



BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF LOS ANGELES



MINUTES

TUESDAY, March 24, 2015 at 10:00 AM

Los Angeles City Hall, Room 1060
200 North Spring Street, 10th Floor
Los Angeles, California 90012

Audio MP-3 Recording is available at www.laanimalservices.com

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

Meeting called to order at 10:02 a.m. by Board Secretary, Rita Moreno, Los Angeles Animal Services (**LAAS**). Roll call. Commissioners present were Zaft, Yañez and Gross. Commissioners Brent and Wolfson were absent. Also present: General Manager (GM) Brenda Barnette and Assistant City Attorney (ACA) Dov S. Lesel.

Commissioner Zaft opened the meeting and provided an overview of the appeal hearing process and meeting agenda.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING APPEAL

1. Dangerous Animal Case: DA 142032 WV
Respondent: John Cote
Complaining Witness: Farshid Khairolomour
West Valley Animal Care and Control: Lt. Troy Boswell

Testimony was taken from the Respondent and his Attorney, John Cote and Michael Rotsten, respectively; and from the Complaining Witness, Farshid Khairolomour. Testimony provided by the Respondent and his Attorney indicated that proper procedure had not been followed.

Commissioner Gross made a motion to modify the order of the General Manager and remand the matter back to the Hearing Examiner and re-issued the animal licenses upon the following terms and conditions:

- Dogs Theo and Chance are to remain outside of the City of Los Angeles limits until such time as a new Revocation Hearing is held and a final determination is made.
- If the dogs are brought back in to the City, it will result in a new violation.

The motion was seconded by **Commissioner Yañez** and was approved by a vote of 3-0.

II. REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING (Taken out of order; heard after Item 6.A.)

1. **PUBLIC COMMENT SPEAKERS: Michael Rotsten:** Stated that stays used to be issued at the time between the department's decision and that of the Commission, and limiting the public's option to legal writ; questioned the GM Directive. **Michelle**

Cornelius: Stated that there is not enough notice for playgroup training schedule and notification; suggested “I’m alive because I’m fostered” posters for posting at pet shops; no formula in shelters to feed underage kittens; requested update on nursery and would like it to be at West Valley; would like progress report on flyers issue previously brought up. **Phyllis Daugherty:** Stated that there are many cases of animals killed and people can’t afford to come in to do something about it; happy that department is discussing allowing for electronic report submission; cat breeders should need to get business tax registration; 5366.J – \$50 to register guard dogs, but no need for a breeding permit.

2. **COMMISSION BUSINESS** (Taken out of order; heard after Item I.1.)

A. Approval of Minutes for March 10, 2015.

Commissioner Gross made a motion to approve the minutes and **Commissioner Yañez** seconded. The vote was 3 – 0 in favor.

3. **ORAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER** (Taken out of order; heard after Item II.1.)

GM Barnette shared the following:

- Dog portion of the Dog and Cat Habitat display at East Valley has a little gap so there are no cats yet, but quite stunning.
- Cmdr. Dedeaux is having pre-construction meetings at Harbor Shelter discussing swamp coolers and replacement with more efficient heating and ventilation systems; temporary cooler units are being used.
- Staff has moved to the 19th floor due to odors at the 21st floor.
- Field staff finalized the administrative citation form with the City Attorney’s Office for the ACE Program and it has gone to print. Forms should be ready in three weeks and the pilot program will start at North Central.
- Working with granters to determine level of assistance; meeting with ASPCA to find out the type of help for next year. There are needs at the shelters: get-acquainted areas at East Valley have leaking roofs - Cmdr. Dedeaux is working with BOE; field staff impacted by low staffing levels – sometimes not enough staff to cover a shelter and there are issues of staff safety (animals that are biting people and/or other animals and sending them for medical care, or killing other animals are being impounded); not sure additional positions will be granted in next budget; short with clerk typists which are critical support to the shelters.
- Upcoming events: Today is National Puppy Day on ABC7 and Maddie’s Fund came out with “Adopt a former puppy” ad campaign to give older dogs a fair shot at Puppy Day; on March 29 West L.A. shelter will have a UCLA film crew to shoot film production about a woman who lost her home and is considering leaving her dog at the shelter; on March 25 and 26 the Pet Care Foundation will host a shelter-wide adoption event called “Spring ‘em” with \$25 off the price of adoption for all dogs and cats.

