

MINUTES



BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF LOS ANGELES
Monday, March 9, 2009
10:00 am
Los Angeles City Hall
200 N. Spring Street
Room 1060
Los Angeles, CA 90012



Vacant, President
Kathleen Riordan, Vice-President
Tariq Khero
Irene Ponce
Archie J. Quincey, Jr.
Ruthanne Secunda

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL HEARING 10:00 A.M.

The meeting was called to order at 10:13 am. In attendance were Commissioners Riordan, Quincey, and Secunda.

1. Barking Dog Revocation - **BR 08387 NC**

Appellant: Shui Hang Tam

Complaining Witness: Jack Chludzinski

Field Operations Supervisor, North Central Shelter, Lt. William Tranzow

Hearing Coordinator, Department of Animal Services, Ross Pool, Management Analyst

Commissioner Quincey made a motion to uphold the General Manager's decision. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Commissioner Secunda made a motion to hold the appeal to the next meeting. Commissioner Riordan seconded the motion. The motion failed with a vote of 2-1.

Commissioner Secunda made a motion to modify the General Manager's decision and to add terms and conditions. Commissioner Riordan seconded the motion. The motion failed with a vote of 2-1.

Failure to overturn the General Manager's decision

Determination: General Manager's Barking Dog Revocation Decision Upheld

COMMISSION MEETING

Meeting began at 11:00 am. Commissioners Quincey, Riordan, and Secunda were present. Commissioner Ponce arrived at 11:33 pm.

COMMISSION MEETING

1. ORAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

Welcome to our newest Commissioner, Ruthanne Secunda. The Department looks forward to working with this new Board.

Intakes/Rescues: February 09 Intakes were up over 7% (from 3,010 to 3,225). This is the highest February Intake since collecting data electronically began in 2001. February 2001 Intake was 3,079. Year to Date (YTD) Intakes are up over 4% (from 6,275 to 6,542). This is the highest January/February Intake since 2001 when 7,034 animals were taken in. This is a disturbing trend continuing from 2008.

Adoptions: February 09 Adoptions are up nearly 18% (1,607) compared to February 08 (1,377). YTD Adoptions are up 17.6% (from 2,848 to 3,351).

New Hope: February New Hope Placements are down nearly 7% (from 329 to 306). YTD New Hope Placements are down just over 10% (from 714 to 638).

Return to Owners (RTO): February RTOs are down 2% (from 376 to 368). YTD RTOs are down 6.5% (from 793 to 741).

Euthanasia: February Euthanasia is down 11% (from 748 to 665). YTD Euthanasia is down 14% (from 1,568 to 1,345). This is nearly 3% lower than the historic 2007 low of 1,384).

It is the highest impound rate in nearly a decade AND the lowest euthanasia rate in recorded history. All of this has been done while addressing overcrowding issues in the Animal Care Centers. This is a tribute AGM Kathy Davis, as well as every employee, supervisor, manager, volunteer and partner. Thank you for all your efforts!

Shelter Population Control Strategies: As the Department has moved into our new or expanded Care Centers over the past two years, we have encountered a learning curve for effectively managing our shelter populations. In 2007 we saw the lowest euthanasia rate in the department's long recorded history of statistics (1960). This was the result of having more space to hold animals. In 2008, we experienced a 20% increase in intakes complicated by our inexperience managing so many animals in all this new space. Consequently, the shelters quickly filled up, animals got sick more often and we found ourselves forced to resort to euthanasia to bring populations under control again.

Having gone through this experience, our Center Managers are now promoting their adoptable animals more effectively, pursuing more and better off-site adoption partners and events, exploring partnerships with Pet Stores (such as Orange Bone), having our Veterinarians spay or neuter animals in-house, allowing adopters to take them home the day of the adoption, transferring animals to another shelter to enhance adoption options, transferring animals to other municipal and private shelters, strictly adhering to a Population Assessment Management program (maintain the population at least 10% below maximum capacity to allow sufficient space for incoming animals and the 7-day Red Alert requirement), utilize the Heart-to-Heart program regarding any animal in the Center over two weeks, and, finally, implementing an enhanced cleaning protocol to help maintain a healthy shelter population.

