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**DEPARTMENT OF
ANIMAL SERVICES**
221 N. Figueroa Street
6TH Floor, Suite #600
Los Angeles, CA 90012

(888) 452-7381
FAX (213) 482-9511

BRENDA F. BARNETTE
GENERAL MANAGER

TAMMY WATSON
ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER
Administration

MELISSA WEBBER
ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER
Life-Saving

DR. JEREMY PRUPAS
CHIEF VETERINARIAN

April 23, 2019

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 2019-20 BUDGET

The Department of Animal Services welcomes the opportunity to contribute to making L.A. a safer, more livable, more prosperous and better-run City. We also recognize the weighty burden of our elected officials to attain a fiscally responsible budget which focuses on our core roles and priorities. To this end, we continue to do our part by partnering with outside resources that support our goals, such as Best Friends, ASPCA, and the Pet Care Foundation. Collectively, our dedicated staff, volunteers and partnering organizations create happiness by bringing pets and people together.

As proposed, the budget provides funding to maintain current service levels and in some areas to increase our services levels. We are pleased with the funding to fill all vacant Animal Control Officer positions, allowing the Department to deploy more officers to promote the health, safety, and welfare of animals and people in the City of Los Angeles. Additionally, we welcome the funding for one Veterinary Technician to provide medical support and treatment for animals and to support the Department in ensuring good medical support for animals in our care.

The Department does, however, have concerns about maintaining or increasing four extremely critical items and requests your consideration during the completion of the budget process.

Funding for Animal License Canvassing Program

Dog licensing is a critical responsibility for the Department of Animal Services. Dog licensing is a method by which we protect the health and safety of the public from rabies since pet owners must provide proof of vaccination to obtain a license. A sound dog licensing program is critical for gaining compliance with City and State laws, and it helps to reunite the pet with its family and allows us to keep track of how many pets a person owns and the approximate pet population in our jurisdiction. Each year, the Department is directed to increase licensing within our communities. Both the State mandated law and the Mayor's direction to increase licensing can be met by means of a good Animal License Canvassing Program. The proposed budget gives the Department the "Creating a Humane LA"

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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opportunity to hire four (4) full-time Animal License Canvassers (ALCs). However, we are concerned that, without increasing the number of ALCs to eight (8), we will not be able to implement a meaningful program in reaching pet owners and gaining license compliance.

As per our projections, the staffing of eight (8) ALC's will generate annual revenue of \$280,114.56. A program of eight ALCs will provide sufficient resources to cover the City every two years. By hiring the much-needed ALCs, we would be able to ensure our presence in the communities better, enhance compliance with licensing laws, and obtain our goal of creating a Humane LA. Upon funding, the Department will hire through the Targeted Local Hire Program to support its efforts in providing equitable access to well paying City jobs. The first year cost of filling eight (8) positions is \$180,887.

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 2019-20 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 and has been reduced annually. 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 may incur a shortfall of approximately \$850,000 by the end of FY 2019-20. This shortfall may result in a reduction of over 9,000 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 by increasing euthanasia due to pet overpopulation. 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 mandatory Spay/Neuter 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.

Public Information Director I for Community Engagement and Partnership Program

The Department of Animal Services annually receives over 1,200 media calls/requests and Press/Media events; fulfills over 150 media appearances; prepares over 40 Adoption Events, News Releases/Advisories; engages in a large number of Community Outreach and Education meetings; and responds to public inquiries. Albeit a smaller department, our communication activity is equivalent to some of the larger departments. Yet, the Department has been without a designated position to fulfill this role since 2007. Therefore, it is critical for the Department to have a Public Information Director to plan, develop, and administer a comprehensive public relations, marketing, and communication program.

In addition to providing leadership in all public relations campaigns and community relations matters, this position will enable the Department to increase its donor funds which will assist the Department and fortify the City's finances. A robust Donor Program will relieve the General Fund and allow for a better financial position should a repeated economic downturn occur. The generosity amongst the animal welfare community is enormous. Without a dedicated Donor Program, we are missing out on the opportunity to obtain available donor funds. Approving the position to manage a dedicated

Donor Program will increase donations exponentially. The first year cost of filling this position is \$60,811.

City-wide Animal Volunteer Liaison Program

Advancing the LA Animal Services Volunteer Program has been a long-term goal for the Department. During the past year, our newly appointed Assistant General Manager of Lifesaving implemented a City-wide Animal Volunteer Liaison Pilot Program. This pilot program temporarily repurposed six Animal Care Technicians (ACTs) to work exclusively as Volunteer Liaisons. These efforts are extremely successful as it has increased the number of volunteer orientation attendees by 61%; the number of volunteers worked by 64%; and the number of volunteer hours worked by 57%. The increase in volunteers has enabled the Department to increase the enrichment for animals in our care. Thereby, providing humane treatment and increasing the success of home placements.

To maintain the success from the pilot program, it was necessary to dedicate six Animal Care Technician (ACT) positions as Volunteer Liaisons. Unfortunately, this special assignment diverts from other services that we can no longer provide to complete the volunteer liaison duties. The statistics from the pilot program demonstrates that these positions are critical to the continued success of our Volunteer Program. However, to sustain our service levels in other areas, we need to hire six additional ACTs.


The Department has had a favorable experience filling ACT vacancies through the Targeted Local Hire Program, and we would willingly do so to fill these six positions. The first year cost of filling six (6) positions is \$169,940.

Summary

The Department understands that there are many urgent needs that exceed the resources available. We will always work as hard as we can to reach our goals and meet our commitments to the communities we serve.

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
General Manager

cc: Honorable Curren D. Price, Council District 9
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
Richard H. Llewellyn, Jr., City Administrative Officer
Bryan Oh, Office of the City Administrative Officer