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Council File: 11-1345  
Council Districts: CD 7  
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Honorable City Council  
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**REPORT BACK ON SERVICES PROVIDED AT NORTHEAST VALLEY ANIMAL SHELTER**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- NOTE AND FILE this report.

**SUMMARY**

With the passage of the November 2000 Proposition F bond issuance, voters approved an ambitious building program for both fire stations and animal shelters. One of the new facilities built was the Northeast Valley animal shelter, located in Council District 7. Due to significant changes in the City's finances, the Northeast Valley shelter, which was planned to be operated by departmental staff, faced the prospect of being shuttered instead.

A solution to this problem was finding a private contractor to provide adoptions and sterilization services. The Office of the City Administrative Officer released a Request For Information in January 2011. As a result of this procurement, Best Friends Animals Society was awarded the contract to run the Northeast Valley shelter. This contract was executed in January 2012.

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## **REPORT BACK ON NORTHEAST VALLEY ANIMAL SHELTER**

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The Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee heard an update on Best Friends' performance at the October 16, 2012 meeting. Questions were raised at the meeting and the Department was directed to report back on those. This report back addresses those questions.

### **QUESTIONS RAISED AT PAW COMMITTEE**

At the October 16, 2012 meeting, then-Councilman Richard Alarcon raised various questions regarding the services provided at the Northeast Valley animal shelter and the savings attributed to having a private organization run that facility.

In a report dated August 2, 2011, the City Administrative Officer stated that contracting out Northeast Valley operations would be cost-neutral to the City and it would gain \$3.3 million in services (C.F. 11-0600-S135). Then-Councilman Alarcon thought this amount was overstated since Best Friends does not provide all services, such as field enforcement, provided at the City's other six shelters.

It is important to note that the cost of Animal Control Officers<sup>1</sup> (ACOs) was never part of the \$3.3 million in services. Of the \$3.3 million in services, \$2.0 million represented 33 kennel and medical employees and five clerical staff<sup>2</sup>.

Councilman Alarcon asked how many ACOs would typically be stationed at a shelter. Two shifts would require nine officers plus five new vehicles (\$60,000 each).

There are six animal shelters citywide, or seven facilities total when taking the Northeast Valley facility into account. With respect to the deployment of 63 authorized Animal Control Officers, the San Fernando Valley is roughly divided in half by the 405 Freeway. And, there are two San Fernando Valley-based shelters: one in Council District 12 (West Valley) and the other in Council District 6 (East Valley).

When animal-related calls are received, the dispatcher will deploy staff based on zip codes. Nineteen zip codes are in the West Valley district; roughly the same number, 23, are assigned to East Valley. Deploying an officer will also be based on priority: a loose, potentially dangerous animal in one zip code will get a higher priority than a request to investigate a barking dog complaint. These business practices are followed to ensure that services are provided equitably across the City, given that not every Council District will have its own shelter.

### **ADDITIONAL SERVICES PROVIDED TO CD 7**

Best Friends Animal Society has a fully staffed adoption center which houses approximately 400 animals. They are open to the public seven days a week, from 12 p.m. – 8 p.m. In addition,

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<sup>1</sup> Average salary: \$53,000

<sup>2</sup> The balance, or \$1.3 million, is related to healthcare/pension costs, expense accounts, and General Services-related expenditures.

## **REPORT BACK ON NORTHEAST VALLEY ANIMAL SHELTER**

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Best Friends provides low-cost, high-volume spay and neuter services with special free or discounted services for CD 7.

The Northeast Valley location provides public assistance and transportation (when necessary) for unwanted or stray pets if initially brought to Best Friends by the public. Best Friends operates in CD 7 at the expense of over \$4 million dollars annually. The center provides jobs for 76 Los Angeles residents, a requirement for the facility to operate properly and ensure its contractual obligations with the City are met.

### **BEST FRIENDS ANIMAL SOCIETY STATISTICS**

At this Mission Hills facility, the capacity for dogs ranges between 162 – 264 dogs with 159 kennels. The capacity for adoptable cats is between 183 - 283 cats with 127 kennels and free roam spaces for cats.