New Statistic to Watch: With the current economic downturn and the recent discussion concerning implementation of a tax on veterinary services, we took a look at how many pets are being relinquished due to the cost of medical services. Comparing the first two months of 2009 to the same two months in 2008 we saw a 306% increase in the number of pets relinquished for medical reasons, from 47 to 191.

Licensing Code Changes: We have had good news from the Mayor's Office in regard to the recommended Municipal Code changes in dog licensing that were approved by the Board at the last meeting. The Mayor's office has expedited approval and we expect the City Clerk to receive it soon.

Banking Changeover: The changeover from Bank of America to Wachovia is set for the beginning of April; in coordination with this transition, the Department is working directly with the new bank's credit card agency to process our on-line donations and on-line dog licensing renewals through our own website, in place of using the on-line applications provided by HLP (Chameleon). This will save us \$2800 a year in user fees to Chameleon, will allow us to update and customize our on-line donations page, and represents a test for a future expanded on-line modules that we will directly manage which will allow application for new dog licenses.

Guardian Angel Program: New Hope partner Bound Angels is partnering with the Department to implement "The Guardian Angel Program" The program is an adoption incentive contest for all employees at the North Central Center. The program was initiated at NC as a pilot. If successful, we eventually hope to expand the program to all the Centers. This is an exciting contest that was well received by staff and will involve everyone who works at the Center. The concept is simple: the person who helps the most pets get adopted gets the a \$100 American Express Gift Card that can be used anywhere to purchase anything. I want to thank Robert Cabral for the program concept and for donating the prize.

Spay Day Press Conference and Event: On Friday, February 27th, Councilmembers Alarcón and Cárdenas introduced a resolution declaring Saturday, February 28, "**LA Spay Day 2009.**" In celebration of this wonderful event, the two Council Offices partnered with the Department, Social Compassion, Clinico, The Sam Simon Foundation and The Amanda Foundation to host a free spay and neuter event for residents of the Northeast San Fernando Valley. Local residents were encouraged to bring their unaltered dogs and cats to the **Mission Hills Animal Care Center.**

The event's goal to alter 165 dogs and cats was achieved and dozens more are scheduled for surgery in the coming weeks. Local residents were very grateful for this free service. The event was made possible through the donations of many who are dedicated to ending euthanasia by providing free spay and neuter as the preferred method for controlling pet overpopulation. I want to thank all our donors along with the organizations mentioned above and the employees and volunteers of LA Animal Services and the two Council Offices for making this such a successful event.

It is our hope to provide a Big Fix Spay Day every quarter in a different part of the City. We encourage anyone wanting to help make that possible please consider making a donation to Social Compassion and indicate that it is to be used for the LA Big Fix program.

Strategic Planning Process: Four teams of 8 employees are working on Departmental goals for the next fiscal year and beyond. On Monday, March 2nd, project management and team building training was provided to the team leaders and/or their alternatives. They are on track to

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submit their goals on March 17th. A special feature on our Intranet allows Strategic Team Leaders and their alternates to communicate in a fashion that allows all employees to stay informed of their progress.

Volunteer Bulletin Board: The Department's IT team also developed a Volunteer Bulletin Board that can be accessed by the public on our Internet, under the Volunteer tab. Only staff members can add information, but the general public can read it. This feature will be a great tool for informing volunteers on a regular and consistent basis. The feature also allows us to publicly recognize volunteers, staff and others. The feature keeps all staff informed of all volunteer supported events or important volunteer information. The bulletin board will also be an excellent tool to update volunteers on departmental protocol, procedures and operations.

Medical Program:

- Medical Staff aided with the logistics of Spay Day at Mission Center
- Met with Foster Baby Program Coordinators to discuss more efficient handling of the Program
- Met with ValuVet at West LA Center to discuss better communications between the Center staff and the S/N clinic staff.
- Met with Laura Beth Heisen to discuss Low Cost S/N Issues pertaining to the Low Cost S/N Committee.
- Met with members of Strategic Planning Team to discuss ideas and goals.
- Continued to perform some S/N surgeries at our Centers.

