



BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF LOS ANGELES



MINUTES

TUESDAY, September 8, 2015 at 7:00 PM

MISSION HILLS ANIMAL SHELTER
OPERATED BY BEST FRIENDS ANIMAL SOCIETY
15321 BRAND BOULEVARD
MISSION HILLS, CALIFORNIA 91345

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

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

Meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m. Commissioners present were Zaft, Gross and Brent and Wolfson arrived late. Commissioner Yañez was absent. Also present Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS) Board Secretary, Rita Moreno; General Manager, Brenda Barnette; Assistant General Manager (AGM), Dana Brown; and Assistant City Attorney (ACA) Laurie Rittenberg.

Commissioner Zaft opened the meeting and provided an overview of the meeting agenda, thanked staff that provided the facility tour, and invited Steve Jaramillo from Councilmember Fuente's Office, who welcomed attendees.

REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

- 1. PUBLIC COMMENT SPEAKERS:** **Daniel Guss:** Discussed breeder's permit for Pit Bulls and Chihuahuas at 6016 N. Kester and fees not collected; 8,803 fake adoptions; discussed financials for Best Friends. **Marla Tauscher:** Discussed press release regarding animal cruelty and animal neglect and selective enforcement; preferential treatment for a friend of the General Manager. **Gail Raff:** Discussed 50+ unweaned kittens since Friday at East Valley for which there are no fosters; check permits for trapping – cats illegally trapped – owner has to pay impound fee; senior adoption program doesn't work - senior for senior should be everyone for seniors. **Sherry Brewer:** Stated need for more spay neuter clinics; discussed kennel space – kept over weekend; vets don't want to do some dogs or pregnant dogs; charging too much for other items; shelter hoses don't have shut-off nozzles. **Arlene Ober:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills – keeps shelter animals from being euthanized. **Scott Bachrach:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills. **Marissa Pessell:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills – as much for people as for animals. **Tina James:** Discussed Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills – transformation of building into kennels; there are employees and volunteers. **Rod Summers:** Requested Rockin' Rescue continue to operate until zoning issue is resolved; work is self-funded. **Andrew Brown:** Stated that the line at East Valley on Sundays is too long and people left without adopting; people are being overcharged. **William Oglesby:** Fix Nation support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills – spay neuter cats and provide medical services. **Cathy Serksnas:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills – takes in animals from West Valley and requested help expediting permit. **Jeffrey Mausner:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills – rescued dogs from West Valley shelter; requested that nothing be done until permit issue has been resolved. **Jumana Peer Mohammed:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills – has received assistance with medical services for adopted kittens. **Staci Wilkes:** Blankets of Love support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills – helps

homeless with food for animals; requested expedited permit. **Thomas Webster:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills – providing a service at personal cost; stated personal attacks should not be considered. **Paula Hsien:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills – haven for homeless dogs and cats, and sick shelter animals. **Bari Fiore:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills and requested zoning variance; discussed work on TNR and food donation; assist West Valley with resources and picking-up animals that would otherwise be euthanized; about 20 adoptions per month and no returns. **Melodee Von:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills – provided own story with adopted animal. **Dan Saucedo:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills. **Yvonne Len:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills – animals are always clean, fed and have blankets and toys. **Gary Werner:** Law firm working with Ady Gil discussed zoning entitlements and requested additional time – filing in four weeks and the process takes four to eight months. **Ady Gil:** Stated he owns the building and loses \$200,000 per year on rent and another \$200,000 to care for animals; Walmart donates food; he provides food and resources to other rescues and supports the West Valley Animal Shelter. **Paul Darrigo:** Support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills; discussed lack of follow through on RACO, the 11 animals that died of heat exhaustion in the department, Garfield project; discussed audit and accuracy of statistics; mentioned protest on Sept. 23rd at Grand at 11:00 a.m. **Zoey Knittel:** SNPLA support for Ady Gil and Rockin' Rescue in Woodland Hills - stated they have highest volume of spay neuter from shelters. **Garry Fordyce:** Stated venue was poorly planned.

