



BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF LOS ANGELES



MINUTES

TUESDAY, March 8, 2016 at 10:00 AM

LOS ANGELES CITY HALL, ROOM 1060
200 NORTH SPRING STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

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 10:07 p.m. Commissioners present were Zaft, Gross and Yañez. Commissioner Wolfson arrived at 11:14 a.m. Also present from Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS) Board Secretary Rita Moreno and Assistant General Manager (AGM) Dana Brown; and Assistant City Attorney (ACA) Dov Lesel.

Commissioner Zaft opened the meeting and provided an overview of the meeting agenda. **Commissioner Gross** discussed the appeal hearing process and conducted the hearings.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS

1. Barking Dog Revocation Case: BR 153069 WL

Respondent: Tamara Parsons Tweedie Pitman

Complaining Witness: Lauren and Barry Smith

West Los Angeles Animal Care and Control: Captain Wendell Bowers

AGM Brown provided an overview of case BR 153069 WL and the basis for the General Manager's determination, and Commissioners asked questions. The Respondent, Tamara Parsons Tweedie Pitman, and her legal Counsel, Michael Rotsten, were in attendance, as were Complaining Witnesses Lauren and Barry Smith. Mr. Rotsten testified that the evidence did not support the General Manager's determination and responded to Commissioner questions. Mr. and Mrs. Smith countered the testimony and responded to questions from the Commissioners. **ACA Lesel** responded to Commissioner questions about procedural issues raised by the appeal. The Commissioners discussed the merits of the appeal and the evidence provided to the Hearing Examiner.

Commissioner Yañez found that there was sufficient evidence to support the General Manager's determination and moved to uphold the General Manager's revocation of the dog licenses for Dodger (A135584), Flossie (A1452842), Jane (A1441883), Pookie (A0471955) and Olive (A1270627); and the revocation of your privilege to own, possess, control or be in charge of any dog for a period of one year. The motion was seconded by **Commissioner Zaft** and was approved by a vote of 3 - 0.

2. Dangerous Animal Case: DA 152110 EV (rescheduled for 4/12/16)

Respondent: Anabel Garcia and Roxanna Flores

Complaining Witness: Gloria Quijas and Maria Barba

East Valley Animal Care and Control: Captain Karen Knipscheer-Cox

II. REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

Phyllis Daugherty: Discussed the current department lieutenant vacancies and stated that staff currently in those positions, on an emergency basis, is from the SMART Team and do not have the experience. **Leyla Hadzimuratovic:** Bunny World Foundation; stated that bunny at North Central since 2014 has lesions and there is blood on the cage; bunnies are not getting any exercise and have developed skin conditions; asked for bunny room; bunnies are being put on emergency medical alert list. **Jeff Fleiss:** Requested that meeting agendas be sent through the City's automated notification service; stated that there are still no street signs for the South L.A. shelter. **Marla Tauscher:** Stated that Ed White's dog, Cooper, is not to be killed and that he has 90 days to file a Writ; stated that administrative hearings violate the 14th Amendment. **Shasa Abelson:** New Hope Partner; discussed wanting to pull a family of 3-week olds (A1611065) through, Love Leo Rescue, but was told they would be available 3/29; puppies were sent to a foster and the mother was left behind.

2. COMMISSION BUSINESS

- A. Board Recognition of LAASEE Award Volunteer Recipients (Action Item; Public comment limited to one minute per speaker)
- a. Luis Favela, North Central (*tabled to future meeting*)

Public Comment
None

- B. Approval of Minutes for February 23, 2016.

Public Comments
None

Commissioner Gross moved to approve the minutes for February 23, 2016 and **Commissioner Yañez** seconded. The motion passed 3 - 0.

- C. Approval of Minutes for March 1, 2016.

Public Comments

Lelya Hadzimuratovic: Requested that bunnies be put on the agenda.

Commissioner Zaft moved to table the minutes for March 1, 2016 to allow more time for review, and **Commissioner Yañez** seconded. The motion passed 3 - 0.

3. ORAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

AGM Brown discussed the following:

- Events
 - My Furry Valentine was a success; 165 pets were adopted citywide (39 cats, 119 dogs and 7 other); adopters were given \$25 off the price.
 - Robert Frost Middle School Career Day for 500 students; learned about careers in animal welfare.

- Open volunteer orientations for March are full; one orientation will be held at each shelter and they will be at different times of the day.
- SMART documentary was shown on February 26 at the Animal Film Festival in Grass Valley; film submitted for best feature and won.
- February 23 was World Spay Day; mobile spay neuter vans were parked at City Hall and performed surgeries; Gayle Anderson from KTLA was there; 10 animals were adopted.
- Field services provided staff to Porter Ranch residents who were relocating as a result of the evacuation; two staff answered questions at the Chatsworth Recreation Center public counter.
- West L.A. Animal Shelter had Girl Scout troop there to work toward their pet badges.
- Strategic planning meetings with stakeholders are underway; employee meetings are nearly completed; the first community meeting is scheduled to take place in Council District 9 on March 16, at the CD9 Community Center.
- Personnel:
 - Sr. ACO exam is completed; the civil service process will be used to fill five vacancies currently filled with emergency appointments.
 - ACOs applicant background packages were reviewed and eight candidates proceeded to next phase – psych and medical review.
- Field Operations:
 - February 18 Officer Gonzalez responded to call at Vet office re dog with embedded pet collar, but owner did not want to get treatment for animal; Officer was able to talk owner into getting treatment for animal.
 - West Valley Officer Julian responded to call of injured egret now being housed at the shelter until California Wildlife picks it up to rehab and release it.
 - February 20 SMART Team responded to report of hybrid wolf; animal impounded and evaluated by medical staff at West L.A.; Officer Perea kept tense neighborhood calm.
 - LAFD called for LAAS assistance with I-5 car accident involving an overturned van with 15 animals; both drivers taken to hospital; animals transported to North Central and examined by medical staff; all doing well.

Public Comment

Lelya Hadzimuratovic: Bunny World Foundation; noted that there are no bunny events; April 2014 and 2015 rabbit adoption fees were raised to cover microchipping and rabbit sterilization was included in the free and discounted spay neuter programs; botched surgeries occurring – rabbits found with ovaries and parts of the uterus. (**AGM Brown** reported that increase in spay neuter voucher program is going to PAW Committee on Wednesday next week and to the City Council the week after; **Commissioner Zaft** encouraged public to support the recommendation). **Phyllis Daugherty:** Commented on the case of the dog with the embedded collar and that it is a violation of the worst animal cruelty law; owner should have been arrested and charges should have been brought against the owner; friend payed to have animals involved in accident released to owner; there are provisions in LAMC 53.11(o) and (p), to waive fees and laws don't have to be changed; LAFD rounded up animals and gave first aid.

4. COMMISSIONERS' ORAL REPORTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Commissioner Gross: Discussed lack of South L.A. shelter signage and requested issue be addressed.

Commissioner Yañez: Presented at Animal Care Conference on Pets 4 Life; next outreach event on Saturday, April 2 at the Eastmont Community Center in unincorporated East L.A.

Commissioner Zaft: Shared schedule for stakeholder meetings on the department's strategic plan: March 16 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., at Community Center in CD9, 4301 S. Central Avenue between MLK and Vernon; there will be 15 community meetings and written input can be provided; commended ACOs, Vets and ACTs on their great work; acknowledged SMART documentary which will be shown later this month in the L.A. area; made requests for staff report on the status of the situation of rabbits at North Central, and ensure approved cages have been purchased for all shelters; asked for report on whether there is equipment for new ACOs.

Commissioner Wolfson: Shared that agenda items requested are published on face book page: Commissioner Wolfson; suggested holding two meetings at each shelter per year to hold appeal hearings; would like staff report on whether there are uniform standards for the housing of rabbits at all shelters; would like to discuss strategies to increase the licensing of animals.

