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EDWARD A. BOKS  
General Manager

June 12, 2007

Los Angeles City Council  
Public Safety Committee  
C/O City Clerk  
Los Angeles City Hall  
200 North Spring Street, Room 360  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Attention: John White

Dear Committee Members,

At its meeting of June 11, 2007, the Board of Animal Service Commissioners (Commission) voted to approve a motion to request the City Council to direct the City Attorney to prepare an Ordinance amending the Los Angeles Municipal Code to mandate the spaying and neutering of domestic cats, dogs, and rabbits by the time the pet is four months old, with specific exception for licensed breeders, to be consistent with provisions of Assembly Bill 1634 but adapted to the specific needs of Los Angeles. The Commission further directed the General Manager to work with the City Attorney concurrently on the recommended provisions of such Ordinance, to include necessary modifications to the Breeding and Transfer sections of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, and to bring recommended provisions back to the Board for further consideration and referral to Council.

**BACKGROUND:**

Councilmembers Richard Alarcon and Tony Cardenas introduced a motion, seconded by Councilmember Janice Hahn for Councilmember Herb Wesson, Jr., to mandate the spaying and neutering of domestic cats and dogs in the City, with exception for licensed breeders (Council File 07-1212). The motion was an outgrowth of the Council's discussion on April 17, 2007, regarding support for California Assembly Bill (AB) 1634, the California Healthy Pets Act. The motion by Councilmembers Alarcon and Cardenas, however, is predicated on the position that the City has a pet overpopulation crisis, and that we should not wait for pending legislation at the State level to address the City's problems. Tens of thousands of pets are born each year in Los Angeles unwanted and abandoned. Left un-spayed and un-neutered, these animals propagate far beyond the capacity of the local animal care centers, animal

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rescue groups, and the community to accommodate them. Neighborhoods deal with roaming and sometimes dangerous animals while the Department grapples with the pressure to euthanize some animals to make room for more. The financial cost to taxpayers, and the emotional toll suffered by Department employees and the communities who take care of these animals, are extremely high.

In accordance with the Motion, the proposed ordinance should be consistent with provisions of AB 1634 but adapted to the specific needs of Los Angeles, including an expanded program to assist pet owners earning less than 300% of the Federal Poverty Level to spay and neuter their pets.

The California Healthy Pets Act (AB 1634) would require the spaying and neutering of most cats and dogs by the time the pet is four months old. Pet owners who have not spayed or neutered their pet would be cited and given time to spay or neuter their pets before a fine would be assessed. Local animal control agencies would be responsible for enforcing the California Healthy Pets Act. A portion of the fines collected would be used to expand the availability of free or low-cost spay or neuter programs and other outreach efforts.

The California Healthy Pets Act exempts:

- Purebred dogs and cats whose owners obtain a permit
- Dogs who work as guide dogs, service dogs, or signal dogs
- Dogs who are used by law enforcement agencies for law enforcement or rescue activities
- Dogs and cats whose veterinarian determines that due to age, poor health, or illness it is unsafe to spay or neuter them
- Non-resident show dogs and dogs brought into the state for exhibition

The benefits of a local mandate will mirror those of the California Healthy Pets Act, and are numerous. Medical research shows that spayed or neutered cats and dogs live longer and healthier lives. The American Veterinary Medical Association recommends early spaying and neutering because younger animals recover faster and with less pain. In addition, the number of diseased cats and dogs that enter shelters and harm otherwise healthy and adoptable pets would be reduced as overall population falls. Mandatory spaying and neutering will reduce the dangers caused by roaming stray animals, the transmission of rabies, and injuries from dog bites. Unaltered dogs are three times more likely to attack humans and other pets. Reducing the number of unwanted dogs, cats, and rabbits will reduce the costs associated with caring for and euthanizing them.

In order to propel this local mandate, Staff recommends that the Board endorse the Motion and transmit to the Council the Department's request to prepare an Ordinance as described, in accordance with the Charter requirements. The Ordinance should include revisions, deletions, or additions to all sections of LAMC needed to effectuate the mandate of spay neuter with exceptions for licensed breeders, including Section 53.15.2 Breeding and Transfer of Dogs and Cats. Concurrently, the General Manager and staff will be working closely with the City Attorney to draft specific provisions we would recommend to encompass this Ordinance. Those recommendations will take the form of a further report to the Board for

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consideration and for request for approval to transmit to Council as further response to this Motion. To be included in that report or a separate report will be information and recommendations, in response to the Motion, for expanding existing spay/neuter programs to assist pet owners earning less than 300% of the Federal Poverty Level to spay or neuter their pets.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Fiscal impact is unknown at this time. While there may be some short-term impact due to changes in enforcement procedures or assistance for spay/neuter, however there will be overall and long-term reductions in expenses as the number of animals taken in and quantity of animals running loose or biting is diminished.

Sincerely



Edward A. Boks  
General Manager

EB:LB:RP

cc: Dov Lesel, Office of The City Attorney  
Board of Animal Service Commissioners  
File