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- Acknowledged North Central Officers for a quick response – received a note from a woman who thanked the Officers for responding quickly to a loose dog in Boyle Heights; can't always do quick action as it is not a high priority.
- Conversations on the expansion of Feline-Ality program to other shelters.
- Playgroup training has taken place at all the shelters and those trained can now train other volunteers; the classroom training for walking un-available dogs and the legal issues has taken place and now we need to do the handling of the animals. Dogs not considered potentially dangerous will be able to be walked.
- Will be out next week at HHUSA Conference and will be leaving early to meet with the National Roundtable of No Kill Movement on how to sustain it.
- Woofstat: cat intake is up 3% year to date, 8% for the month; dog impounds are down 7% for the month and 4% year to date; rabbit impounds are down; other category can include chickens slider turtles, birds, etc. The live save rate is down for the month, but up 1% for the year. Overall save rate for cats and dogs is 73%, but the dogs being placed are the more difficult ones that we need to get better at. We're catching-up on licensing, but still lagging behind on admin due to processing because we're down on clerks. We're looking at ways to improve the process.
- Having a difficult time filling position of Canvasser – still working with Personnel on other ways to advertise.
- Vet spay neuter numbers are down, but they're dealing with impounds and animals that need special care. We're working with the vets to figure out why the numbers are down.
- Pictures in binder are from the "Helpful Honda" event that helped adopt 41 pets at East Valley, 27 at West L.A., 40 from North Central and 8 from a mobile that day. Total adoptions for six shelters that day were 184.

Public Comment

Phyllis Daugharty: Stated that licensing is needed for emergency preparedness; would like to know how many dogs are being taken in and impact on the shelter and hearings – need to know statistics; Officers using target ammo instead of hollow points – target ammo goes through target and rickshaws does not do any damage, but you need something that will kill the animal. **Mary Catalano:** Asked if pregnant cats are being aborted and if staff is asking about mother to get them fixed; why no funding for cats to be rescued by New Hope partners; Best Friends "kitten shower"; vouchers difficult to get. **Whitney Smith:** Stated that no one goes to Personnel website for jobs, suggested publicizing at vet clinics; why no subsidizing to pull cats; why no money for bottle formula.

4. COMMISSIONERS' ORAL REPORTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Commissioner Yañez: Mentioned going to Expo in New Orleans on Sunday and presenting on Pets for Life's community outreach strategies.

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Commissioner Gross: Mentioned Councilmember Cedillo's tenants' rights workshop March 12 in Highland Park where he presented and provided LAAS materials; proposed that vets and pet stores should be legally required to post animal licensing and leash laws.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

None

6. BOARD REPORTS

A. Update and Report on Best Friends Animal Society Activities at Mission Hills Shelter (Taken out of order; heard after Item II.2.A.)

Marc Peralta, Executive Director of Best Friends Animal Society, provided an overview of the board report and made corrections to the save rate, which is calculated by dividing live intake by the live intake + euthanasia, died in care and lost in care. It differs from the Department's calculation divides positive outcomes by live intake. Added that they provide licenses for people in the city adopting animals, and paid the City \$72,000 in 2014 for the resale of 1,767 licenses; and provide almost \$500,000 to spay / neuter organizations per year to support the City. Added that they do not ask the department to hold animals for their events.

Commissioner Yañez: Asked whether dog and cat adoptions were to homes in Los Angeles, and kitten and puppy adoptions left the state; whether transfers come back when they're old enough; and what happens to underage. **Marc Peralta:** Responded affirmatively; stated that transfers are still tracked by Best Friends in order to report outcomes to department; and that most are neonates that die in care. **GM Barnette:** Responded that animals are held for events as part of an internal decision to ensure enough are available. **Commissioner Gross:** Asked if pull fees were used to offset the cost of spay / neuter; about the 45 kennels in the back room; whether agency cherry picks. **Marc Peralta:** Responded that they are added in addition; the back rooms are for isolation or bite quarantines, but used when there is an influx of small animals; directed to look at the website which shows diverse animals. **Commissioner Gross:** Asked about visibility of the LAAS Logo on the facility. **Marc Peralta:** Responded that there are no logos in the facility, but there is the building sign and credit is given to LAAS on other sources. **Commissioner Yañez:** Asked if a person can walk in to license an animal; spay / neuter numbers and internal goal; whether surgeries are funded by vouchers. **Marc Peralta:** Responded that not currently, but that the organization is open to it; goal is 6,000, but want to increase to 6,500; surgeries are handled in-house and vouchers are not used. **Commissioner Zafft:** Stated that this is the most important partnership and appreciates the work; asked what should be the focus of Best Friends and the department to make the most progress. **Marc Peralta:** Responded to focus on cat neonates and pitbulls – difficult to get positive outcomes; will provide stats for 2014. **GM Barnette:** Added that there is a community process – KNLA board meets monthly. **Marc Peralta:** Responded that agency and coalition members work to fill gaps to assist department. **Commissioner Zafft:** Stated that the department is understaffed and don't have the resources needed to make shelters more into adoption centers; need to grow

