



BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF LOS ANGELES



MINUTES

TUESDAY, February 23, 2016 at 7:00 PM

WEST VALLEY ANIMAL SHELTER
20655 PLUMMER STREET
CHATSWORTH, CALIFORNIA 91311

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

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

Meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m. Commissioners present were Zaft, Gross and Yañez. Commissioner Wolfson arrived at the beginning of item 2.A. Also present from Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS) Board Secretary Rita Moreno, Assistant General Manager (AGM) Dana Brown and General Manager (GM) Brenda Barnette; and Assistant City Attorney (ACA) Dov Lesel.

Commissioner Zaft opened the meeting and provided an overview of the meeting agenda, and recognized Jonathan Coto from Councilmember Englander's Office.

I. REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ady Gil: Thanked Commissioners for support; provided an update on his application for a kennel and indicated community support. **Andrew Brown:** Requested more spay neuter clinics for adopted animals; contracted clinics should not be able to dictate the size and sex of animals they will take; indicated it takes 5-6 days to get animal fixed; rabbit adopters are turned away because no clinic will take them; rabbits not available for foster program; behavioral notes should not be on front of cards; indicated volunteer shirts are no longer free. **Cathy Serksnas:** Discussed foster program and blue list for cats; asked for status of kitten nursery pilot program; blue list is for animals with medical conditions too severe for shelter vets, but some cats' condition is not too severe. **Gail Raft:** Discussed surrender fees for those who can't afford the fees or are homeless.

2. COMMISSION BUSINESS

- A.** Board Recognition of LAASEE Award Volunteer Recipients (Action Item; Public comment limited to one minute per speaker):
- Beverly Grab Mitchell, North Central
 - Sherry Brewer, East Valley
 - Heidi Okuhara, West Valley
 - Luis Favela, North Central (*tabled until March 8, 2016*)

Commissioner Wolfson and **Commissioner Zaft** gave a summary of the purpose of the LAASEE Award. **Commissioner Wolfson** shared his personal experience with Beverly Grab Mitchell, his nominee, and presented her with the award. **Beverly Mitchell** thanked the Commission and shared her thoughts. **Commissioner Gross** shared his personal experience with and volunteer history of his nominee, Sherry Brewer, and presented her with the award. **Sherry Brewer**

thanked the Commission and recognized other East Valley volunteers. **Commissioner Zaft** discussed the contributions of his nominee, Heidi Okuhara, and presented her with the award. **Heidi Okuhara** thanked the Commission and shared her thoughts.

Public Comment
None

Commissioner Wolfson moved to approve LAASEE Award recipients Beverly Grab Mitchell, Sherry Brewer and Heidi Okuhara; **Commissioner Yañez** seconded and the motion passed 4 – 0.

B. Approval of Minutes for January 26, 2016.

Public Comments
None

Commissioner Gross moved to approve the minutes for January 26, 2015 and **Commissioner Yañez** seconded. The motion passed 4 - 0.

3. ORAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

GM Barnette discussed the following:

- February 18 budget meeting with CAO and Mayor to discuss priorities: \$500,000 for EIR projected to cost \$800,000 (\$300,000 in current budget) to fight injunction; need for promotional ladder for several positions; preliminary blue book online; needs to go to City Council.
- February 16 DFO Salazar met with Fleet Services and California Truck Company to review proposed modifications to two animal collection vehicles purchased last year to correct trucks and get delivery date; visited other departments to see their vehicles to work with Fleet Services on our needs.
- DFO Salazar reviewing concerns of ammunition used to euthanize injured wildlife in the field; hollow point ammunition removed and only round tip ammunition is being used.
- Lt. Transow trained vice detectives at Police Academy on animal cruelty and its direct link with human violence.
- February 2-4 six part-time Canvassers wrote 50 ACE citations for spay neuter requirements.
- February 8-10 Bound Angels University held first class at West L.A.; hands-on animal training of dogs with behavioral issues attended by animal shelter staff (L.A., Long Beach, Ventura, Arizona and Oregon).
- Personnel Department announced delay in hiring of Animal Control Officers; 18 candidates in background processing available for hiring in early March; conditional job offers being made this week; 8 vacancies plus 12 new positions and 12 in inappropriate, which are the ones being filled.
- Staff testifying in court on case involving owner surrender dog in bad shape.
- January 25 Officer Sheldon assisted with cat trapped under hood of car.
- February 5 Officer Collins responded to Echo Park for injured duck with Hook and fishing line attached to beak; inflatable boat used by rescue team.