2. COMMISSION BUSINESS

A. Approval of Minutes for August 25, 2015.

Public Comment
None

Commissioner Gross moved to approve the minutes of August 25, 2015, and **Commissioner Wolfson** seconded. The motion passed 4 - 0.

3. ORAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

GM Barnette reported on the following:

- Attended the Women's Equality Day at the Getty House on August 26 and the city's efforts toward gender equality.
- The September 2nd PAW Committee meeting heard and would like to see the number of indoor altered cats increased from three to five; raised questions about the vans and the misters in the shelters and General Services was there to respond.
- Meetings are being planned with General Services to discuss repairs needed at shelters including climate control since some of the runs can't be used when it's too hot or too cold; misters at West L.A. were missing a part and it was replaced.
- Press conference held at South L.A. Animal Shelter on the department audit, which found that there is a higher number of animals euthanized there because more animals come in and there is not enough space to transfer them to other shelters.

Public Comment
Daniel Guss: Expressed dissatisfaction with the Controller's audit of the department.

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4. COMMISSIONERS' ORAL REPORTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Commissioner Wolfson: Commented on the support for Ady Gil and let attendees know they were being heard; discussed Best Friends assistance in taking in cats; has been working with GM Barnette and ACA Lesel on allowing shelters to open in the evening when volunteers are available, and on providing supplies to adopters at the shelters.

Commissioner Brent: Requested agenda items to discuss status of TNR EIR, the breeder's permit, and the number of department positions open in each area.

Commissioner Zaft: Attended the press conference at Chesterfield Square and stated that the audit will be on a future agenda; added that an independent auditor participated.

Commissioner Gross: Announced October 19th Sherman Oaks Street Fair; LAAS/HCID workshops on pets and rental housing on November 5 at the East Valley Shelter at 10:00 a.m., and at West Valley Shelter on November 19 at 10:30 a.m.; acknowledged support for Rockin' Rescue.

Commissioners recognized and thanked Best Friends for hosting the meeting.

Public Comment
None

5. Board Reports

A. Board Report re Best Friends' Work at the North Central Animal Shelter

Candy Crawford, NKLA Manager, and **Erin Olson**, Client Services Specialist, provided an oral report of their work at North Central. Since June 1st, Ms Olson works full-time, five days per week, Wednesday through Sunday; launched program to help increase positive outcomes at highest intake shelters. A second full-time staff member has been at South L.A. shelter for three weeks. The assigned staff role is to assist LAAS staff and volunteers; all have been trained and approved for volunteer services by LAAS. The services provided include training volunteers, assigning them duties at the shelter, working with clients coming in to shelters and showcasing the animals, helping processing adoptions up to the point it goes to the Clerk. The first month Ms Olson was at North Central, there was a 15% increase in adoptions, 20% increase in New Hope placement, and 23% increase in placements to Best Friends. Kennel cards designed by Ms Olson were provided, which help promote animal adoptions by highlighting their characteristics, and assist rescues with selections. Commander Dedeaux has experienced a visible change in staff when working with the public.

Commissioner Zaft thanked Best Friends for their support; mentioned actions taken by department to improve such as the playgroups, and noted the walking schedule board outside the kennels during the tour, and stated that it would be a great goal for the department to get evidence animals out and keep them healthy. **Commissioner Brent** stated Best Friends had risen to the challenge; stated importance of customer service. **Commissioner Wolfson** stated there is a need for more support of volunteers, staff and the public; expressed gratitude for the positive effect on the environment at North Central.

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Public Comment
None

B. Update on Best Friends Animal Society Activities at Mission Hills Animal Shelter

Mark Peralta gave an overview of the report provided at the meeting. Committed to additional 1.2 million for cats, specifically community cats, and will work on strategy to strengthen coalition sustainability and foster care program to save more cats. Aside from 6,200 surgeries, BF will pay for additional 7,385 surgeries for groups like Stray Cat Alliance, SnipLA, Spay4LA, Downtown Dog, Angel City Pit Bulls and others in specific underserved areas; will provide eight staffing grants to other coalition members to increase sustainability; paid out \$300,000 to rescue groups last year; recognized importance of relationship with the city.

