

ANIMAL ISSUES MOVEMENT

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#7
Councilman
Narciso Johnson

September 1, 2015

Councilmember Paul Koretz, Chair
Councilmember David E. Ryu
Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson
Personnel & Animal Welfare Committee

All Members, Los Angeles City Council
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles CA 90012
Date: 9/2/15
Submitted in PAW Committee
Council File No: 13-1513
Item No.: 7
Adam R. Lid
Deputy

Honorable Members:

**CF 13-1513 OPPOSE: CAT-LIMIT INCREASE PROPOSAL DATED AUGUST 25, 2015
PERSONNEL & ANIMAL WELFARE COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULED SEPTEMBER 2, 2015**

Animal Issues Movement hereby submits its opposition to the above proposal by Los Angeles Animal Services General Manager Brenda Barnette in an August 25, 2015, letter which fails to provide any factual data as to how this increase in cats would decrease cat overpopulation in the city of Los Angeles and how it would be enforced. If the City of Los Angeles was already “vigorously” or even minimally enforcing the strict spay/neuter law—as Ms. Barnette asserts—we would NOT have increasing cat overpopulation.

Even if LAAS were enforcing the spay/neuter ordinance, allowing this increase would not make sense without including (1) microchipping – for owner identification; (2) licensing – to assure valid rabies shots and spay/neuter; and (3) mandating that ALL owned cats in the city be kept indoors for their own and public health and safety.

It stands to reason that, if there is a current three-cat limit (which may be owned or “fosters”) plus an existing spay/neuter ordinance and the Department recommends keeping cats indoors, yet cat overpopulation is increasing, then obviously owners are NOT spaying and neutering NOR keeping cats indoors. Thus, the number of owned pets proposed should be DECREASED—not increased. Wouldn’t allowing everyone in the city to have five (5) cats, as proposed, just increase this problem geometrically?

It is difficult to determine by sight whether a cat is altered, and LAAS does not pick up cats to make that determination. How does Ms. Barnette propose to enforce a 5-cat limit and its provisions, given the failure under the current limit?

Contrary to Ms. Barnette statement, LAAS does not “vigorously” enforce cat sterilization. If this were true, the problem would have diminished greatly within her five-year tenure. In fact, L.A. Animal Services does not pick up cats nor do house checks on their sterility unless there is a complaint.

LAAS has less than 50 officers serving the entire city (469 square miles) 24-hours a day. (Even with increased officers, chasing outdoor cats to see if they are altered is not a priority.) There are hundreds of calls for serious humane investigations that go unanswered for prolonged periods.

Barnette’s letter states that the five cats MUST be kept indoors. This is impossible to enforce, unless the City ALSO requires that ALL owned cats in the city be kept indoors. It is impossible to determine by sight whether a particular cat which is outdoors belongs to a five-cat-limit family; and, without a microchip and license, the owner cannot be positively identified even if the cat is captured.

This proposal is merely an end-run to create quasi-animal shelters for “foster” animals all over the city—and it is not in the best interest of the animals who may be taken in by someone who—albeit well meaning—cannot afford the expense of food and other necessities and the very high cost of veterinary care for this many animals, nor the public to whom living next door to five cats (which may escape or be left outdoors) can become a problem.

The taxpayers of this city are paying a huge amount of money for L.A. Animal Services and deserve solutions—not just having unwanted and homeless animals placed irresponsibly in homes to becoming either a victim of improper care or a

further problem to the community. (If the city passes this increase, it cannot then discriminate against anyone who decides to obtain five cats, nor can neighbors demand that the number be reduced.)

LAAS received a total 2015-16 budget of \$43,950,107 and Ms. Barnette earns an annual salary of \$220,000, plus benefits. The total CAO's Animal Services Budget is listed as \$23,055,166, but LAAS also receives \$20,894,941 for "Related and Indirect Costs." It is time for GM Barnette to take some serious steps to address the multiple causes of cats being treated as disposable and not just triage or add to a growing problem.

The County of Los Angeles requires cat licensing. Their website states: "Cats are also required to be vaccinated for rabies at four months of age and licensed." http://animalcare.lacounty.gov/wps/portal/acc/laws/pet_licenses/

The current allowance of cats in L.A.--three (3) per household--is at or above the allowance for most local cities. San Diego and Santa Monica are two of the most affluent cities in Southern California and are not a valid comparison to Los Angeles. Additionally, it is not true that there is no hoarding. Santa Monica PD arrested actor Andrew Bryniarski and his girlfriend in August 2012 for animal cruelty in hoarding 25 Pomeranians. Santa Monica Animal Control is part of the Police Department and enforces nuisance laws quickly to preserve quality of life and property values. San Diego has investigated/prosecuted hoarders and released photos of animal hoarding cases to NBC that are very disturbing: <http://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/Animal-Hoarding-Cases-97979754.html>

Ms. Barnette assures the City Council that increasing the number of cats will not result in hoarding and uses a boiler-plate definition of "hoarder" at the bottom of her letter without citing the source. She quotes, "People who hoard animals are more precisely described as having a 'hoarding disorder.' This is a pattern of behavior that is characterized by the excessive acquisition of and inability or unwillingness to discard large quantities of objects or live animals."

Her statement casts an interesting light on comments by Councilman Paul Koretz, who has made continual efforts to massively increase allowed numbers of animals since his election, including five dogs and five cats, plus unlimited puppies and kittens per property; unlimited adult animals in "rescue" pet shops in C-2 zones; and allowing 20 cats in a former version of this report (CF-13-1513.) He has been constrained by very vocal opposition from homeowners' associations and neighborhood groups, as well as Superior Court Judge Joanne O'Donnell.

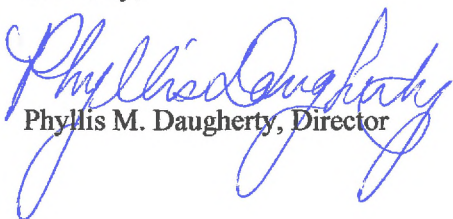
Here's what Mary Plummer of KPCC reported on August 11, 2013, after interviewing Councilman Koretz:

"Koretz owns two cats, which his family rescued. As a child, Koretz at one point owned 19 cats, which his parents gave to a shelter. He believes the animals were likely euthanized, and says some of the motivation from his current work comes from that memory."

<http://www.scpr.org/news/2013/08/11/38642/coalition-opens-new-animal-shelter-aims-to-create/>

We urge you to NOT APPROVE increasing the number of cats that can be owned in Los Angeles without FIRST imposing requirements for (1) microchipping - to guarantee identification of owner; (2) licensing - to assure valid rabies shots and spay/neuter; and (3) mandating that ALL owned cats in the city be kept indoors for animal and public health and safety.

Sincerely,


Phyllis M. Daugherty, Director