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April 22, 2014

Honorable Paul Krekorian, Chair
Budget and Finance Committee
c/o Erika Pulst, Office of the City Clerk
200 North Spring Street
Room 360, City Hall
Los Angeles, California 90012

ANIMAL SERVICES COMMENTS RELATIVE TO THE PROPOSED 2014-15 BUDGET

We are in receipt of the April 3, 2014 letter from Councilmember Paul Krekorian, Chair of the Budget and Finance Committee. This letter is the Department's response to his request for comments related to the proposed budget.

We appreciate the efforts of the Mayor's Office and the Office of the City Administrative Officer in developing this budget. We continue to respect the City's long-term commitment to balance its budget as demonstrated by our support from the beginning of the recession to today. We have absorbed multiple, unplanned and sometimes large budget reductions. We found a partner willing to invest millions to operate a shelter for years, and found other partners who have made commitments to help the City achieve the "No-Kill" goal.

However, the Department does have serious concerns with the proposed budget. These extremely critical items are listed below:

- 1. Proposed 2014-15 funding levels for animal food and medicine – and reduction in clerical staff -- will lead to a closed animal shelter.**

Insufficient Animal Food and Medical Expense Accounts

The proposed amounts for Medical Supplies and Animal Food are insufficient to meet the demands of a six-shelter system.

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ANIMAL SERVICES RESPONSE TO PROPOSED 2014-15 BUDGET

To address this, in our proposed budget, the Department submitted Service Enhancement Requests to increase medical and animal food expense accounts to properly care for shelter animals. The Medical Supplies expense account has remained static at \$304,141 for at least six years, while animal medical costs – like human medical care – have increased. In-house spay/neuter surgeries have also jumped 60%, from 2,773 to 4,450¹. These increased surgeries require more medical supplies.

The \$304,141 budgeted for medical expenses is only enough for 10 months. In the past, the remaining two-month deficit has been made up by the Animal Welfare Trust Fund and intra-account transfers approved via the Financial Status Reports or the CAO/Mayor. We consider the use of the Animal Welfare Trust Fund a stop-gap solution only and with donor-designated restrictions on most of the Fund, this special fund is not likely to meet the Department's on-going medical needs.

While an additional \$48,750 is being proposed in the 2014-15 Medical Supplies account, our request was for \$135,859. There is no proposed increase for animal food, but an additional \$103,313 is needed.

The budget gaps in these two accounts are now large enough that lack of adequate funding in either account would result in increased euthanasia of adoptable animals if we cannot give them proper care. Additional funding in these expense accounts is required to keep pace with cost increases for food, medicines, vaccines, and to maintain current-level services.

The City would be in violation of State law if it cannot provide humane care for animals in its shelters. The animal welfare community takes these issues very seriously. For example, there have been two humane treatment-related lawsuits against County of Los Angeles Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC). In one², the settlement of the case required DACC to stipulate, among other things, to the following:

- For a period of two years starting January 16, 2009, the Animal Defense League will monitor DACC by monthly review of all records relating to all owner-relinquished animals taken in by the department to include a monitoring mechanism for how DACC cares for animals who are held for the holding period and beyond, such as where DACC takes in and holds an owner-relinquished animal with a medical condition, but does not provide needed vet care, resulting in the animal's suffering during the holding period.

¹ When comparing July 2013 to March 2014 to the same period the prior year. Six thousand in-house spay and neuter surgeries are targeted for this fiscal year.

² Sheldon Eisenberg and Orly Degani represented Cathy Nguyen, Rebecca Arvizu, and No Kill Advocacy Center.

ANIMAL SERVICES RESPONSE TO PROPOSED 2014-15 BUDGET

The City of Los Angeles does not want to be sued, found guilty of not providing proper food and medical care for shelter animals, nor cause unnecessary suffering.