volunteers and would appreciate assistance to Commander Selder, and Dedeaux with playgroups. **Marc Peralta:** Responded that working on a Best Friends liaison for North Central. **Commissioner Zaft:** Added that department does not do marketing for the shelters and would like support and guidance to make City aware of its shelters as a place to adopt animals. **Commissioner Gross:** Requested weekly reports and NKLA reports. **Marc Peralta:** Responded that he would provide the reports. **Commissioner Yañez:** Asked if aware of “meet your match” and if interested in implementing. **Marc Peralta:** Responded that agency may not use it, but thinks it’s a good tool for shelters. **Commissioner Zaft:** Requested contract renewal come back to Commission months in advance.

Public Comment

Michelle Cornelius: Stated that Best Friends takes dogs with medical issues and provides medical care.

B. Animal Welfare Trust and Animal Sterilization Fund Balances

Commissioner Zaft recommended to start with the Animal Welfare Trust Fund report and indicated that, due to the Ringling Brothers decision to phase out the use of elephants by 2018, there will be a future need to hire a vet to inspect the elephants and review their records (GM Barnette responded that it will come up as an agenda item in the next 4-6 weeks as there is a team of field staff working on recommended changes to the inspection process including the hiring of the vets and increasing the cost of the license; the RFP will come to the Commission). Commissioner Yañez asked about the phase out of the Bullhook ban and Commissioner Zaft responded by 2017.

GM Barnette briefly discussed the report and indicated that capital projects requests will come to the Commission in the future.

Commissioner Zaft noted no questions on the Animal Welfare Trust and asked for questions on the Animal Sterilization Fund.

Commissioner Gross: Concerned with contracts and lack of expenditures with only four months left in fiscal year; Amanda Foundation was delayed, but Value Vet spent only a minimal amount of contract funds; need to get money out on the street for spay / neuter. **Commissioner Zaft:** Asked if there was just not a high need in the West L.A. area or whether there was a problem with the vendor (**GM Barnette** responded that West L.A. is a small shelter and it may not be the most popular vendor; working on program with non-profit to increase voucher distribution and promote spay / neuter; need more Officers for licensing enforcement); **Commissioner Gross:** Asked what happens with unspent funds and whether staff can look at alternatives to apply funds elsewhere (**GM Barnette** responded that they are special funds so they don’t roll into the General Fund; however, the City Council may reduce the department’s budget for certain items because there are unspent grant funds; we are getting information on vets and on increasing the \$70 voucher). **Commissioner Yañez:** Stated she is open to increasing the fee to \$100 and to include the pain meds and cone, etc.; try to get \$122 which includes cone, stitches (**GM Barnette** responded that the voucher agreement lists that those items are included, but there is still a level of up-selling; Erica Brunsen’s staff tracked this and produced a list of who was up-selling and who wasn’t, but don’t know how to

control that). **ACA Lesel:** Responded that we get push-back by vets especially with large dogs that need pain meds for follow-up and consider that to be a large expense. **Commissioner Gross:** Concern with increased cat intake and unspent money. **Commissioner Yañez:** Responded that door-to-door outreach is the most effective method to spend the money, and it needs to be a paid employee not volunteers.

Public Comment

Whitney Smith: Stated that vets won't do spay/neuter for less than \$100; problems with reimbursement so vets won't participate; department should make it easier to get vouchers. **Mary Catalano:** Indicated that meds and e-collars are not included; it is difficult for public to get vouchers – go to low-income areas and hand them out to people, and if they don't use them, cite them; West L.A. area doesn't need vouchers. **Phyllis Daugherty:** Recommended making the vet survey easy with "yes/no" questions and on City letterhead.

C. Shelter Recommendations on the use of Animal Welfare Trust Funds – 2nd Request.

Cmdr. Dedeaux provided additional information on request for Adlerhorst training and decrease in bites after 2005 staff training by 70%. Stated that staff is dealing with dogs with aggressive temperament and dogs that have been trained to bite. Indicated that it is important to be trained above the industry standard and that ordinarily the agency trains only law enforcement and military. Asked for questions.