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- Early February Officer Navarro rescued entangled large Canadian goose and transported to International Bird Rescue.
- Early February Officer Gonzalez responded to call for injured duck and transported to Balona Creek and released.
- February 13 Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian hosted pet awareness event at East Valley, Found Animals and Amanda Foundation hosted vaccinations for dogs, microchipping, licensing, spay and neuter services, and talked about shelter intervention program.
- February 3-7 Somebody to Love discount event: 299 adoptions - 45 cats, 193 dogs and 19 other types of pets; rescues adopted 42 pets.
- Shelter Vets doing specialty work with injured animals
- February 13-14 My Furry Valentine event: 39 cats, 119 dogs and seven other animals found homes.
- February 10 ACO McCarthy submitted humane case to City Attorney involving a neglected Chihuahua from 49th Street; Dr. Ewing provided medical treatment.
- February 15 LAPD arrest for animal cruelty at Harold Way, Officer Perez transported dead dog to shelter for necropsy.
- Meeting with Inner City Law Center's Lori Weiss regarding services for homeless or low-income people's animals.
- Celebrated World Spay Day this morning at City Council; three spay neuter vans parked in front of City Hall on Main Street for people to tour; Gail Anderson from KTLA broadcasted from Lucy Pet Foundation van, Danny Trejo and Spay4LA participated, reception in Councilmember Koretz's office.

Public Comment

Andrew Brown: Stated that Vets are doing sterilizations when other surgeries are needed; suggested that vets conduct all surgeries needed by an animal at same time, or wait.

4. COMMISSIONERS' ORAL REPORTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Commissioner Gross: Assisted with Department info table at February 4 Mass Transit Forum held by Assemblymember Nazarian and Councilmember Krekorian at Valley College; thanked Public Relations Specialist Sara Ebrahimi for the materials and Officer Susan Botta for relieving him; attended February 13 event with Assemblymember Nazarian at East Valley for free spay neuter, Lt. Botta and others processed 128 licenses; noted need for more staff at events – Teri Austin provided canopies to shield public from sun; significant number of hearings where either party does not show up – hearings may be inaccessible to public due to transit and costs – requested discussion at future meeting; AB2760 introduced by Assemblymember Matthis on behalf of California Realtor Association will undermine protections for people with support animals.

Commissioner Yañez: Celebrated World Spay Day; received \$75,000 grant from Doris Day Foundation to provide spay neuter in four cities; received 2 million dollar donation for Pets4Life Los Angeles; received \$7,500 grant from Ahmanson Foundation for new washer and dryer to wash TNR towels and to buy module storage units; next outreach event will held in April in coordination with new Commissioner in unincorporated East L.A. – will provide free spay neuter, free pet food and free vaccines; future agenda item to discuss policy on what Canvassers will offer when

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going door-to-door.

Commissioner Zaft: Has been participating in planning meetings for strategic planning process for department – 15 meetings to be held in each Council District for public input on priorities; requested report and recommendation from staff on how to increase licensing numbers – aware of Chameleon’s new licensing module.

Commissioner Wolfson: Agreed with Commissioner Zaft and stated that he has requested an item to discuss strategies to increase licensing; would like two hearings per shelter per year held in the evening because people have day jobs; would like discussion on cat protocol – when beds are full in shelters; discussion on charge for adoptions and second animal adoption; discussion on policy for accepting major donations from corporations and individuals; request for RFP for kiosks in shelters for pet stores.

Public Comment

Andrew Brown: Stated that policy for licensing fee for unaltered dogs not being followed – spay neuter hearings are being held instead – dog waiting for five months at shelter for hearing; adoption prices for pocket pets are higher than at pet stores. **Gail Raft:** Suggested meetings be held in the community so that people who work can attend; don’t tell people they can’t surrender their animals because they get dumped.