Commissioner Wolfson noted the character / types of dogs and cats Best Friends pulls. **Marc Peralta** responded they pull everything to match animal shelter animals. **Commissioner Gross** asked how effective the mobile pet adoptions are. **Marc Peralta** responded that in-center adoptions are more successful; mobile pet adoptions are more successful when they have small animals; 7% through mobile. **Commissioner Wolfson** asked Best Friends to come back to talk about how they get volunteers 24 hours a day. **Marc Peralta** responded that they set protocols and trust the volunteers to be there for the right reasons. **Commissioner Zaft** thanked Marc for focusing on hard to place animals; noted spay neuter services provided to the public. **Marc Peralta** responded they still pull small dogs but not focus.

Public Comment

Vince Wong: Commended Best Friends. **Zoey Knittel:** Thanked the Commission and Department for partnership; stated that in 2014 over 23,000 L.A. pets were spayed and neutered, 13% were from LAAS – over 3,000 shelter cats and dogs; expressed support for Best Friends and grant funding that has allowed them to spay/neuter over 600 pets. **Galit Reuben:** Stated that rescue dogs are different and importance of fosters who help provide information on dog characteristics for matching purposes; thanked Best Friends for staff grant.

Commissioner Wolfson recognized GM Barnette for partnership with Best Friends.

C. Board Report re Draft Department Press Release and Applicability and Enforcement of Animal Welfare Ordinances to Conditions of Animals Prior to Use in Religious Ceremonies

GM Barnette stated that the press release with contact information will be distributed widely. **DFO Mark Salazar** gave an overview of the press release; stated that Officers are dispatched citywide who are trained in humane investigations and that the Animal Control Officers also participate in a joint task force with LAPD to work on more egregious animal cruelty crimes; the phone numbers at the bottom include an 888 number staffed 24/7 by an Animal Control Officer and the other to Animal Cruelty Task Force during regular business hours.

Commissioner Zaft noted that the penal code section in the press release discusses requirement for food, water, proper shelter not just deliberate violence to an animal.

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DFO Salazar added that a lot of the cases involve simple neglect, sometimes it involves a funding issue and Officers point people to resources. **Commissioner Brent** asked about the enforcement plan in relation to ritual killing of animals. **DFO Salazar** responded that all types of calls will be responded to by Animal Control Officers; if egregious they will call LAPD and also the Animal Cruelty Task Force. **GM Barnette** added that animal cruelty calls are the top priority. **Commissioner Brent** stated that it is difficult to know when it is neglect or a need for education; asked if ACE citations will be issued or whether action will be taken immediately. **DFO Salazar** responded that it depends on the situation. **Commissioner Gross** asked if there will be more staff available to respond during heightened times of potential animal cruelty. **DFO Salazar** responded that staff will always be available to respond and will get there as quickly as possible.

Public Comment

David Rutan: Discussed legal issues involving Kapparot; stated that enforcement of laws when involving religion is not as strong; mentioned Employment Division, Department of Human Resources of City of Oregon vs. Smith; stated that in Kapparot the law is applicable to how chickens are kept, how they are waived overhead and throats slit, and their slow death when disposed of in garbage bags. **David Simon:** Represents pro bono several people who have filed a lawsuit against Kapparot practitioners, alleging the violation of 11 state or local laws; discussed penal code 597B and 597T; should pictures of chickens kept in close confinement and raw eggs on streets. **Nazila Mahgerefteh:** Circulating petition against noise, smell and sight of the ceremony conducted in back alleys of temples in high temperature – animals are dehydrated; children are exposed to defecation and raw eggs on public streets. **Alice Lewis:** Appalled by conditions, stated unused chickens, after no food, shelter or water, get shipped back to Inland Empire; called LAAS including Animal Cruelty Task Force and was told actions were protected by 1st Amendment; important to educate staff on what is legal and what needs to be enforced. **Lola Kay:** Requested coordination between the department and the Bureau of Sanitation, State Food and Agriculture and County Health; LAAS point of contact needed to report violations – someone who will respond right away; pulling back wings of chickens is cruelty. **Dr. Sherstin Rosenberg:** Veterinarian and manages Happy Hen Chicken Rescue; stated chickens are taken from egg industry and are spent hens so suffer from severe osteoporosis; in Kapparot wings are pulled back and waved over head and constitutes extreme animal cruelty; rescued several hens from Kapparot ritual that were not used – chickens show terror. **Nicolas Tomas:** Stated that chickens experience trauma; they were not being fed; chicken body parts on ground and buckets of blood dumped in sewers; need enforcement. **Niloo Khodadadeh:** Commended the Commission for being on the right side of history; discussed psychological damage to children in experiencing animal cruelty; asked the enforcement of a ban; mentioned that a Rabbi on radio recommended use of coins. **Kara Kapanakova:** Discussed 2013 Kapparot protest – Kapparot supporters were cutting pieces of live chickens and throwing them at protesters, bagging up chickens still alive in plastic bags; it's about money and not ritual; said children don't want to participate. **Ladan Sheybani:** Witnessed two ceremonies and said they are barbaric and haunting; asked how people would react if it was dogs or cats. **Sara Jane Hardt:** Stated that when they call police they are the ones asked to stop or be arrested; requested a specific person to call. **Jonathan Klein:** Thanked Commission for including item on the agenda; stated the ritual has a track record of cruelty; religious obligation to not hurt animal; need proactive warnings; Pico/Robertson neighborhood – no visible sign because of activists or lawsuits, not agencies; requested advisory be sent to Kapparot