Commissioner Yañez: Asked if the 250 staff to be trained includes Officers and shelter staff (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** responded that it includes both). **Commissioner Gross:** Asked if dogs are being trained to be more aggressive (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** clarified that dogs are trained for police work like bomb detection, building searches, etc. and they're tracked; you have to learn to read the dog to know when they're on or off-track; they're intense on body language and knowing when a dog is going to bite before he does). **Commissioner Zaft:** Asked if agency has done training for Animal Services (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** responded that he helped put together a program for LAAS in 2007 for new recruits, and that staff is able to state what they need help in; more aggressive dogs are in the kennels so kennel workers need to be better trained to stay safe). **Commissioner Gross:** Asked whether there are other agencies in the area that provide the same service (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** responded that not in the area and that agencies like LAAS that provide training can't teach us anything we can't teach). Added that would like to use an agency that is part of the community that seeks to benefit shelters; sees no connection and is concerned that agency breeds order to there were other agencies besides Adlerhorst that can provide training and expressed concern about the agency's breeding program (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** responded that most dogs are imported and that the practice started in the 70s because it was less costly to import sound animals; they breed for their police dog program). **GM Barnette** added that that there are other programs that teach how to evaluate a dog, how to run it through a course of exercises and find out the dog's reaction, but not aware of any other program that teaches how to handle a "hard-to-handle" dog. The service dog arena has breeding programs such as Guide Dogs for the Blind and Canine Companions. **Commissioner Yañez:** Asked if the breeding program was for police departments and not to sell (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** responded for police and

military and it was for work animals). **ACA Lesel:** Stated that there will be a need for an RFP unless we can show that there is a need for a sole source contract. **Commissioner Zaft:** Stated that the Commission can provisionally approve the request, but the department would then work with ACA Lesel on the contract. **Commissioner Yañez:** Asked whether the puppy and kitten formula was for all six shelters and whether it includes bottles (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** responded affirmatively and that it includes the bottles; the cost covers the 2015 season and not all the funds may be expended); whether formula will be available for fosters (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** responded that when picking up in the middle of the night, they can't get formula; fosters will get formula initially, but will be responsible for purchasing to maintain). **Commissioner Gross:** Asked whether the cost is for one Bubble Sofa and provided a low price quoted on the internet, and urged that we ensure we get the lowest price (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** responded that it is for two, one for each side of the habitat at East Valley; **GM Barnette** added that they are designed to be outside and can be cleaned and disinfected; **Cmdr. Dedeaux** added that there are no slats where animal legs can get caught). **Commissioner Yañez:** Requested a breakdown of all items for the report. **Commissioner Zaft:** Asked about the closed circuit TV system price increase (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** responded that more cameras were added and that the 5-year warranty is \$75,000). **ACA Lesel:** Indicated that all items will need to comply with the City's purchasing rules. **Commissioner Gross:** Asked about the placement of the cameras and whether it includes the kennels (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** responded that the cameras will be placed to view the hallways, parking lots, at entrances and clerical to deter animal theft and for staff and volunteer protection); and about kennel card holders (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** responded that the kennel cards were made specifically for LAAS for all shelters).

Public Comment

Phyllis Daugherty: Stated that basic safety of Officers should be addressed first; vehicles are falling apart, there is a need for surveillance, ten brand new vans are parked for use by the SMART Team, which is a private entity that receives funding and should not be using vans bought with public funds – needed by Officers picking up dangerous animals. **Whitney Smith:** Discussed estate donations that has not been spent on animals; stated the union requested the cameras and that they should be directed at the staff and not just the public, and questioned the cost. **Mary Catalano:** Mentioned incident of abandoned animal at the shelter; animals that are not fixed bite; there is no advertising for adoptions or fosters; money should be used for medical costs, for rescues and cats. **Michelle Cornelius:** Questioned Adlerhorst training and having expertise with shelter animals; suggested placing cameras in kennel areas and cats rooms.

Commissioner Gross: Requested that staff provide more information on alternative trainers and specify the type of training to be provided. **Commissioner Yañez:** Stated that she would like more cameras to be placed everywhere (**Cmdr. Dedeaux** responded that he can get an estimate for additional cameras; indicated he will poll staff for additional sites). (Discussion ensued over camera placement)

Commissioner Zaft made a motion to approve the Staff request except the training academy and requested a report back with additional details about the training and information about other possible vendors, and a report back on additional cameras to be added to the CCTV system. **Commissioner Yañez**

seconded. The vote was 3 – 0 in favor.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Zaft made a motion to adjourn the meeting and **Commissioner Gross** seconded. Motion carried 3 - 0.

Meeting ended at 12:52 p.m.