Cutting Another Clerk Typist and Failing to Fund All Clerk Typists

The Department proposed a Service Enhancement Request to “regularize” and fully fund five Clerk Typists currently in resolution authorities. The Department believes that these proposed regular positions, along with the 28 regular Clerk Typist authorities, should all be maintained and not reduced because all are required for the Department to operate six shelters. In fact, in 2011-12, the Department requested 37 Clerk Typist positions to support opening the large South Los Angeles (Chesterfield Square) shelter. (For context, 40 regular and resolution Clerk Typist and Communication Information Representative authorities were approved in the 2008-09 budget and 41 in the 2009-10 budget -- before the Chesterfield Square shelter opened in February 2013.)

Clerks staff public counters and revenue processing operations. The Licensing Section averages over \$300,000 in revenue processed per Clerk each year. Clerks are the main contact with the public and receive or send over 300,000 notices each year, assist in the adoption of 25,000 companion animals yearly, and respond to over 400,000 calls from the public each year. If these Clerk positions cannot be funded, then license and adoption revenue will be reduced.

The reason why the Department strongly supports keeping the Department at its current Clerk Typist levels – and not lose even one – is underscored by its current employment situation. While in 2013-14 there are 33 Clerk Typist authorities, this number does not reflect actual bodies on any given day. There are two Clerk Typists on Injury-on-Duty status; the Department has no idea when these employees will return. Two Clerks are on Family Medical Leave Act time-off. These absences put the Department in a very precarious staffing situation. Nowhere is the effect of the clerical shortage felt more than in the Harbor shelter.

Every day, the Harbor shelter has only one Clerk Typist assigned to it with no senior supervision. This results in no breaks and the need for overtime authority to allow the one Clerk Typist to finish processing adoptions and redemptions after 5:00 p.m. To manage under one clerical employee, the public counter has to open late or close early. Potential adopters and license-renewers have walked out due to long wait periods. If the lone Clerk is sick or goes on vacation, a Clerk from another already strapped shelter must be reassigned. No other shelter employee classifications are authorized to process public counter transactions. The Director of Field Operations frequently assists in providing clerical support due to this untenable staffing situation. Losing a Clerk Typist in the 2014-15 budget would only exacerbate this problem. The Department’s work program requires at least 33 Clerk Typists.

- 2. Additional cuts to the Animal Sterilization Fund negatively impact spay/neuter programs essential to reducing animal intake, costs of animal care and euthanasia.**

ANIMAL SERVICES RESPONSE TO PROPOSED 2014-15 BUDGET

The City's mandatory spay and neuter ordinance compels all dogs/cats to be sterilized. To help pay and meet this objective, the Department relies on the Animal Sterilization Fund (ASF). The Fund is composed of three revenue sources: 1) Either \$7 or \$2 paid from the sale of a \$20 license (for sterilized dogs) and \$100 (intact dogs); 2) Donations; and 3) A General Fund subsidy.

The Animal Sterilization Fund pays for three contracted veterinary organizations, co-located at four shelters, to provide sterilization surgeries for the public and for animals adopted from our shelters. The Animal Sterilization Fund also pays veterinarians for the \$70 certificate used by low-income residents to get their dog or cat sterilization surgery for free. It also reimburses veterinarians for the \$30 discount coupon that can be used by any resident to offset the cost of their pet's sterilization. There is also \$500,000 set aside for a mobile spay/neuter van.

In prior years, the City subsidized the Animal Sterilization Fund with an investment of \$1.1 million. This year, that subsidy was cut by \$400,000 reducing the subsidy to \$710,000. This was considered a "one-time" reduction. The Department requested that the \$400,000 be restored in 2014-15.

Next year's budget proposes an additional reduction of \$164,782, or a total subsidy of \$545,218. *This is over a 50% reduction in two years (\$1.1 million vs. \$545,218.)* It is also important to note that \$184,335 is set-aside next year to reimburse the General Fund for the administrative costs related to the Department's sterilization programs. This represents 2,700 fewer spay/neuter surgeries reducing our former \$1.1 million General Fund contribution to \$360,883.

The Department has \$2.5 million obligated in contracts with the ASF as its source. The latest ASF obligation went into effect when the City Council approved a \$500,000 contract for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (C.F. 14-0007). The ASPCA began operations of the spay/neuter clinic at the South Los Angeles (Chesterfield Square) shelter on April 15, 2014 in a community that sees a significant intake of dogs and cats and a large (and often dangerous) stray dog population.

