours served.

#### **5. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

##### **A. Legal Status and Treatment of Rabbits [5A and 5C were combined]**

Commissioner Zaft invited Lejla Hadzimuratovic, Sue Mattson, Marla Tauscher, Carole Davis to the table. Hadzimuratovic stated that rabbits should have equal status to cats and dogs. Mattson wants rabbits included in no-kill calculation. Shelter rabbits stats will be upcoming; rabbits should not be “other” in adoptions; need protocols/procedures for rabbits. Tauscher handed out document on the Califa Street timeline; need rabbit limits and breeding permit; there were eight Notices to Comply, this is too many, need standards; California Public Records Act was too late and incomplete. Review zoning issues related to too many rabbits; treat rabbits equal to cats and dogs. Davis said Califa Street was a breeding operation and we should learn from it. Said there were no medical inspections done and incomplete investigation records. Wants mandatory sterilization. Hadzimuratovic said some rabbits went missing. Wants definition of “cruelty” relative to rabbits. Wants vets to go to rabbit hoarding cases.

Commissioner Zaft asked why one would need over 100 rabbits.

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Wendell Bowers, East Valley shelter captain, gave a recap of the Califa Street case. ACOs do visual inspections. Sanitation was a problem, but the rabbits had food and water and sheltered from the sun. Commissioner Gross asked if the conditions of the rabbits was an issue. Bowers: no, according to the ACOs. Bowers stated that there were so many rabbits because the owners used to show the rabbits, and bred them for shows. Commissioner Zaft wanted to know if there should be a limit on rabbits, and have a ratio of rabbits per owner and limit the number in R-1 (residential) zone. For pigs, it is one per acre.

Commissioner Gross suggested how to address these issues. Since a number of issues were identified, these should be prioritized, including putting limits on the number of rabbits one can have. Commissioner Zaft said ideas from the Commission and the public should go to the GM.

#### Public Comments

Hadzimuratovic complimented Bowers. Phyllis Daugherty said you cannot slaughter rabbits for commercial purposes; must involve Building and Safety, LAPD, Animal Services relative to rabbit hoarding and breeding operations. Nathan Stewart: wants equality for rabbits. Involve the Sheriff and federal government. Marianne Sawaya: classify rabbits separately; rabbits are prey animals, so they will hide injuries from other animals/humans; wants mandatory permitting. Grace Lan: Wants the Department to crack down on Craig's List ads selling rabbits that don't display a breeding permit; wants licenses to reflect difference for unaltered vs. altered rabbits; wants mandatory spay/neuter for rabbits. Dawn Roznowski: Need a different evaluation of rabbits' conditions because they are prey animals that hide physical problems. Don't treat all animals the same; "one size fits all" doesn't work for dogs, cats, rabbits.

#### B. Improving Rabbit Outcomes – Tracking and Reporting Rabbit Outcomes and Working with New Hope Partners

Hadzimuratovic: She is a New Hope partner since 2009. She targets the "red alert" list. Wants more New Hope communication via email. East Valley shelter is overwhelmed. Wants a separate agenda item to discuss New Hopes and rabbit issues. GM Barnette is checking with other cities on how they deal with rescue partners; is open to suggestions; will come back with policy issues and recommendations.

#### Public Comments

Grace Lan: Put rabbits in their own category. It was done before, but now they are lumped in with "others." Sawaya: wants more transparency, communication.

[The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 p.m. It resumed at 12:35 p.m.]

Commissioner Wolfson had to leave the meeting.

#### C. Recap and Discussion re: Recent Investigations – Addressing Similar Situations [Combined with 5.A]

### 6. BOARD REPORT

#### A. Recommendations on Dangerous Dog Ordinance (Action Required).

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GM Barnette stated that the City's proximity to the County makes looking at their laws a good place to start. Need Commission and community input to develop these laws, and getting this at a community meeting would be a good idea. Commissioner Gross stated that legislation should focus on dangerous dogs and the owners. Have owners pledge upfront that they will be responsible owners, take a preventative approach. Commissioner Brent supported following County laws and consider dangerous cats. Commissioner Yanez supported the focus on owners' responsibilities. Commissioner Wolfson said that adoptions to the public are generally good, but bad owners need to be held accountable. Glad that the focus is on public safety and the Mayor's priority outcomes. Commissioner Brent said the County has waivers related to dangerous animals. Commissioner Gross said to look at Calgary, Canada as a model. Commissioner Brent said that Calgary has a 99% return-to-owner rate and mandatory licensing of cats. Commissioner Zaft wants the legislation to address penalties related to owners' intent to fight their dogs.

Public Comment:

Phyllis Daugherty: Has issues with people who adopt animals, bring them home, and these new animals fight with the existing pets. Willing to share ordinances related to dangerous animals, such as New Zealand's. That country puts to death vicious dogs that prey on sheep. Need to keep good documents relative to dangerous/vicious dogs. Tauscher: Stop bad owners from owning dogs for three years. Enforce this existing law. Has problems with hearings vis-à-vis due process.

Commissioner Zaft asked GM Barnette to provide draft recommendations.

**B. Recommendation for Dog Playgroups Contract (Action Required).**

AGM Chavez stated that this item had gone out to bid via the RFQ process. That yielded two proposals, neither of which met the Department's needs nor were they cost-effective. Following a telephone bid process approved by the City Attorney, the Department recommended Bound Angels, founded by Robert Cabral. Chavez stated that while the Letter of Agreement shows the maximum amount is \$25,000, he noted that this maximum amount should have been reflected in the report. Chavez said Cabral was in the audience and could answer any programmatic questions.

Robert Cabral summarized his program. His techniques would increase stimulation, activities, and the live-save rate. Commissioner Brent wanted to know how this training would stick after Cabral stopped the training. And, would he be partnering with volunteer staff.

Public Comment: None.

[Commissioner Yanez left the meeting.]

City Attorney Lesel said the recommendation should be amended to allow a maximum amount of \$25,000 per year, for three years. This would provide the Department with flexibility and would eliminate the need for Animal Services to request additional authority from the Board during this period. The Department's recommendations, with the amendment proposed by the City Attorney, was moved by Commissioner Zaft, seconded by Commissioner Brent. Approved with three votes for acceptance.

**C. Request For Monthly New Hope Report.**

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Commissioner Zaft asked that this item be moved to the September 9 Commission meeting.

Public Comment: None

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Gross reminded the audience that the next meeting was to be held at Northeast Valley shelter, and the Department should do outreach to the neighborhood councils, City Council, and the public. He would be happy to provide the bilingual notice.

Commissioner Gross motioned to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Brent seconded. Motion carried 3-0. Meeting ended at 1:15 PM.

Next Commission Meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m., September 9, 2014, at the Northeast Valley (Mission Hills) shelter, 15321 Brand Blvd, Mission Hills, CA 91345.