



BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF LOS ANGELES



MINUTES

TUESDAY, May 12, 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 10:04 a.m. by Board Secretary, Rita Moreno, Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS). Roll call. Commissioners present were Zaft, Yañez, Brent, Gross and Wolfson. 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 meeting agenda.

REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

1. **PUBLIC COMMENT SPEAKERS:** **Susan Taylor:** Discussed ACO distribution – East and West Valley being combined between shelters; asked why, if department budget has 1 million from last year and \$500,000 from current year, department can't get needed Officers. **Jonathan Klein:** Discussed the use of hens and chickens for Kaparrot primarily in Council District 5 and creating health and safety issues; feels breakdown in communication between County and City; wants monitoring, warning to community and agenda item to discuss options. **Sarah Jane Hardt:** Feels City has not acted on Kaparrot and requested agenda item to discuss 1) task force to monitor, 2) warning to community about violations, and 3) real resolution to use coins instead of live sentient beings. **Lola Kay:** Told City not going to enforce cruelty laws; requested agenda item to create a task force and assign someone to coordinate between departments on issue; give a clear message to community about enforcement of animal cruelty laws. **Mark Peralta:** Encouraged agendizing \$300,000 proposal for Cat Plan EIR. **Aimee Gilbreath:** Asked for full discussion of options on proposed Cat Plan. **Sybil Kohn:** Discussed her animals that were impounded and that witness can't identify the dog that bit her; feels dogs are being held illegally as notice was not sent within prescribed date.

2. COMMISSION BUSINESS

- A. Approval of Minutes for April 28, 2015.

Commissioner Yañez made a motion to approve the minutes and **Commissioner Brent** seconded. The vote was 5 – 0 in favor.

3. ORAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

GM Barnette shared the following:

- Report on Audit of Surprise Cash Counts at Los Angeles Animal Services was completed. The surprise audit showed that there was \$100 shortfall at the Harbor Shelter and no other discrepancies. A plan to provide staff training and better tracking and record keeping at all six shelters was submitted and the steps to implement are expected to be completed before the end of this fiscal year.
- The weekly series, "Lucky Dog" will start its third season this week, the show follows trainer Brandon McMillan as he trains dogs adopted from LA Animal Services for families. The show has already adopted 5 dogs for this season. Their promoters are also working with several potential donors to receive products such as pet treats and comfort items for our animals.
- Last week our IT supervisor, Dara Ball, attended the annual Chameleon software conference. Chameleon is the software package the Department uses for calls for service, officer activities, animal licensing and management of animals in our shelters.
- Dana Brown will be fulfilling the role of Assistant General Manager and starts next Monday.
- On Sunday, May 4, 2015 the Department received word that one of their Animal Care Technicians underwent emergency open heart surgery while vacationing with his family in Hawaii. This employee is currently being treated at Queen's Medical Center in Honolulu, HI. That is all of the information we have at this time. We wish him a quick and steady recovery.
- General Services Plumbers are continuing to work at the North Central animal shelter. To date, they have been unsuccessful in isolating the leak in the hot water line. It has been determined that the water leak is actually under the concrete lifted puppy kennels where it is unreachable. They are currently evaluating other options to make the necessary corrections.
- Councilmember Parks made a motion directing funds to GSD to complete the Animal Shelter Annex Project, which was approved. This includes more gates and the installation of cameras to monitor trespassers at the park. We are asking for a meeting with LAPD, GSD and CM Parks office to discuss. We do not have staff to sit by a monitor to watch the Annex all night and call LAPD if there is a problem.
- Clerk typist interviews have been held for one vacancy.
- In the budget hearings Councilmember Blumenfeld suggested funds for Cat Plan EIR and the City Legislative Analyst is researching the issue.
- On May 6th, the Director of Field Operations, Mark Salazar, met with the Harbor Alliance of Neighborhood Councils and heard concerns about the consolidation of moving Harbor Field Officers to South Los Angeles office.
- June 6th East Valley Shelter and Animal Planet will host a "no fees" adoption day to promote The Road to Puppybowl 2016. The adoption fees are paid by a grant received from the ASPCA.