5. Board Reports

- A. Staff Report Requesting Authority to Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding Between the City of Los Angeles and Western University of Health Sciences for a Veterinary Shelter Medicine Program

GM Barnette provided an overview of the staff report and introduced **Zarah Hedge** who will be responsible for setting up the program.

Commissioner Zaft asked about the timing of construction at North Central. **GM Barnette** responded that it has to go out to bid again since the first RFP resulted in bids over budget. **Commissioner Gross** asked how that impacts this MOU. **GM Barnette** responded that if we go out to bid before MOU, it limits the University’s ability to provide input on the project. **Commissioner Zaft** confirmed that the University would not begin the program until construction is completed. **GM Barnette** responded affirmatively. **Commissioner Gross** asked about interaction with Chief Vet Jeremy Prupas. **GM Barnette** responded that both Jeremy and Dr. Steven Feldman have been working with Western students.

Public Comment

Vince Wong: Expressed support of MOU by Found Animals.

GM Barnette added that students at Western University have been graduating with top scores in the State.

Commissioner Yañez moved to approve the request for authority to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Los Angeles and Western University of Health Sciences for a Veterinary Shelter Medicine Program. **Commissioner Wolfson** seconded and the motion passed 4 - 0.

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B. Staff Report Requesting Authority to Enter into a Sole Source Contract with Francisca Baxa for Strategic Planning Services

AGM Brown provided an overview of the staff report.

Commissioner Zaft clarified that initial meetings were being conducted with staff. **GM Barnette** added that people will be able to give input at meetings, provide written input and complete surveys. **Commissioner Zaft** asked how the meetings were going to be publicized. **GM Barnette** stated that Sara is working with Council Offices to publicize them in throughout the districts, the schedule will be posted on the website, and a press release will go out. **Commissioner Wolfson** asked if the selection had gone through a competitive process. **GM Barnette** responded that the sole source contracted does not require it and that Ms Baxa was selected due to her work with the Department and Commission retreat. **Commissioner Wolfson** stated that Ms Baxa does not have background in animal services; suggested using Deloitte or Anderson that may provide service for free, or other partners who have experience and can bring best practices to process. **GM Barnette** responded that it is intended to allow the community to take ownership of their shelters. **Commissioner Gross** added that big companies don't have experience with the community and Ms Baxa has a track record in that; Commissioners and department have role to provide animal services background. **Commissioner Wolfson** suggested that what is being proposed is not a strategic plan, but an outreach plan. **GM Barnette** clarified that all responses will go to Ms Baxa and she will come back to department with results to be used to craft strategic plan. **Commissioner Wolfson** asked who will write the strategic plan. **Commissioner Zaft** clarified that it provides information that we may not be focused on. **GM Barnette** added that the department will put it into a strategic plan to present to the Commissioners for approval. **Commissioner Wolfson** stated that Ms Baxa is not providing strategic planning services, rather collecting information from the community; suggested calling it a community outreach plan. **Commissioner Gross** responded that it is part of the process for a strategic plan.

Public Comment
None

Commissioner Gross moved to approve the request for authority to enter into a sole source contract with Francisca Baxa for strategic planning services. **Commissioner Yañez** seconded and the motion passed 4 - 0.

C. Staff Report re Proposal for Pilot to Keep One Shelter Open One Evening Per Week

AGM Brown discussed her meeting with the Joint Labor Management Committee regarding this issue. Representatives for RVTs, ACTs, Clerks and ACOs were in attendance. Those present were not generally in support; they discussed prior efforts that were not successful – the public did not benefit, but rescue groups did; they noted that there is already 24/7 coverage in case of emergencies. The strongest opposition was related to staffing as there is not enough staff; most vocal were RVTs and Clerical; ACOs brought up safety concerns with limited lighting after dark – recommended pilot program during summer months. Recruitment and

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retention is already a problem with the Clerical staff who prefer a more traditional Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. assignment. When asked what would entice participation, they responded paid overtime, increased salaries.

