



ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA
MAYOR

August 12, 2011

Honorable Members of the City Council
c/o City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall

Re: Northeast Valley Animal Care Center

Honorable Members:

I am writing you regarding the Northeast Valley Animal Care Center (NEV, also known as the Mission Shelter). I would like to urge you to approve the CAO's recommendation regarding a contract with the Best Friends Animal Society to operate an adoption center and spay-neuter clinic at the shelter.

There are several reasons why it is important that we address this matter promptly. In May, the Council was presented with objections to pursuing this arrangement and, in its vote on the budget, rejected them. Therefore, in principle, you have made a decision to pursue this arrangement. Currently, no funding exists for staff at this shelter.

The City owes the people of the northeast San Fernando Valley more service from this beautiful facility than we have been able to provide during the two fiscal years since it was completed. This is the only feasible way to do so at this time. The shelter has been used for limited purposes by the Department of Animal Services (LAAS), but it has never been open to the public. For the past three years, City budgets have precluded hiring sufficient staff to fully open NEV to the public.

We are being presented with arguments about how outsourcing the management of the shelter will lead to layoffs and a "slippery slope." I can confidently say that this is not the case. LAAS has carefully planned to redeploy the small contingent of department staff at NEV to its other facilities, where they are desperately needed to care for animals and serve the public. No one will be laid off as a result of this proposal.

Every day we fail to move on this proposal in a timely manner jeopardizes the agreement with Best Friends because the organization has options for partnering with

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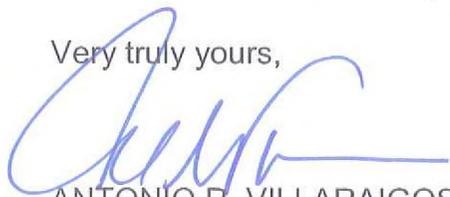
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other jurisdictions that need help. It also postpones the date when Best Friends can get the facility open to serve the constituents of the northeast Valley, as it will take the organization several months to hire staff and be ready to open its doors.

Every proposed alternative to this concept has been thoroughly studied by the CAO and LAAS and found wanting. They render staffing for the entire shelter system inadequate and would force service reductions that would penalize the public and lead to the euthanization of up to 10,000 more animals per year than at present. Our shelter system already is struggling with a recession-driven increase in animal intakes and euthanasia.

The City has an obligation to deliver services to the people of Los Angeles. I believe the proposed contract with Best Friends is the best way to do so. This is because the alternative to going forward with this proposal is to completely shut down NEV for the foreseeable future and spend scarce resources to try to protect a new building from vandalism. That is unacceptable.

Very truly yours,



ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA

Mayor

ARV:jba

cc: Miguel Santana, Chief Administrative Officer
Brenda Barnette, Department of Animal Services