commercial people named in lawsuit; need to monitor the week prior and coordinate with other agencies. **Lisa Karlan:** Discussed experience with Kapparot Rabbi; showed pictures of chickens in battery cages with wounds; told chickens would be used for food, but chickens are sick; described chickens after slaughtered and stated it's not kosher. **Andrew Brown:** Stated he had never heard of the Kapparot ceremony; assured that people would be outraged about practice and thanked speakers.

Commissioner Gross acknowledged attendees; stated that on the Jewish Orthodox organization Chabad's website it says that it is of utmost importance that chickens be treated humanely and not cause them pain or discomfort; Jewish laws forbids causing unnecessary pain to any of God's creations; the Chief Rabbi of Israel stated and warned that the failure to treat animals decently by those who perform Kapparot are violating religious law; 1st Amendment protects the ritual, but the treatment and conditions of chickens is not condoned or protected; best way to honor the High Holy Days is to join activists and get the word out and getting involved in issue; the Day of Atonement should be about embracing and caring – a protective relationship with animals, not destroying them; urged department to respond quickly and work closely with people in attendance to monitor actions not protected by the 1st Amendment; proposed agenda item weeks following Yom Kippur to get a report back and assess response and ensure it doesn't happen in the future. **Commissioner Brent** thanked and supported Commissioner Gross' comments; would like report back to see how effective we were and how we can improve. **Commissioner Wolfson** acknowledged Jewish community for speaking out against own ranks; supported Commissioner Gross' recommendations; expressed need for more attention on the general welfare of domesticated animals in this country; shared he is a vegan as a result – a lot of egg bearing hens were already not being treated well. **Commissioner Zaft** thanked everyone who gave a voice to the voiceless; stated that there are no group of animals more in need of a voice than those part of the industrial agricultural complex; roots of tradition involved chickens kept and raised by ancestors in much different conditions, but chickens today live truly tortured lives; thanked speakers for baring witness during High Holy Days; urged department to have staff in place to respond to calls timely and have Officers prepared on how to handle the situation; these are not correctable violations; coordination with other agencies has been difficult – some issues raised are not within our jurisdiction.

- D. Board Report Requesting Authority to Negotiate and Enter into Agreements with the Amanda Foundation and the Lucy Pet Foundation for Mobile Van Spay / Neuter Services

Senior MAIL John Forland provided an overview of the staff report.