Commissioner Zaft indicated that the pilot would involve shifting the hours not adding additional hours. **AGM Brown** responded that they were not interested in a proposal that did not involve overtime. **GM Barnette** added that it involves a change in working conditions which requires the Department to meet and confer with the Union. **AGM Brown** stated that the pilot will cost the Department. **Commissioner Wolfson** stated that the majority of country is moving toward an evening schedule to allow people to find pets after work and volunteers to come during evening hours; having one shelter open one evening per week offers some benefits; suggested picking a shelter with adequate lighting and **GM Barnette** added the most adequate location would also need to be picked; discussed need to publicize project and noted that it may not have been publicized in the past; need volunteers willing to help. **GM Barnette** stated that as a pilot only one shelter should be used. **Commissioner Gross** suggested selecting a shelter where the community has most need to after hour access; asked if there is money to provide overtime and, if so, is that the opening to get buy-in from Unions. **AGM Brown** responded that it depends on how much overtime is needed; unions will want to discuss the location since best location may not match the staff who wants to participate. **GM Barnette** added that the volume at the shelter makes a difference – need space to take in animals and adopt animals. **Commissioner Gross** stated that we need a cooperative effort with the Unions. **GM Barnette** added she would like to get Commander Dedeaux's input. **Commissioner Wolfson** stated he appreciated the effort and suggested coming back in a month with potential choice. **GM Barnette** stated that we can figure out the overtime if we look at a couple of shelters. **AGM Brown** added that there are other creative options such as a 3/12 or 4/10 schedule. **Commissioner Wolfson** stated that people tend to adopt more at shelter closing time. **Commissioner Yañez** asked whether a schedule shift can only be done in 2019 negotiations. **AGM Brown** responded that only the issue of additional pay would need to be discussed during contract negotiations. **Commissioner Yañez** clarified that a formal shift can be done now and **AGM Brown** responded affirmatively. **GM Barnette** added that we need to figure out where the money for overtime comes from because the shelter will still need to open during regular business hours. **Commissioner Yañez** asked can the hours be shifted but limit what can happen after hours. **AGM Brown** responded that it needs to benefit them not just make it more inconvenient. **GM Barnette** added that we work seven days a week and that is why there is high attrition.

Public Comment

Renee Shamlou: Tarzana Neighborhood Council; she and President support the proposal and indicated that people come in to the shelter 15 minutes before closing, but not enough time to find right fit. **Andrew Brown:** Stated that lighting at all shelters is inadequate to be safe; suggested lighting be improved. **Gail Raft:** Stated that it's an excellent idea; volunteers are the ones who show the animals and do the adoptions. **Cathy Serksnas:** Stated that when she started seven years ago West Valley was open twice per week until 7:00 p.m.; doesn't recall any issues or safety concerns; ACTs and Clerks were on a different schedule – no overtime; stated that public servants are here to serve public – asked what will department do if public asks for shelters to be open twice a week until 7:00 p.m.; expressed

support for AGM Brown's idea of 4/10 schedule. **Sherry Brewer:** Stated she was volunteering when shelter was open two nights a week until 7:00 p.m.; no issues and people came in to see animals; asked where funds from animal auctioning goes – can it be put toward...; stated donations of leashes, collars and beds are received through Amazon wish list – could take place of kiosk.

Commissioner Zaft asked for next steps. **GM Barnette** indicated she would discuss issue with senior staff. **Commissioner Zaft** asked if a report with recommendations would come back to Commissioners. **AGM Brown** responded affirmatively.

D. Woofstat Report Through January 2016

GM Barnette congratulated staff, volunteers and community – overall year-to-date live save rate is 78.2%; goal for year was 75%; cats are up to 66.6% or 16% above last year – credit grant from ASPCA that underwrote adoption fees for cats over four months of age; for the month of January, cats were at 93.4%; dogs at 85.8%; for a total of 87.57% for the month; overall licensing is up 24% from \$64,024 to \$79,484 – attributable to ACE citation program and admin staff being able to catch up; Vets are getting back to goals for spay and neuter; overall euthanasia totals are down 24%; volunteers are up 25% from January 2015 – hours are down, but not sure how they were being calculated - open orientations are occurring; working on stats for ACE citations – 700 done in January, but no comparison information yet since program had not yet started; wildlife calls dropped slightly this month; working with vendors on numbers; biggest shelter struggles in South because higher intake, but animals being transferred to other shelters.