- June 13th and 14th The Pet Care Foundation will be sponsoring “Cat-A-Palooza” all cats will be \$50 off the regular adoption fee!
- June 20th Pacific World Cosmetics will host a free makeup brush replacement booth at West Los Angeles Shelter, they will offer free cruelty free brushes in exchange for animal hair brushes and promote animal adoptions.
- June 20th North Central Shelter and the Eagle Rock Neighborhood Council will be hosting a mobile pet adoption at Eagle Rock City Hall, time to be announced soon.
- June 21st West Valley will host a mobile Pet Adoption at the Sepulveda Basin dog park
- June 27th East Valley will participate in the Sherman Oaks Street Fair from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. with a mobile pet adoption and information booth.
- The NKLA weekend event was a success and very well attended, the mobile pet adoption at the La Brea Tar Pits had 19 cat adoptions and 68 dog adoptions for a total of 87 adoptions. Adoptions for all six shelters, including the mobile for the weekend totaled 160: 35 cats, 117 dogs and 8 others. Best Friends subsidized the adoption fees down to \$50 at the event, they will be paying a total of \$927.50 in adoption subsidies and all of the dogs and cats not adopted were transferred to Best Friends.

Public Comment
None

4. COMMISSIONERS’ ORAL REPORTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Commissioner Gross: Attended NKLA event and recognized East Valley shelter volunteers Gail, Sherri, Orley and Christine for staffing events, and congratulated Best Friends; suggested requesting a central location for the Sherman Oaks Fair; stated Kaparrot meetings have made progress and urged acceleration of meeting schedule to develop an approach to situation.

Commissioner Yañez: Mentioned 11th outreach event at Salazar Park and attendance of 194 animals for services and vaccination, 76% of which were unaltered and of those, 53% signed up for spay neuter; Salazar Park will be home for outreach events for next year, then moving to Obregon Park.

Commissioner Brent: Requested agenda item on potential dangerous dogs and effect on intake and shelters, the hearing process and whether proper notice is provided, and the animals being confined to their homes.

Commissioner Wolfson: Attended NKLA event and mentioned the generosity of someone who paid the adoption fee for a woman who bonded with animal; thanked Brenda and dept. for improvements to volunteer program; would like a future agenda item on an RFP for pet item kiosks at shelters; would like to discuss extending shelter evening hours and possibility of renaming shelters “animal adoption centers”; discussed “Portraits of Hope” and their spheres project at MacArthur Park, and would like to bring six spheres to each of the shelters to talk about civic responsibility, and the possibility of a project to

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paint shelters with soundproofing paint that is engaging.

Public Comment

None

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- A. Presentation by Lori Weise and Kerry Armstrong re the Shelter Intervention Programs at Chesterfield Square, East Valley and North Central shelters.

Kerry Armstrong provided background information of how Lori Weise started the intervention movement, which started small at North Central Animal Shelter collecting materials on free spay and neuter and low cost vet care in the area; formed a relationship with North Figueroa Animal Hospital; then received funding from Found Animals for staff and expenses. Lori Weise discussed the importance of having a shelter partner; work in South Los Angeles and that it is not a pet problem, but a poverty issue and the need to provide social work; connecting with the community; need to focus on pets that don't need to be there; small pilot at East Valley where people have a game plan, but generations of poverty at South L.A. Asked about the power the department has to work with homeless shelters to allow pets and provide boarding as a solution to surrendering pets; providing help to redeem pets. At North Central helping people put resources together; partnering with Pets for Life for spay and neuter services and vet care; work with Sam Simon Foundation and staff to help people solve problems to keeping pets.

Commissioner Zaft thanked Lori and Kerry and funding from Found Animals, and asked about redemptions and medical costs and how decisions are made. **Kerry Armstrong** responded that financial assistance is provided to individuals who lack the means to redeem their pets; volunteers will confirm need through field inspections and staff information. **Commissioner Zaft** asked about the schedule and whether people are referred by staff on off days (North Central: Thursday, Friday, Saturday and half day Sunday; South L.A.: Tuesday – Sunday; East Valley: partial days Tuesday and Thursday and all day Saturday; hotline available and staff has personal numbers). **Commissioner Brent** thanked Lori and Kerri for amazing work; asked about redemption fee and ability to reduce fee. **Lori** responded that a staff reduces as much as they legally can. **Commissioner Brent** asked if the department is able to provide a special exemption of redemption fees for intervention program (**GM Barnette** responded that through Council action). **Lori** discussed training classes provided to help people with life skills and pet care, provided by Larry Hill at a reduced cost, and scholarships are provided. Training is provided on Sundays at North Central and Saturdays in Compton. **Commissioner Gross** thanked Lori and Kerry and asked about how landlord issues are handled. **Lori** responded that they teach people how to talk with landlords and they do role-play and coaching; sometimes they buy liability policies. **Kerry** added that it also depends on the terms of the lease. A tenant's rights attorney, Diana Prado, does pro bono work with them. **Commissioner Gross** asked about expanding to the other three shelters. **Lori** responded that there are some volunteers who would like to do a hotline at West L.A. and providing the training, because there is not the level of need. **Commissioner Wolfson** asked about Council action needed to reduce the redemption fee and whether the Commission can recommend a reduction for the redemption program. **GM Barnette** responded that all fees are set by Council and added that the department's budget has specified number