Commissioner Zaft thanked staff for considering both respondents to get more spay and neuter services in the community. **Commissioner Brent** glad there were two respondents. **Commissioner Gross** asked Lucy Pet Foundation representative about locations for mobile services and a publicity plan. **Joey Herrick** from the Lucy Pet Foundation responded that there is a publicity plan in the works; two years old and honored to be considered; added that expect to do more than 25,000 surgeries in next five years – work on legislation, education, grooming and training; started Natural Balance pet food out of his car; company grew because marketed differently; will use contacts in industry to make things happen. **Commissioner Gross** expressed concern that the money is not spent down. **Mr. Herrick** responded that we need to work together to make that happen; working with D.J. to get word out and other Spanish language

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media contacts. **Dr. Halligan** stated that they will target Sylmar and Pacoima. **Commissioner Gross** asked if they will have people from community working on the contract. **Dr. Halligan** responded affirmatively. **Commissioner Gross** requested the schedule to know where they are and help get the word out. **Dr.** discussed importance of working with known people in the community. **GM Barnette** clarified that Juan Carlos works on Make Your Horse Count and gets people out. **Mr. Herrick** added that getting contract is not about making money, it's about giving back to the animals. **Commissioner Brent** stated that some don't qualify for contract for following reasons and asked how many tables Lucy Pet Foundation will have (**Dr. Halligan** responded 2), the maximum weight (**Dr. Halligan** responded 120 lbs), whether there is recovery space (**Dr. Halligan** responded they can have a second van for recovery), whether they handle brachycephaly (**Dr. Halligan** responded yes if safe and healthy to do), whether there are any age restrictions (**Dr. Halligan** responded 7 yrs and younger, but vet examines and makes decision). **Commissioner Zaft** thanked Lucy Pet Foundation for submitting bid and answering questions; said they should think strategically and not compete for the same space with the Amanda Foundation.

Public Comment

Marc Peralta: Supported agreements with both agencies and stated importance of reducing intake.

Mr. Herrick added the importance of spay/neuter legislation – gave example of Riverside and San Bernardino when animals are dumped in the desert; need sensible enforcement. **Commissioner Zaft** responded that ACE program addresses that issue.

Commissioner Gross moved to approve and grant the department authority to enter into and negotiate agreements with both organizations. **Commissioner Brent** seconded and the motion passed 4 - 0.

Commissioner Zaft asked ACA Rittenberg to make sure contract process moves quickly to get money out for spay and neuter.

- E. Board Report re Proposal to Allow the Amanda Foundation and Home Dogs L.A. to do a Combined Spay/Neuter and Wellness Clinic Day at the North Central Animal Shelter on October 11, 2015

GM Barnette said idea originated from Teri Austin. **Sandra** with Home Dog L.A. is the Bilingual Intervention Coordinator at North Central shelter; serve over 50 families per month; want to reach families that don't qualify for a voucher – a lot of people can't provide the paperwork to prove they are low-income and they slip through the cracks, so a lot of animals are not getting spayed or neutered; they don't meet the Pets4Life zip code criteria; the preventive care will also include a wellness clinic – they see a lot of people relinquish animals because they don't have the money for basic care; low income pet owners need access to resources; education is key to prevent overpopulation; need for behavior modification; intervention works – motto is 1st Home Forever Home.

Commissioner Gross asked what the top three issues are in intervention program. **Sandra** responded that medical care came in first, redemption fees second, 3rd was spay / neuter costs, and not enough Spanish speakers to assist in the process and walk people through it is 4th. **Commissioner Wolfson** stated he loves serving as a volunteer at North Central and is very supportive of this proposal. **Commissioner Brent** asked

about outreach because, for sterilization, it needs to be scheduled in advance. **Sandra** responded they are establishing a relationship by word of mouth, number is provided to public, and will be doing door-to-door flyering. **GM Barnette** suggested using Councilmember O'Farrel's office to help distribute flyers.

Public Comment

Vince Wong: Found animals can provide data on all the work that they do; suggested redemption fees be agendized. **Andrew Brown:** Stated that if a dog has been licensed before, the owner has to pay back licenses; if the dog has never been licensed, they only pay \$20; need fix-it tickets.

Commissioner Wolfson moved to allow the Amanda Foundation and Home Dogs L.A. to do a combined spay/neuter and wellness clinic at the North Central. **Commissioner Brent** seconded and the motion passed 4 - 0.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wolfson made a motion to adjourn the meeting in honor of Marc Peralta's upcoming wedding and **Commissioner Gross** seconded. Motion passed 4 - 0.

Meeting ended at 9:58 p.m.