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April 23, 2018

Honorable Paul Krekorian, Chair
Budget and Finance Committee
c/o Richard Williams, Office of the City Clerk
200 North Spring Street, Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES PROPOSED 2018-19 BUDGET

The Department of Animal Services is proud to serve the City of Los Angeles and looks forward to continuing our work to save animals' lives and to provide essential public safety services for our community. We also understand and respect the responsibility that our elected officials have to make the best use of the available funding for our City. We look forward to doing our part by attracting more outside resources that support our goals such as developing public-private partnerships like we have with Best Friends, successfully competing for large grants from national organizations like the ASPCA and local support from local partners such as the Pet Care Foundation that produces multiple events annually to get shelter pets into homes of their own. Our small but dedicated staff deals with the growing pressures of doing more work with fewer resources - and still posts outstanding metrics and achieves major goals.

The Mayor's 2018-19 Proposed Budget provides the Department with a total budget of \$24,487,051. This includes \$21,985,823 in the Salaries General Account that will fund the 313 full-time positions currently filled (as of April 4, 2018), and the funding to backfill ten positions that are currently vacant bringing us to 323 full-time positions which was the staffing level at the beginning of 2017-18.

The Department has concerns about maintaining or increasing three critical services and requests your consideration regarding these items during the completion of the budget process.

Funding for Animal Control Officers

Public Safety is a critical responsibility for the Department of Animal Services. We are concerned that, without increasing the number of Animal Control Officers (ACOs) available to serve our community, we will not be able to provide the services our constituents request and deserve. The proposed budget gives the Department the opportunity to fill one Animal Control Officer vacancy, however, 17 Animal Control Officer positions remain unfunded.

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With the current staffing resources in the community, the Department cannot respond to all field requests in a timely manner, deploy officers to support the Unified Homeless Response Center, or assist our partners who operate homeless pet service centers. Fiscal Year-to-Date, the Department has already responded to 32,130 field calls (average response time 10h/49m), of which 8,047 were urgent calls (average response time 2h/54m). The urgent calls (priority calls) are for a person or animal in danger such as animal bites to humans or other animals, injured or sick animals, potentially dangerous animals on school grounds or public parks.

By hiring these much needed ACOs we would be able to better ensure our presence in the communities, enhance compliance with licensing and spay/neuter laws and prevent or prosecute animal cruelty cases. The cost of filling the remaining 17 positions is \$788,358.

For comparison purposes, we are sharing this chart showing the similarities and differences in staffing, population and square miles:

**Comparison of Authorized and Funded Animal Control Officer Positions by Classification
 2017-18**

LA City Department of Animal Services		LA County Department of Animal Care & Control	
Class Title	Number	Class Title	Number
ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER I *	30	ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER I	82
ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER II	29	ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER II	66
SENIOR ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER I	7	ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER III	24
SENIOR ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER II	6	ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER IV	9
DIRECTOR OF FIELD OPERATIONS & DISTRICT SUPERVISOR	5	ANIMAL CONTROL MANAGER*	10
Total Officers	77	Total Officers**	191
POPULATION SERVED**	4,076,353	POPULATION SERVED***	3,179,968
SQUARE MILES SERVED**	508.4	SQUARE MILES SERVED***	511.0

*54 authorized, but only 30 funded.

**As of 2017, includes Beverly Hills

*Assignment of duty information has not been provided.

**As of 2014

***As of 2017, includes 38 Contract Cities

Fund Depletion – Animal Sterilization Fund

Our second area of critical concern is the projection that the Animal Sterilization Fund will run out of money during FY 2018-19 eliminating spay/neuter services for low-income pet owners in the City of Los Angeles. In FY 13-14, the annual transfer from the General Fund to the Animal Sterilization Fund was \$1,100,000 annually and has been reduced annually. Now we face a likely elimination of the Fund during FY 2018-19. The Animal Sterilization Fund supports the City's Mandatory Spay/Neuter Ordinance and makes it possible for homeless and low-income community members to comply with the mandatory spay/neuter law.

Following many hours of projections, review and analysis, the Department and the Office of the City Administrative Officer are in agreement that the Animal Sterilization Fund will incur a shortfall of approximately \$850,000 by the end of FY 2018-19. This shortfall will result in a reduction of over 7,700 spay/neuter surgeries for pets belonging to Los Angeles residents.

Funding for the Animal Sterilization Fund is an investment in the future by preventing larger costs if the pet population is allowed to reproduce because free and low-cost spay/neuter is no longer available. The result would be increasing shelter impounds, lowering the level of high-quality care and seriously jeopardizing our efforts to become a no-kill City. To cover these costs and maintain a safe account balance to ensure no interruption of valuable services needed and to ensure that our low-income community members can comply with the law, the Department recommends funding this program directly or through an \$850,000 designated allotment in the Unappropriated Balance sufficient to cover the costs of continuing this valuable service to prevent closure of the program.

The Department has successfully implemented an online spay/neuter application process. We are on target to receive 11,000 applications this year. To manage this online process, the Animal Sterilization Fund, the contracts for five clinics and three mobile units and support the various spay/neuter special events, the Department is requesting a resolution authority to hire a fully-funded Accountant position at an annual direct salary cost of \$63,329.

Squad Room Support

Gratefully the proposed budget provides funding for Squad Room Support to address the challenges we face with the current telephone system. This technology upgrade will not only assist with customer service it will produce useful metrics to increase accountability. In conjunction with the telephone system upgrade, 11 new Administrative Clerk authorities (to be filled by Office Trainees through the Targeted Local Hire Program) and workstations are needed to answer calls for urgent animal services assistance.

The Department of Animal Services receives approximately 40,000 calls per month. These calls are answered by the clerical staff assigned to the Animal Service Centers. Twenty-two (22) Administrative Clerks attempt to answer these telephone calls while processing over 98,000 in-person transactions annually, each transaction averaging 12 minutes. The limited number of clerks in the Service Centers, the large number of transactions processed and a large number of calls received result in many dropped calls, long wait times and public frustration.

In partnership with the Information Technology Agency (ITA) 311 Center, the Squad Room Support staff's primary responsibility will be processing urgent call requests. It is estimated that the call takers will process over 50,000 urgent-call requests annually. In comparison with another City Department's Call Center of similar call volume (47,484), it is determined that 11 positions are the appropriate number to efficiently handle the urgent call requests. The implementation of this partnership will reduce dropped calls, the number of frustrated callers, provide better customer service, save more lives and increase customer satisfaction.

Summary

The Department understands that there are many urgent needs that exceed the resources available. We will always work as hard as we can while staying within our means.

Letter to Honorable Paul Krekorian, Chair
Budget and Finance Committee
Department of Animal Services Proposed 2018-19 Budget

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter on behalf of the Department of Animal Services and thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Brenda F. Barnette

BRENDA F. BARNETTE
General Manager

cc:

Honorable Mitch Englander, Council District 12
Honorable Paul Koretz, Council District 5
Honorable Bob Blumenfield, Council District 3
Honorable Mike Bonin, Council District 11
Barbara Romero, Deputy Mayor
Ashley Stracke, Office of the Mayor
Megan Cottier, Office of the City Administrative Officer