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of days in which it can provide reduced fee adoptions, and that the Council may require income verification. **ACA Lesel** agreed and that it will likely require paperwork. **Commissioner Zaft** asked if there is anything the Commission can do to assist the program; mentioned that there are as many owner surrenders at West L.A. and quite a few at West Valley, and East Valley has the most. **GM Barnette** responded that we may want to look at the zip codes of the person surrendering their animals since people drive to West L.A. because they believe animals have greater chance of adoption. **Commissioner Zaft** expressed interest in knowing the reasons for animal surrender to determine what the department and Commission can do to assist in the intervention program. **Kerry** responded that assistance is needed with landlords. **ACA Lesel** asked whether landlord issues is a large percentage of the reasons why people surrender their animals (Lori and Kerry responded affirmatively). **Commissioner Wolfson** added the importance of having more people at the shelters as a resource who are bilingual and can provide services and resources (mentioned the idea of placing pet supply kiosks in shelters). **Kerry** responded that they keep collars, leashes and food to give out if people need them for their pets; Sara helps when clerks need help with Spanish language. **GM Barnette** replied that they also provide good modeling for staff. **Commissioner Yañez** thanked Lori and Kerry and importance of non-judgmental program; noted the highest stats for surrender are redemption fee and spay neuter fee, and would like to explore the possibility of having a two-tiered redemption fee.

Public Comment

Susan Taylor: Impressed by program and statistics; stated that there are a lot of animals in City that are not spayed or neutered; noted that 39% of the people serviced have a pet one year or younger so may not be forever homes for animals; intake program needed at the beginning of adoption. **Aimee Gilbreath:** Stated that it is unusual that Los Angeles does not give GM discretion with fees and need to plan a year in advance for special events; it's less expensive to give animal back to owner rather than hold it in shelter. **Marc Peralta:** Suggested a cost benefit analysis in order to bring down the fees; intervention program is well known nationally and shows the department as a service provider, not just punitive. **Whitney Smith:** Department has always had a relinquishment counselor position, but no one has done the job for last 15 years; suggested development of screening mechanism at adoption; statistics state 3,800 abandoned animals because too many at home – great issue for RACO program. **Phyllis Daugherty:** Stated that she allows dogs of homeless be placed in her home so they are not impounded; have to work with people's lifestyles. **Sybil Kohn:** Asked that if impounded animals are labeled dangerous, how are they rehabilitated; animals at shelters are increasing because of impounding; sick animals are disintegrating; asked animals be released.

6. BOARD REPORTS

A. Board Report re Pilot Program MOU with *Actors and Others for Animals* to Expand Distribution of Spay Neuter Vouchers

GM Barnette stated that the pilot program was designed to get vouchers out and if successful it would be expanded to other non-profits; discussed background involving audit of the department six (6) years ago that found vouchers were being used inappropriately by some rescues, inability to determine the amount of funds encumbered, the lack of tracking and accountability. As a result practices went to the

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other extreme and it became very difficult to get a voucher. **Sue Taylor** discussed the 2000 coalition to end pet over-population and the first mobile van; vouchers were used for stationary clinics and given to everyone to distribute; rescue groups and vets were using them for themselves; were mostly used for feral cats; vouchers funded by tax payers and should be used by tax payers. Actors and Others was a major distributor of vouchers, but system broke down. Current program requires proof of income for \$70 voucher, so starting with \$30 vouchers and written policy that people sign attesting to qualifications. Staff has found that vets are up-selling in low-income communities. Vouchers are non-transferable and valid for 60 days.

Commissioner Yañez asked whether Commission is going to vote on increasing the voucher amount. **GM Barnette** responded that survey results will be analyzed and that if there is an interest in greater participation by vets, a report will come to Commission and City Council. **Commissioner Zaft** asked about information that will be sent along with vouchers. **Sue Taylor** responded that applicant information will be obtained over the phone to determine qualifications and they will be referred to nearest vet and prices, and filled in on voucher sent. **Commissioner Zaft** asked to include information on mobile vet clinics in area (**GM Barnette** stated that the list of contract vets will be provided and posted online). **Sue Taylor** stated that they will look at marketing opportunities. **Commissioner Brent** thanked Sue and zero cost assistance. **Sue Taylor** responded that success will be determined when vouchers are used; asked if the department will mark the vouchers to determine they were provided by Actors and Others (**GM Barnette** responded that they will be marked and numbered). **Commissioner Gross** asked about the outreach plan once approved. **Commissioner Zaft** suggested information on the department website and a link to Actors and Others. **Commissioner Wolfson** suggested info table at dog parks. **Commissioner Yañez** asked if documents will be in Spanish (**GM Barnette** responded that department can assist).