Public Comment

Leyla Hadzimuratovic: Thanked Commissioner Zaft for being responsive; stated that numbers on bunnies euthanized in the last six months inconsistent: GM states only two, but rabbits were euthanized on 1/02, 12/14, 11/09, 10/10, 9/15 and 10/10.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Discussion Regarding Proposal by WAG to Offer Free Walks and Gift Bags to People Adopting from Los Angeles Animal Services

Commissioner Wolfson provided background on the proposal; wife approached Wags! about providing free dog walks to people who adopt from shelters, and Wags! offered to provide five free walks for anyone adopting a dog, and one free walk to anyone who has adopted a dog from a shelter in the past; offer made four months ago, but it hasn't been approved yet; gift bags will be provided with leashes and collapsible dog bowls.

Commissioner Yañez expressed support for proposal noting that public-private partnerships are needed to help struggling city departments, and that it will be a great benefit for adopters. **Commissioner Gross** stated that it is a generous offer and good for dog owners, but expressed concerns about LAAS distributing the donation and providing advertisement for Wag!; asked why Wag! does not publicize and provide the donation themselves to people who adopt from LAAS. **Commissioner Yañez** responded that she is not concerned with providing the advertisement if after paying \$102 dollars to adopt a dog, a person receives free items and will encourage more people to adopt; letter does not require advertising, only that staff hand out the bags. **Commissioner Gross** stated that he would like

to see a policy so that contributors do not expect to see their logo on the building. **Commissioner Wolfson** expressed support for companies who provide free items or benefits to those who adopt from LAAS; considers animal adoption a public service; free services are valued at \$125 plus the cost of items in the bag, Wag! will drop off bags at shelters and staff just has to hand them out; it will encourage other companies to donate items/services; length of time it has taken to decide on the offer discourages private donations. **Commissioner Zaft** responded that the Commission has passed and discussed several items and issues that benefit animals, sometimes things happen fast and sometimes not; has looked for prior instances; has questions for Wag! about how walkers are screened and vetted; concern about being associated if something happens to someone's dog; would like to know if there is evidence this will promote adoptions and whether it is positive that people will adopt if it depends on getting free items; it would be different if Wag! was contributing walks to shelter dogs that are going kennel crazy; asked ACA Lesel whether there has been past promotion of a for-profit corporation. **ACA Lesel** stated that there is a city prohibition on endorsing the products of a for-profit corporation with which the city has a partnership; and the issue of liability should anything happen to the dog or dog owner. **Commissioner Wolfson** confirmed that Wag! is fully licensed, insured and bonded, and willing to include any disclaimer.

Public Comment
None

Commissioner Zaft stated that next steps would be a staff report on the proposal. **Commissioner Wolfson** requested that it be placed on an agenda in a reasonable amount of time.

6. BOARD REPORTS

A. Staff Report re Review of, and Proposed Changes to, Permitting Rules for Use and Display of Exotic Animals

Commissioner Zaft provided background related to an incident involving the issuance of a permit for an elephant at a party in Hollywood Hills; Commission subsequently requested the review of the permitting regulations to determine any changes needed to restrict how wild and exotic animals are displayed in the city. **ACA Lesel** provided a progress report and stated that he is working with Film L.A. and the activist community, and other stakeholders; looking at event-based permits for locations and the factors that need to be considered; looking at prohibition of use of certain animals for display in public places without permits.

Commissioner Zaft asked for timeline to get a recommendation. **ACA Lesel** responded that it depends on the occurrence of several meetings, which DFO Salazar is responsible for setting; possibly the 2nd meeting in April. **Commissioner Zaft** requested the Department ensure that Permitting Officers follow the current regulations closely – examined permits issued for event in question and noticed substantial discrepancies or omissions such as the location of the event not being listed and required signage and notification to neighborhood. **ACA Lesel** responded that the permits currently issued are for the business and issued annually; the new permits that will be proposed will be for a specific event.

