

Hollywood Animals

Exotic and Domestic Animals

Film • Television • Stage • Events

September 30, 2019

Re: Opposition to Agenda Item #16-1357 as the ordinance is written, August 23, 2019.
Please include this letter into record.

Dear Councilmember Koretz and Members of the Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee:

My name is Eric Weld and my wife, Bettina Weld, and I own Hollywood Animals. We provide animals for the film industry (please consider that an all-inclusive term for film, television, commercials, still shoots, etc.), as well as various selective events. We are professional animal trainers and members of the Teamsters Local 399 Union. I also sit on the Animal Handler, Trainer, and Wrangler subcommittee for the Local 399 Union.

We are permitted and monitored by the Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS) whenever we come into the city of Los Angeles, or any other City that has a contract with LAAS for animal enforcement (i.e. Beverly Hills). We have a Wild Animal annual permit and an Animal Rental annual permit. We have a very good working relationship with LAAS and its employees. They have a large file on our company, including current copies of our USDA, CA Fish and Wildlife permits, proof of our General Commercial Liability Policy, our Emergency Action Plan and Protocols, and contact details of our veterinarians for emergency purposes. Furthermore, LAAS vets each film permit request or event for public and animal safety. LAAS' tasking of the animal company and the event source to provide critical information on each event has gotten stricter and better – this is good! These rules, regulations, and vetting processes are fair, and are easy for any professional animal company to be compliant with. We have two annual animal permits: Wild Animal and Animal Acts and Exhibitions.

An ordinance "... to regulate the exhibition of a wild, exotic or dangerous animal in the City..." is a fine idea. Most animal trainers have no problem with checks and balances with regard to working with animals, of any caliber, in film, conservation, or at events.

However, the ordinance submitted August 23, 2019 has a number of concerning issues:

First, the term **Dangerous Animal** is not clearly defined. That has to be quite clearly defined in order for LAAS to do their job without prejudice. It could be agreed upon that Elephants, bears, and all big cats are **potentially** Dangerous Animals. But what about a small monkey who has participated in conservation events his whole life; a ten foot boa constrictor that has spent its whole life being handled by trainers who educate the public about these creatures? The City Council's ordinance needs to clearly define what those animals of concern are for LAAS.

Second, the permitting process states at least 10 calendar days in advance of exhibition. Many film productions don't know where they are filming until 1-2 days ahead of time. If they are required to have permits into LAAS 10 days in advance, they will seek to film elsewhere, leaving the City losing productions. As it stands now, film productions can get a film permit

from LAAS by going into any of the shelters with the application and fee. This should remain the same so we can continue to cultivate the film process in Los Angeles.

Third, Proof of Insurance limits should be specified. Having limits of \$1MM per occurrence is reasonable for any professional animal company, so make that a requirement under the insurance. As I mentioned above, LAAS has a large file on our company with our proof of insurance already in there.

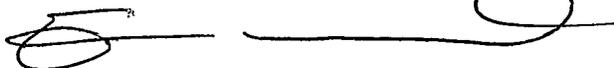
Lastly, a performing animal show is not clearly defined. Many conservation or education outreach programs could be considered a performing animal show as they show each animal and provide facts about each animal. The animals in the show will sometimes perform behaviors so as to enhance the experience for the viewers.

I would like to offer an idea that was used by the California Fish and Wildlife when creating their new rules for their permit process and inspections. They formed a committee that included their CAFW folks and other stakeholders in the process and outcome. I propose that the Personnel and Animal Welfare Committee create a committee that is headed by the Los Angeles Animal Services or Attorney's office. Members of this committee could be: LAAS personnel; a member of the Attorney's Office; animal trainers from film, education, outreach, conservation; AZA member; ZAA member; American Humane Association (monitor animal welfare on film sets). This is not an exhaustive list for committee members, but it is a start. This would allow the City Attorney's office the ability to hear all sides of this topic and generate an ordinance based upon the key reasons for this ordinance in the first place.

I believe the ordinance language submitted August 23, 2019 has its merits but also has many issues that need to be addressed and fine-tuned. If not, we risk removing film making from the City of Los Angeles when what we really wanted to do was stop big cats, elephants, and giraffes from being at house parties where Uber and Lyft gum up the roads.

I welcome any questions you might have or if I can be of service at all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric M. Weld". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent loop at the end.

Eric M. Weld
Hollywood Animals, Inc.