Public Comment

Marc Peralta: Agreed that \$30 is not going to cover the cost for most individuals. **Phyllis Daugherty:** Suggested using Officers to conduct outreach; possibility of fraud; determination of who gets fee reduction (**Commissioner Zaft** agreed and suggested Canvassers be used as well). **Aimee Gilbreath:** Stated that it is a challenge to get the vouchers to people who need them; need to reevaluate fee structure to get more vets to participate. **Whitney Smith:** Stated that \$30 is not going to help and vouchers need to cover entire cost – suggested \$125 vouchers.

Sue Taylor added that they will be able to ascertain the true financial situation; Actors and Others will provide additional resources; if simplified way to verify income, will distribute \$70 vouchers; need to talk about pit bull money. **Commissioner Zaft** asked for a report back on vouchers and asked about the targeted zip code contracts. **Commissioner Gross** stated that grant funds can be used to increase the voucher amount.

Commissioner Gross made a motion to support the personal service agreement between the Department and Actors and Others for Animals and **Commissioner Yañez** seconded. The vote was 5 – 0 in favor.

- B. Board Report on Changes to Staffing of Field Staff at Harbor and Chesterfield Square Shelters

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GM Barnette indicated that Acting Lt. Annette Ramirez would present for Mark Salazar. Annette Ramirez provided information for the Harbor Shelter over the past few months and the prior year from May 2014 to April 2015, they handled a total of 3,251 activities. Of those 1,275 were in the Watts area, which is 4.5 miles from Chesterfield Square shelter. From February 2015 to April 2015 the Harbor shelter handled a total of 416 activities (radio calls) and 504 activities (investigations). During February, with three ACOs: Harbor shelter issued a total of 160 hours off to staff and Officers were out in the field 23.3% of the time they were on duty; one day with no field Officer at all so field services covered by another district; five days with only one field staff to respond to only emergency calls and provide services at shelter; 13 days with two field staff present – one Officer to handle emergency calls and one office paperwork and dispatch services. From March 2014 to March 2015, field stats department wide: Injuries up 349%, FMLA up 34%, Sick time up 24%, Overtime up 16%, Leaves of Absence down 42%, Vacation down 12%. This indicates Officers are not getting time off, which increases injuries on duty and illnesses (GM Barnette interjected that we are way up on injuries as compared to the rest of the City). During March 2015, there were a total of 184 hours off for staff. Seven days there was only one field staff present providing office and emergency field services. Fifteen days there were two field staff present; one provided field services and the other provided office services. In April 2015: one day with no field staff present and another district had to provide field services on an emergency basis; 12 days with only one field staff present providing office and emergency only field services; 15 days with only two field staff present, one provided field services and the other provided office services.

Commissioner Zaft requested a copy of the document with the stats (**GM Barnette** responded that they would be provided in a chart). **GM Barnette** stated that the Officers had been discussing solutions and the idea came up that if Officers were dispatched from one location, one Officer could be added to the field. This was an effort to provide better services in the south part of the City where there are a lot of calls. **Commissioner Gross** asked about the meeting with the Neighborhood Council (Mark Salazar arrived at this time). **Director of Field Operations (DFO) Mark Salazar** responded that 16 people attended and that, by the end of the meeting, the majority understood the department's needs and actions; issue of perception about where the Officers are who serve the Harbor; Officers are in the district, not in the office; due to changes, Officers are in the field sooner and for longer period of time, and more Officers available; when emergencies arise, Officers are pulled from other districts. In the week prior to effective date, the Field Supervisor was out three days (**Commissioner Zaft** asked for clarification). There are three assigned to a district - one Supervisor and two Officers. When the Supervisor is out, one Officer serves as Officer-in-Charge (OIC) and taken out of the field. Evenings, graveyard and weekends always have an OIC. Now one Supervisor can determine days off to ensure coverage. **Commissioner Gross** indicated concern over dispatch and travel time in an emergency between South L.A. and the Harbor. **DFO Salazar** responded that Officers are not dispatched from the shelter, rather from the field. Harbor district extends north to Watts and nearly 40% of Harbor calls come from Watts. Field logs indicate Officers are out in the field 80% of the time versus 23% of the time. **Commissioner Yañez** clarified that Officers are not sitting in the district but are out in the field waiting to be dispatched. **Annette Ramirez** added that they are handling Harbor investigations in between calls. **DFO Salazar** stated there are between one and three Officers serving the North Central district with 1.1 million people, and today there were none; all