Budget Update: As you will note in the discussion of the update on our Spay/Neuter programs, funding in the current fiscal year is being cut as part of the budget-balancing efforts in the City. In December, the City Council acted to cut spay/neuter funding for the coupon and van programs by \$100,000. In another action last week, the City Council further directed the Department to make up any deficit in the Salaries account through our own expense and spay/neuter funds. As you may recall, every Department had a budget cut at the beginning of the year because employees were going to have to take six mandatory furlough days. For Animal Services, that was \$414,000. When mandatory furlough days were dropped, Departments were not given the funding back. So far, we have made up over \$100,000 of this shortfall. Since we cannot lay off employees and our attrition rate is very low, we can only make up the remaining \$300,000 through a combination of savings in expense accounts and spay/neuter funding. The spay/neuter funding level that we can expect for next year is unknown at this time.

Commissioner Riordan questioned if any licenses were issued during Spay Day and Mr. Boks responded that 75 licenses were issued by the Canvassers.

Commissioner Riordan asked if it was a management decision to take the \$300,000 from the Spay/Neuter trust fund and Mr. Boks responded that the Department offered several alternatives, with the cutting S/N funding as a last resort. However, that option appears to be the one that was accepted.

Commissioner Secunda asked about how adoption statistics were broken down. GM Boks told her that they are broken down into several categories and available on the LAAS website.

Commissioner Riordan also questioned if the \$100 gift certificates were only available for the ACTs and GM Boks clarified that they were available to all employees. We may look at adoption “teams” in the future. This is a pilot program and the staff is very excited about it.

Public Comment:

Teri Austin- Spay/Neuter funding should not be touched. The Department should seek donations from other sources. Do not cut the mobile S/N budget.

Phyllis Daugharty-She had questions about the increase in adoptions. She feels the reward program will be problematic and night employees will be left out.

2. COMMISSION BUSINESS

A. Approval of the Commission Meeting Minutes

January 12, January 26, February 9, and February 23, 2009

Approval held to end of meeting for approval. Commissioner Riordan made a motion to hold over approval of the minutes to the next meeting and Commissioner Ponce seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4 – 0.

Break at 11:22 am. Meeting resumed at 11:29 pm.

B. Oral Report by the Commission on Meetings and Events attended

Commissioner Riordan attended the Voice for the Animals event at the Comedy Store.

Commissioner Secunda attended the North Central training of the Strategic Planning leaders.

Commissioner Quincey had nothing to report.

3. GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FOR BOARD ACTION

A) None

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A) Information Report from the Volunteer Coordinator

Discussion of an Assessment of the Volunteer Program, the Erica Meadows Report and the plans for the future.

Jaren Sorkow , Volunteer Coordinator, gave a general assessment of the Volunteer Program and review of the Erica Meadows report.

He stated that the issues at LAAS are no different from other organizations.

His suggestions included:

- Increasing volunteer retention;
- Diversifying the volunteer base to reflect the community where each Care Center is located;
- Increasing communication through group meetings and the internet bulletin board;
- Increasing the public’s awareness of LA Animal Services;

- Increasing non-traditional partnerships, i.e. the medical staff attending volunteer meetings to answer questions;
- Taking advantage of the skill base of the volunteers, i.e. marketing and PR;
- Regular volunteer meetings at each Care Center;
- Holding volunteer appreciation events; and
- Increasing customer services through the volunteers.

Commissioner Ponce suggested that the volunteer meetings be run with an agenda and that there be more outreach to the Hispanic, Chinese and Korean communities. She also suggested that there be a volunteer sign-up sheet at each shelter and that Jaren contact the Kaiser Permanente and Rose Hills Foundations regarding funding for the program.

Commissioner Riordan questioned whether the volunteers could assist the Department in following up on D-300 compliance. She also asked Jaren to contact Erica Brunsen regarding her offer to help with Beverly Hills locations for MPAs. The Commissioner requested a copy of the Volunteer guidelines be submitted to the Board.