Commissioner Zaft added that the permits he had inspected include one for a particular event that listed an address in Monrovia; permit must include location and time when an animal will be used.

Public Comment

Felix Hemstreet: Larchmont Charter School; new ordinance should protect circus animals as well as animals at private parties. **Matt Rossell:** Animal Defenders International; looking at protections for all exotic animals; concerns with just changing permitting process. **Julia Murray:** Would like a broader ban; animals should not be used for entertainment; permit can't prevent animals escaping; permit process incurs costs and potential litigation. **Georgia Umano:** Requested that elephants not be allowed into the city at all - trained with bull hooks; all exotic animal exhibits should be banned.

Commissioner Zaft added that introducing a broader ban is a separate track that can be pursued by Commissioners; current review is to fix current situation in dealing with party houses more quickly.

B. Staff Report on Proposal to Modify Requirements to Increase Accessibility of Spay/Neuter Vouchers to Low-Income Residents

AGM Brown provided an overview of the staff report, and introduced Paul Makowski, Management Analyst II, who will be working on these initiatives.

Commissioner Zaft expressed appreciation for Commissioner Yañez's efforts and the Department's initiative. **Commissioner Gross** stated that the proposal shows the commitment of the Commission and Department to increase spay neuter efforts to reach "No Kill" goal; issue raised by community including Jose Sandoval who has been at the forefront of the issue; providing residency and income for vouchers is a huge challenge for someone who is homeless or jobless; many undocumented residents work in the underground economy that doesn't provide any proof of anything; proposal opens the door to those who want to participate and spay neuter their animals. **Commissioner Yañez** stated that she has been asking for something like this since 2012; proposal in line with philosophy of Pets 4 Life; proposal will reduce the number of pets coming into shelters. **Commissioner Wolfson** stated that proposal is an example of the Commission and department forward on effort regardless of any risks. **Commissioner Zaft** asked if the proposal has been approved by the Controller's Office. **AGM Brown** responded that discussions with the Controller will occur after Board approval, with the assistance of the City Attorney. **Commissioner Zaft** asked if the current practice would be followed, with the affidavit as an alternative to the documentation. **AGM Brown** responded that the proposal is for everyone to use the affidavit and not require any documentation. **Commissioner Zaft** asked about the increased coupon and voucher amounts going through the process. **AGM Brown** responded that the free voucher is \$125 and the discount coupon is \$50 for dogs. **Commissioner Zaft** confirmed that anyone can get the discount coupon and the affidavit is needed for the free voucher. **Commissioner Yañez** added that data collected by Pets 4 Life indicates that 87% of residents have never contacted animal control; would like to discuss having Canvassers carry the vouchers and coupons, at a future meeting. **Commissioner Zaft** asked if the current 60 day expiration date on the vouchers remain. **AGM Brown** responded affirmatively.

Public Comment

Dianne Prado: Housing Rights Attorney; supports proposal; stated that most of her clients are low income families and the undocumented who would benefit from this program. **Sandy Zalagens:** Downtown Dog Rescue; expressed support; people served by organization for last 10 years will benefit from program. **Sandy Sagastume:** Spay4LA; shared that experience with people who can't produce required documentation but need the service. **Noil Jackson:** SNPLA; deals with this every day – supports recommendation; asked about the immediacy of signing affidavit. **Jose Sandoval:** Expressed community support for proposal.

Commissioner Yañez moved to approve modifying the requirements to increase accessibility of spay/neuter vouchers to low-income residents. **Commissioner Gross** seconded and the motion passed 4 - 0.

C. Staff Report and Recommendation to Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Inner City Law Center and Downtown Dogs to Provide Pet-Related Services to Homeless Persons

AGM Brown provided an overview of the staff report. **Dianne Prado**, Inner-City Law Center, discussed importance of being in the Skid Row community and being able to provide more services; stated that about 30% of clients, who are low-income families, have companion animals and support animals. **Sandy Zalagenz**, Downtown Dog Rescue, discussed the inclusion of office at Inner-City Law Center and how it will help transit dependent clients.