districts had two or less; staff is working harder and getting hurt. **Commissioner Gross** commented on his ride along in East Valley and that there was only one Officer covering the entire area; mentioned the article in today's paper and plans for Valley. **Commissioner Zaft** asked for clarification on staff plans for Valley. **DFO Salazar** responded that the change will be made next month to cover the Valley – East Valley had only one Officer 10 days in the month – has a lot of the hoarding cases; change will put two more Officers in field during swing shift. **Commissioner Gross** asked whether there was support from Officers. **DFO Salazar** responded that it's mixed (**GM Barnette** added that some Officers want to work close to home, but can't always be accommodated; meeting will be held with Officers prior to change). **Commissioner Brent** recommended ride along participation to experience distances in districts; Harbor is remote from the rest of the district, why not impound Watts animals in South L.A. **DFO Salazar** responded that South L.A. shelter has a high population. **Commissioner Brent** asked if rescue officers are pulled to help when there are such dramatic shortages. **DFO Salazar** responded that all but one supervisor and one officer. **Commissioner Zaft** asked about handling client services. **DFO Salazar** responded that Officers are seldom needed at the shelter and clients can call for an appointment. **Commissioner Zaft** asked if 12 new Officer positions will be placed in the field (**DFO Salazar** responded affirmatively). **GM Barnette** added that there is not an active list so it will take some time to get the Officers hired and trained. **Commissioner Zaft** asked about RACO program to alleviate situation. **GM Barnette** responded that part-time as-needed positions are difficult to fill and Personnel is looking at other ways to market the RACO positions. **Commissioner Zaft** stated that people he knows are applying but are not being contacted. **Commissioner Gross** asked if meetings had been held with CD15 (**DFO Salazar** responded no).

Public Comment

Susan Taylor: Stated that it is a dangerous state with the number of ACOs; most requests for ACOs don't get a response; asked if additional Officers are hired, will the dispatch be reverted because people take the time to drive to shelter. **Phyllis Daugherty:** Stated that San Pedro people at meeting were furious about not being advised or consulted; the change was planned for months and discussed three years ago; Officer who lives in the Harbor will now have to drive to South L.A. in rush hour traffic to get equipment and drive back to Harbor, then leave early to drive back to South L.A. to drop off equipment and do paperwork; they should be able to log in via email instead of driving there.

C. Board Report Requesting Approval to Terminate RFP for Animal Management Software and Continue with Chameleon Data Management

GM Barnette provided summary of report and use of budget salary savings instead of 2015-16 funds. Discussed challenges with licensing and solutions provided by upgrading Chameleon; and use of iPhones for Officers in the field.

Commissioner Zaft stated that there is an option to have auto notification about a dog being available (noted Commissioner Wolfson had an emergency and had to leave early – 12:30 p.m.). **Commissioner Brent** asked if 58 iPhones is enough, whether that was the initial cost, would there be additional monthly expenses, and whether it would sync with administrative citations. **GM Barnette** responded that there are never more than 58 Officers in the field at one time; the monthly cost is not included but would be added to current package; app is from Chameleon not Verizon. **Commissioner Brent**

asked about new Officers. **GM Barnette** responded that we would need to increase our order; waiting for City Attorney to get started. **Commissioner Zaft** clarified if they would sync with the new ACE program. **GM Barnette** responded that it is set up for an "A" citation. **Commissioner Gross** clarified reason for RFP and staying with Chameleon. **GM Barnette** responded the department wanted to make sure we were using the best system and discussed Pet Point. **Commissioner Yañez** has experience with Chameleon and indicated that it is easy to use. **Commissioner Zaft** stated that the licensing component is key and upgrades are needed to automate system, and to increase revenue.

Public Comments

Susan Taylor: Expressed support for using Chameleon; Pet Point used by rescues and non-profits, Chameleon by municipalities. **Phyllis Daugherty:** Stated that Chameleon has been upgrading but the department has not kept up; the City Attorney has been ready with the administrative citation; department should bring the 10 Officers and the four that were promoted back into the field, plus 24 more Officers to bring department back on track; no need for rescue crew; licensing should be automated. **Whitney Smith:** Supportive of keeping Chameleon; Pet Point used by Best Friends.

Commissioner Zaft made a motion to approve the department request and **Commissioner Yañez** seconded. The vote was 4 – 0 in favor.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Brent made a motion to adjourn the meeting and **Commissioner Gross** seconded. Motion carried 4 - 0.

Meeting ended at 12:56 p.m.