Commissioner Secunda suggested that the volunteers be put on committees to help with certain events/tasks and to help give them a sense of purpose.

Public Comment

Phyllis Daugharty- She suggested that the volunteers could be used to match missing animal ads with animals in the shelter and assist with adoption follow-ups.

B. Update on Spay and Neuter Programs and Clinics

Oral Report on the Various Spay and Neuter Programs and Clinics

AGM Barth presented a report in response to questions asked by Commissioner Riordan, which paints a picture of what is happening in the South LA Clinic operated by Dr. Eric Jones that has been in operation for almost 2 years. The West LA clinic operated by Value Vet has been in operation for one month, so we do not have their first month's report yet and Clinico has run into a snag at Harbor because there is a problem with the flooring and General Services has to make the repairs.

One of the challenges that the Department is facing is the City's desperate need to cut budgets, meaning that what they want to put on the table is either to cut jobs or S/N money. The Department is sensitive to the fact that every dollar lost in S/N funding will affect the program for years to come, and therefore the Department is looking at the S/N coupons and the S/N van program to assess how to spend the money that we have in order to get the greatest benefit. The Department is looking at ways to make billing more efficient with our vets and reformulation the programs to ensure that they are truly serving the people which they are intended to target.

Most of the complaints that the Department has received in regards to the clinic at SLA have been in regards to operating hours and customer service issues. Very few animal-related complaints have been received.

Commissioner Riordan stated that most of the complaints that have come her way have been in regards to unanticipated fees being charged in addition to the S/N. AGM Barth responded that the Department does not have a monitoring system of all of the vets throughout Los Angeles

that accept the City's coupons and vouchers, or a standard agreement with them except for the vets operating our S/N clinics and the van. The Department is looking into instituting a formal contract with the vets that take the City's coupons and vouchers (currently 67 vets) which includes a built in audit trail and an incentive of streamlined billing.

The Department is also planning to issue postcards with adopted animals that can be brought to the adopter's vet on the first visit and the vet can note health issues, ect. and be sent back to the Department as feedback.

Commissioner Riordan requested that the Department post price lists of public costs for each S/N clinic on the Department website.

Commissioner Ponce requested that the information about services on the Department website be bi-lingual.

Commissioner Riordan asked whether the Department's S/N clinic vets are helping the Department with licensing. AGM Barth replied that they are not, although they do make the applications available and they are located on the Animal Care Center grounds and can direct the public to the counter to purchase a license. With the S/N vans, the Department sends canvassers to issue licenses.

Commissioner Ponce asked when the award for the S/N mobile clinic will be presented and AGM Barth responded either March 23rd or the first meeting in April.

Public Comment

Teri Austin – The Amanda Foundation is offering pro bono services to treat additional illnesses and it offers discounted vet services to other charities.

Phyllis Daugharty – She cautioned against losing the relationships with outside vets.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD - (Comments from the public on items of public interest within the Board's subject matter jurisdiction and on items not on the Agenda.)

Phyllis Daugharty – The breeders are organizing again against the S/N ordinance. Her group trained 12 District Attorney's last week. Need more training with the ACTF on animal cruelty.

Teri Austin – Congratulated Phyllis and Debbie Knaan for their work with the ACTF trainings and to Helen Brakemeir and the staff at Mission Hills for the successful Spay Neuter Day. Commented on the fact that impounded animals that give birth at Mission Hills are remaining healthier.

6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Requests from Commissioners for future Agenda Items.

Commissioner Ponce is requesting a report on the pets in housing issue in one month.

Commissioner Riordan would like to explore the Fix-it ticket approach in issuing Notices to Comply.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Please join us at our website: www.LAAnimalServices.com

Commissioner Secunda made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Quincey seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

Meeting ended at 1:05 pm

Next Commission Meeting is scheduled for 10:00 A.M., March 23, 2009, Los Angeles City Hall, Room 1060, 200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, California 90012