With 21.2% of Los Angeles' residents at the poverty level³, reducing the ASF – which subsidizes sterilization surgeries to low-income residents – will make it more difficult to reduce the homeless pet population. Reduction to the ASF sends the message that Los Angeles is no longer committed to the low-income community or to mandatory spay/neuter to reduce unwanted pet births.

The reduction in the General Fund subsidy means 10,700 fewer sterilization surgeries. Moreover, reducing the City's investment in spay/neuter surgeries goes against the City's long-history of supporting such programs. These sterilization efforts were funded because they worked.

³ U.S Department of Commerce

Brief History of Los Angeles' Spay and Neuter Programs

In a 1989 article⁴, Los Angeles is mentioned in glowing terms due to its progressive animal management practices:

"One of the animal control success stories of the seventies was the program implemented by Robert Rush at the Department of Animal Regulations of the City of Los Angeles, Rush (1985) has claimed that "the success of a combined low-cost sterilization program and differential licensing is illustrated by the dramatic decrease in the number of animals impounded in our shelter. In 1970, Los Angeles was impounding an excess or 144,000 dogs and cats and destroying over 80,000 of these. By 1982-83, however, this rate had dropped 50%, with a total of 72,454 dogs and cats impounded."

In another publication⁵, the authors note that,

Animal protection groups began pushing the concept of companion animal surgical sterilization as a pet population control method.the Department of Animal Regulation in the City of Los Angeles set up a municipal spay-neuter clinic and a differential licensing system—in which it cost more to license intact dogs than neutered ones—in 1970.....within 10 years the proportion of licensed dogs in Los Angeles who were sterilized rose from 10 percent to 51 percent.....Over the same period, the number of animals taken in by the city's Department of Animal Regulation fell from about 140,000 a year, to about 85,000 a year (Rowan and Williams 1987).

Today, in Los Angeles shelters, the intake numbers for dogs and cats are 35,838 (fiscal Year to Date through March 2014), which is 8% lower than the same time last year.

Unless we want to see a rising shelter population and an increase in shelter killing due to space limitations, it is imperative to restore the \$400,000 that was said to be a one-time reduction and reject any further reduction lest the historical – and current – progress in animal sterilization be stopped and even recede.

REASONS TO SUPPORT ANIMAL SERVICES' REQUESTS

It would be extremely frustrating to close a shelter or reduce spay/neuter services in light of the significant progress the Department has made in key metrics:

⁴ By Andrew Rowan and Jeff Williams published in the journal *Anthrozoos*.

⁵ The State of the Animals: 2003 by Andrews Rowan and Elizabeth Clancy.

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- In 2012-13, the Live-Save Rate⁶ for dogs/cats jumped from 65.86% to 72.87%.⁷ When compared to 2010-11 data (57.06%), the Live-Save Rate has increased nearly 16 percentage points since this General Manager was hired.
- In 2011, about 17,400 healthy, treatable dogs were killed in its shelters. In 2013, this number was reduced to 9,075 – a 48% reduction in shelter deaths due to space constraints.
- The number of in-house spay/neuter surgeries jumped 60%, from 2,773 to 4,450.
- Licenses have increased four percent when comparing last year to this year's figures (91,636 and 95,174, respectively).

We are making progress and do not want to regress. We look forward to further discussion in the Budget and Finance Committee.

Brenda F. Barnette

BRENDA F. BARNETTE

General Manager

CC:

Honorable Mitch Englander, Vice Chair, Council District 12
Honorable Michael Bonin, Council District 11
Honorable Robert Blumenfield, Council District 3
Honorable Paul Koretz, Council District 5
Patricia Whelan, Office of the Mayor
Janice Chang Yu, Office of the City Administrative Officer

⁶ This is the percentage of dogs/cats that are impounded and leave the shelters alive. To be a “no-kill” shelter, most animal welfare administrators consider an 85%-90% Live-Save Rate to be the goal.

⁷ When comparing July 2013 to March 2014 to the same period in the prior year.