Commissioner Wolfson stated he is proud to serve the city and proposal to help those most defenseless, starting with animals and bridging to low-income people; had opportunity to hear presentation by Dianne on connection between low-income and the safety and care of animals. **Commissioner Gross** expressed appreciation for two community-based organizations partnering with the department to provide services to homeless pet owners; stated that Downtown Dog Rescue has been working with homeless pet owners for 20 years and Inner-City Law Center has been the only provider of legal services on Skid Row and combating slum housing and developing strategies to address homeless issues; provides quality legal representation for low-income people, working poor, immigrants, people living with AIDS and HIV, the disabled, veterans and people who have nowhere to turn; appreciates willingness to participate in partnership when approached to provide space for Downtown Dog. **Commissioner Yañez** shared mother's advice that one can "judge the problem or do something about it;" people we serve (undocumented, homeless, mentally ill, poor) are often judged by society – proud of department and partnering organizations, Downtown Dog Rescue and Inner-City Law Center. **Commissioner Zaft** echoed sentiments; confirmed that Downtown Dog Rescue and Inner-City Law Center is providing counseling and outreach services, LAAS will provide free spay neuter services - asked how services will be provided, who will be providing them and where. **AGM Brown** responded that the information will be provided at a future meeting. **Commissioner Zaft** stated that he understands the funding will come from the ASF; asked if it would be done through LAAS Vets or whether we would be contracting out; confirmed that additional supplies needed to be funded by AWTF will come back to Board for a vote. **AGM Brown** responded the department is putting together a budget package for the Homelessness and Poverty Committee; any funding gaps will come to the

Commission. **Commissioner Zaft** asked about the MOU. **ACA Lesel** responded that it will come to the Commission and will include all the information being requested. **Lisa Dulyea** added that the MOU will state that the Vets partnering with Downtown Dog Rescue will be used. **Commissioner Zaft** asked whether the MOU has to go to PAW Committee and City Council; stated there may be a timing discrepancy. **ACA Lesel** responded that the budget and other financial pieces will determine whether the MOU has to go to PAW Committee and City Council. **AGM Brown** added that the affidavit and office space are both on the Homelessness strategic plan and moving on an expedited basis.

Public Comment

Jeff Fleiss: Expressed support for program. **Sandy Sagastume:** Stated that contract can be amended to provide spay and neuter services, and not have to wait for approval process.

Commissioner Yañez moved to enter into a memorandum of understanding with Inner City Law Center and Downtown Dogs to provide pet-related services to homeless persons **Commissioner Wolfson** seconded; the motion passed 4 – 0.

D. Staff Report and Recommendation re California Assembly Bill 1825 (Gordon-Maienschein) Concerning Canine Victims of Animal Fighting Crimes

AGM Brown provided an overview of the staff report.

Commissioner Zaft thanked Mark Peralta for bringing issue forward and discussed the intent of the bill. **Commissioner Wolfson** stated that he had the opportunity to visit with a dog previously involved in animal fights and impressed by his sweet demeanor.

Public Comment

Phyllis Daugherty: Stated that there are 13 bills on animals, not surprised that the one from Best Friends is being discussed; dog behavior depends on blood lines – bred to fight; read from Best Friend’s communications indicating dogs have been killed by former fight dogs; dogs successful in dog fights are dangerous. **Vince Wong:** Stated that not every dog in dog fighting is dangerous or vicious; label makes it difficult to adopt them out or rescued to be treated. **Sheila Kouhkan:** Best Friends; stated that it is important to change the perception of pit bull; suggested seeing “The Champions.”

Commissioner Wolfson moved to recommend support for California Assembly Bill 1825 (Gordon-Maienschein) concerning canine victims of animal fighting crimes. **Commissioner Gross** seconded and the motion passed 4 - 0.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

Meeting ended at 12:38 p.m.