

Your Community Impact Statement has been successfully submitted to City Council and Committees.

If you have questions and/or concerns, please contact the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment at NCsupport@lacity.org.

This is an automated response, please do not reply to this email.

Contact Information

Neighborhood Council: Reseda Neighborhood Council

Name: Jamie York

Phone Number:

Email: Jamiey@resedacouncil.org

The Board approved this CIS by a vote of: Yea(13) Nay(0) Abstain(0) Ineligible(0) Recusal(0)

Date of NC Board Action: 08/15/2022

Type of NC Board Action: Against

Impact Information

Date: 08/15/2022

Update to a Previous Input: No

Directed To: City Council and Committees

Council File Number: 20-1177

Agenda Date: 08/15/2022

Item Number: X. G.

Summary: Like many Angelenos, the Reseda Neighborhood Council was appalled and dismayed by the reports in the LA Times and other publications regarding the mistreatment and neglect of animals in the care of the Department of Animal Services. It appears that the department lacks skilled managerial leadership and these shortcomings point to a profound breach of moral and fiduciary duty by the Department, the Animal Services Commission, and the Personnel, Audits, and Animal Welfare (PAAW) committee. Please see the attached statement for our full statement.



DJ FRANK
PRESIDENT
KARLA ESCOBAR
VICE-PRESIDENT
JAMIE YORK
SECRETARY
ANGELA SABORIO
TREASURER
MICHELLE GALLAGHER
PARLIAMENTARIAN
VICTOR SABORIO
SERGEANT-AT ARMS

THOMAS BOOTH
SHARON BREWER
JENNIFER HUNT GUDERNATCH
GUILLERMO MORALES-
VITOLA
ANAT INDIG-PEDDICORD
JOE PHILLIPS
JIMMY REYES
GOLZAR SEPEHRI
MARIA SKELTON

[Council File 22-1111-S10](#)

Personnel, Audits, and Animal Welfare Committee Meetings / Public Comment /
Communication(s) from Public / 2022

[Council File 20-1177](#)

Glue LLC / Marketing, Fundraising, Public Relations and Website Development and
Management Services / Contract

Like many Angelenos, the Reseda Neighborhood Council was appalled and dismayed by the reports in the [LA Times](#) and other [publications](#) regarding the mistreatment and neglect of animals in the care of the Department of Animal Services. It appears that the department lacks skilled managerial leadership and these shortcomings point to a profound breach of moral and fiduciary duty by the Department, the Animal Services Commission, and the Personnel, Audits, and Animal Welfare (PAAW) committee.

First, the Reseda Neighborhood Council would like to inquire how a three hour hearing on July 19th and a subsequent scheduled meeting on [August 16th](#) can result in no motions being filed or reports back requested. Public comment on this item has been relegated to an obscure general comment file ([22-1111-S10](#)) that was not even indicated on the first agenda. Clearly, this is an issue that matters to Angelenos as over 140 people who wanted to make public comments were not allowed to. We wonder where the urgency is from our City Council to address these pressing issues. A special meeting to hear the issue is simply inadequate without concrete steps to actually address the issue. As it is, we are forced to file this community impact statement on a related contract and on the general public comment file as

there is no place for a neighborhood council to attach their community impact statement to a relevant council file. We find this extremely unusual and against any idea of transparency that the City so desperately needs. This issue cannot and will not be swept under the rug.

We would like to remind this committee that concerns regarding the conditions of the shelters are not new or “just discovered.” Volunteers have been raising these issues for years in commission meetings. The city council has been aware of abhorrent conditions since at least 2019, according to Council File [19-1584](#), where it was reported that flooding was occurring at the Chesterfield Animal Shelter on rainy days. It was a choice by the City Council and the Commission to ignore these conditions and it was a choice to ignore these voices. Save us your feigned surprise and do the work that so desperately needs to be done. Given these long standing and well-documented concerns, we find it deeply troubling that interim General Manager Annette Ramirez, in her [revised budget proposal](#) to the Council on April 21, 2022, did not request additional staffing for providing basic care such as cleaning kennels, providing food and water for small animals, and walking the many that dogs have not been out of their kennels for exercise, enrichment and play for months.

The Reseda Neighborhood Council requests that any volunteer who was dismissed for speaking out about the conditions in the shelters be immediately reinstated. We are extremely concerned that many of the dismissed volunteers served the West Valley Animal Shelter which services Reseda. Clearly, the City retaliated against volunteers who blew the whistle about the conditions in the shelter when the City should be listening to and incorporating the ideas of these passionate volunteers. The City is throwing away a resource the animals can scarcely afford to lose to protect its own image.

Claudio Kusnier volunteered over 1900 hours with the West Valley animal shelter and his service was dismissed after speaking with the LA Times. Similarly, West Valley volunteers, Jean Sarfaty, Cathy Serksnas, Paula Hsien, and Carolin Eiliya, all skilled volunteers at the West Valley Animal Shelter, were dismissed from their service after speaking out about the conditions of the animals. There is a disturbing pattern of reactive punishment by the Animal Services Department against volunteers who dare voice their concerns. It seems the City desires our free labor, but recoils and punishes our voices. Perhaps the city should invest in dog walking robots, if it only wants silent, obedient drones.