The adoption floor at Northeast Valley is broken out in the following way:

- 118 total outdoor, public kennels with enclosed cubbies. This is the primary adoption area for dogs. Best Friends primarily keeps these as one-dog-per-kennel due to the lack of width and the small cubbies but will pair dogs as approved by manager, lead, or behavior personnel. These kennels are set aside for the following:
  - 49 kennels for “All-American” dogs (pit bulls and pit bull mixes).
  - 45 kennels for “Unique” dogs (all large breed, non-pit bulls, over 30-lb. dogs).
  - 8 kennels for “Wise” dogs (seven years and older).
  - 16 kennels for “Small Body, Big Hearts” (less than 30 lbs.).
  
- There are an additional 44 kennels in two indoor areas. These areas are non-public spaces in the rear of the facility. Best Friends uses iPads and a kiosk in the front with signage alerting the public that it has additional dogs in the back. The strategy behind this is to use these rooms, but to keep the smaller dogs in the back. These are selected for mobile adoptions, “No-Kill LA” pet adoption center pets, “Pup My Ride” transports and for adoptions because smaller animals can be moved much quicker and they are more suitable for these smaller kennels. Best Friends keeps six kennels for large dog/pit bull admissions and five kennels are open for return adoptions, quarantines and holds.

Best Friends “pulls” animals from all six shelters to keep its kennels full. The organization does not pay pull fees for shelter animals it obtains. Pull fees are intended to offset Animal Services’ costs to spay or neuter shelter pets before they are adopted. By contract, the City made Best Friends responsible for spaying and neutering shelter animals. Best Friends covers that cost along with any ancillary medical care that shelter animals coming into its care might need.

## REPORT BACK ON NORTHEAST VALLEY ANIMAL SHELTER

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In 2013, Best Friends achieved the following:

- 3,570 adoptions
- 2,239 transfers of Animal Services animals and 5,510 total animals pulled from six Animal Services shelters.
- 6,183 sterilization surgeries performed (3,074 were shelter animals transferred in from Animal Services and 3,109 were from the public).
- 1,488 total free or discounted spay/neuter surgeries for Council District 7 residents.
- Paid approximately \$1 million to "No-Kill LA" (NKLA)<sup>3</sup> coalition partners annually:
  - \$243,000 to subsidize year-over-year increased adoptions of Animal Services pets to the public.
  - \$500,000 for spay and neuter grants to coalition partners for targeted spay/neuter in underserved areas and designated zip codes in the City.
  - \$220,000 for staffing/operational grants for rescue groups to build higher capacity for lifesaving of Animal Services pets (by rescuing more from Animal Services or performing more spay and neuter surgeries).

Finally, the Jason DeBus Heigl Foundation donated \$50,000 for the "Apollo Project." When combined with \$30,000 provided by the Department, three mobile spay and neuter organizations (Amanda Foundation, Lucy Project, and Taub Veterinary Services) are sterilizing pit bulls and pit bull mixes in Pacoima and Sylmar. To date, 442 dogs have been sterilized and \$38,035 has been spent.

### FISCAL IMPACT

There is no General Fund impact related to the recommendations in this report.

  
**BRENDA F. BARNETTE**  
General Manager

Cc:

Honorable Councilmember Paul Koretz, 5<sup>th</sup> District  
Honorable Councilmember Felipe Fuentes, 7<sup>th</sup> District  
Honorable Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, 13<sup>th</sup> District  
Patricia Whelan, Office of the Mayor  
Mandy Morales, Office of the Mayor

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<sup>3</sup> NKLA is an initiative led by Best Friends Animal Society, bringing together individuals, city shelters and a coalition of animal welfare organizations to end the killing of healthy and treatable pets in city shelters by 2017. The plan is to provide spay/neuter services and increase adoptions. Best Friends is providing grants to 76 (at last count) coalition partners when they get more animals adopted than they did in the past, as well as funding spay/neuter projects for families who can't afford to have their pets fixed.