Commissioner Zaft noted that euthanasia numbers may be down because impounds are down – dogs are down 12%, cats 4%; adoptions are holding steady, but Best Friends and New Hope Partner placements are down – overall live release is holding steady; asked about thoughts on decreased intake trend. **GM Barnette** responded that dealing more aggressively with dangerous dogs on street; hopefully spay neuter being done by all clinics and mobile vans is having impact. **Commissioner Zaft** noted strays are down 3,000 for the year. **GM Barnette** added that animals are placed on blue and red list to make them free for rescue partners – doesn't mean that if they stay in the shelter they will not be treated – if a rescue partner wants to take them, we let them go with no adoption fee so that we have fewer animals in shelter and they take animals that are true rescues. **Commissioner Yañez** asked the difference between the ACE citation and citations issued. **GM Barnette** responded that it was a different kind of form – not ACE citation program – they went to County Courthouse, not the City Attorney. **Commissioner Wolfson** noted the increase in fosters. **GM Barnette** responded that staff is working harder to encourage people to foster. **Commissioner Wolfson** noted that allowing fosters on same day as they're available for adoption, and the work of Commissioner Yañez with spay neuter program have led to decrease in impounds. **Commissioner Yañez** added that it takes a few years to see the impact of the work. **Commissioner Zaft** asked about plans to expand foster program for kitten season. **GM Barnette** responded that leaning on Best Friends who will sponsor rescues to do kitten nurseries; department will find space at a shelter if necessary; they are taking in any neonatal kitten, sick or well, through the month of March. **Commissioner Gross** noted that hearings are up. **GM Barnette**

responded that we are doing 10 per week; when they were held in the field they were doing two per week; held over the phone if people cannot attend. **AGM Brown** added that Council Offices helping to accommodate people – they swear them in and we take testimony by phone. **Commissioner Gross** noted that spay neuter is down by LAAS Vets, the vouchers and clinics at shelters. **Commissioner Zaft** responded that redemption of \$30 vouchers is up. **Commissioner Yañez** stated that the voucher numbers for the last report were through the roof. **GM Barnette** stated that a proposal to let people self-identify as low-income will be brought to Commission at next meeting – discussed during budget meeting since funds not being spent and can be lost; includes value increase of voucher, which is in process – going to PAW Committee at next meeting, then goes to City Council. **Commissioner Yañez** asked if that means accepting other forms of identification such as the Consular *matriculas*. **GM Barnette** responded that it means a person simply has to say they are low-income.

Public Comment

Beverly Mitchell: Stated that the numbers are down at North Central because of the intervention program – run by volunteers; stated that dogs are not available for adoption/foster on same day at North Central – up to Supervisor to decide (**GM Barnette** will follow-up with Commander Dedeaux). **Andrew Brown:** Stated that animals are allowed to be fostered right away if not likely to be adopted or shelter is full – agrees with practice; recommended keeping fosters for adoption on website and bulletins. **Sherry Brewer:** Discussed Best Friends’ “No More Homeless Pets” conference – when not enough fosters, idea to keep motorhome at shelter for kittens and volunteers would help in shifts – windows would be opened and people would pay 25 cents to see kittens. **Gail Raft:** Recommended consideration of fee for people who can’t afford to surrender animals.

Commissioner Zaft responded that Commission has discussed proposal to allow for waiving of fees; this issue can be separate item. **GM Barnette** responded that all fees are being reviewed to go to Council. **Commissioner Gross** added that if someone brings in pet and says they found the pet, there are no fees.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wolfson made a motion to adjourn and **Commissioner Yañez** seconded. Motion passed 4 - 0.

Meeting ended at 9:14 p.m.