As Neighborhood Council members are all volunteers, we are extremely aware of and appreciative of the immense amount of work volunteers perform to assist this City. The City owes volunteers a debt of gratitude, not punishment for having the courage to speak up when they see something wrong. We find it outrageous that any volunteer would be dismissed from their service due to their criticism of the City. Too many of the City Council have recently likened earned criticism to “threats”. We suggest that the City Council start to take this criticism seriously rather than resorting to reductive and unproductive metaphors to smear their critics. We suggest actually doing the work of fixing the City’s problems. The [City budget](#) currently projects that volunteer hours are falling. These shortsighted punishments will likely exacerbate

the problems Animal Services is facing as the willingness of Angelenos to volunteer declines due to the erosion of trust in government.

Keep in mind that this not only affects the volunteers, but the animals themselves. The clear health risks of not providing the crucial daily physical exercise needed for dogs can put them in a tougher position to be adopted. Side effects can include joint issues, making them weaker and more susceptible to injuries and high veterinary costs. Behavioral issues can develop from frustration and boredom, creating destructive habits and even injury to a dog and their owner. By denying stimulation and exploration of their environments, we are directly affecting their confidence. A lack of stimulation and social skills affects their ability to succeed in their future homes.

When we contacted outside animal organizations, Katie Cleary, representative for Peace4Animals and World Animal News, regarding this issue, we were told, "We witnessed first-hand the inaptitude of the shelter system in Los Angeles after visiting several shelters to rescue animals and donate food and supplies. Many of the dogs were pacing back and forth in their cages or sitting in the back of their kennels scared to death to come out. We asked how many times per day they get walked and the volunteers said sometimes only once per month for only 15-20 minutes, we were shocked! How can an animal survive in a small enclosure while only being walked once per month? Something is seriously wrong with our shelter systems and I'm sure we're not the only city in the U.S. that experiences this lack of leadership, organization, or education on how a shelter should be run."

Shira Astroff of the Animal Rescue Mission also stated "The LAAS shelter system has failed miserably due to the people in charge making six figure salaries, yet they rarely, if not ever, have stepped foot in an LAAS shelter. Many of us rescuers are constantly searching for answers as to who to speak with to improve the situation, and at this point, the blame must fall on the city council and anyone appointed to oversee the shelters. Through the years, they have received thousands of requests for help; they can not feign ignorance anymore. They need to hire more staff at the shelters and more animal control officers. Volunteers make up most of the "staff," and without them, many dogs wouldn't stand a chance or even get walked. There are some incredible people working at the shelters, but they are dealing with a lack of help both in staffing and in funding. These good people end up leaving because they can't bear to see animals suffer any longer. And if they speak up about the conditions, they are immediately suspended or fired. In my opinion, the most inhumane and careless act is that while there are countless animals being killed each week for lack of space, LAAS is still selling "breeder" permits. They are still allowing people to possess intact dogs. There needs to be money put into hiring more staff, more AC officers, and into a spay/neuter fund which has seemed to have disappeared."

Next, the Reseda Neighborhood Council would like to examine the \$1.5 million [contract \(Koretz-Blumenfield\)](#) with The Glue, LLC from December 2020-December 2023. It is a wildly expensive contract that promised to overhaul the animal services website and double its fundraising. It has delivered neither. Nearly two years after awarding this contract, the website has barely changed from archived [versions](#) of the animal services website. According to their

contract, the website was to be delivered no later than February 2022. A review of available revenue data shows that fundraising for the donor funded Animal Welfare Trust Fund (AWTF) has remained essentially flat. This contract amount represents a disproportionate amount of donations to the AWTF. Glue, LLC has been paid by the City over \$750,000 dollars for its services at the time of this filing. In fact, according to the Controller's website **over 63%** of all spending from the animal welfare trust fund in 2021 was solely on this contract, rather than the direct welfare of animals (\$558k of \$881k FY 2021). **This is not a crisis of resources, it is a crisis of dubious priorities, clear mismanagement, and disinterested oversight.**

The Reseda Neighborhood Councils believes that significant investments in low-cost spay and neuter programs would help alleviate the pressure at animal services in the long term by acting proactively to reduce animal populations. We believe that dismissed volunteers need to be immediately reinstated. We believe that the process for new volunteers needs to be immediately streamlined and that seasoned volunteers should have a seat at the table. We believe the contract with Glue, LLC should be immediately exited and that the Controller should conduct a fraud, waste, and abuse audit regarding this contract. We believe the money would be better spent directly helping the animals. The \$1.5 million contracted for Glue, LLC would fund 60,000 hours of dog walking at \$25 an hour. We believe the Animal Services Department, the Animal Services Commission, and the Personnel, Audits, and Animal Welfare (PAWW) committee all must do better.