



Date: September 19, 2017
To: Patrick H. West, City Manager *T.H.W.*
From: Marie Knight, Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine *M.K.*
For: Mayor and Members of the City Council
Subject: Response to Animal Care Services items from City Council Budget Hearing of August 15, 2017

This memo is in response to questions posed by the City Council and comments made by the public during the City Council Budget Hearing on August 15, 2017. Questions were asked regarding the contract with spcaLA and what the agreement calls for with respect to the obligations, expectations, and duties required of Animal Care Services (ACS) and the spcaLA. Additionally, public comments were made regarding the way animals at the shelter are housed, and the reported successes of other alleged “no-kill” agencies such as Sacramento, CA and Austin, TX.

The City’s Agreement with spcaLA

Per staff’s request, the City Attorney’s Office has reviewed all contracts and agreements with the spcaLA. The City Attorney’s Office has concluded that neither party has the right or power to restrict how the other runs their respective facilities or does business, so long as it conforms to the “Use” identified in the Lease Agreement. As such, there are no restrictions on the City regarding the adoption of animals or any other service provided by the spcaLA. Additionally, there are no requirements pertaining to specific duties to be carried out by the spcaLA with respect to adoptions, pulling animals from the City shelter for adoption, providing volunteers, or assisting ACS with any of these operations. It is possible for the agreements to be amended as long as both parties mutually agree to the proposed amendment and it is put in writing and signed by both parties. Terminating the agreement, however, would likely be much more complicated and it is unlikely that the spcaLA would agree to such a proposal.

Regardless of the current contracts in place, the original intent of the Agreement with the spcaLA was to create a partnership whereby the spcaLA would provide for all adoption programs at the shelter, thereby allowing ACS to focus on providing animal control and enforcement programs, as well as minimal sheltering for the purposes of returning animals to their owners and meeting the mandatory stray holding periods required by State law. Historically, ACS has been funded to provide these types of operations only.

Over the past few years, due to increasing public demands and expectations to provide for increased positive outcomes for shelter animals, ACS has been redirecting existing funds assigned to enforcement activities into activities such as volunteers, marketing and rescue efforts, transports, and adoptions. This small team, consisting of mostly part-time individuals,

has greatly increased the number of positive outcomes and helped to drastically increase the overall live release rates. Additionally, ACS has found other partners such as Found Animals, Stray Cat Alliance, ASPCA, Fix Long Beach, and several others to help with these efforts. As the original intent and associated funding was not for this level of activity, it is not possible for ACS to offer these additional services without the help of community partners. The ACS rehoming and medical team are operating at their capacity, and sometimes beyond. If ACS is to continue to grow in these areas and expand with new programs, additional resources will be needed in both areas.

Response to Public Comment

Public comment speakers described the animals being housed at ACS as being in deplorable conditions and lying on the cold floor with no beds available. Unless recommended otherwise for medical or other reasons, all dog kennels have Kuranda beds, which allow the dogs to have a place off of the floor to rest or sleep. All animal enclosures are thoroughly cleaned every morning, with additional spot cleaning provided continuously throughout the day. During the winter, the dogs are provided with blankets, if safe to do so, and the floors in the kennels are heated to provide additional comfort. All animals are provided food and water daily, as well as medical treatment as needed.

Comments were made regarding the reported successes of other agencies. Specifically, the City of Sacramento, California and the City of Austin, Texas were stated as achieving “no-kill” status. While the definition of “no-kill” is not mutually agreed upon in the animal sheltering industry, most people recognize a live release rate of 90 percent as being “no-kill” recognizing that even in an established “no-kill” shelter, there will always be a need to euthanize animals for humane reasons. According to their website, through the month of July, Sacramento Animal Care Services has a live release rate of 84 percent for dogs and 88 percent for cats (85 percent combined). In comparison, ACS has a live release rate of 94 percent for dogs and 74 percent for cats (83 percent combined). The population of Sacramento is roughly 495,000 and their budget for FY 18 will be approximately \$4.78 million. Comparatively, Long Beach has a population of 470,000, but as ACS serves four contract cities, the service population is closer to 570,000 with a budget for FY 18 of \$5.02 million. After subtracting the contract fees charged to the contract cities, Long Beach pays \$4.37 million towards the ACS budget.

The City of Austin, Texas City Council mandated in 2010 that their shelter would become a “no-kill” facility. The current live release rate for Austin Animal Care is 98 percent for dogs and cats. However, these successes came at a price. Their Animal Care Services Department budget has increased on average over \$1 million every year since becoming “no-kill.” In FY 10 their reported budget was approximately \$6 million and the proposed budget for FY 18 is \$13.2 million. In comparison, the proposed budget for Long Beach ACS in FY 18 is just over \$5 million. On a per capita basis, the city of Austin (population 950,000) is spending approximately \$13.90 per capita, compared to approximately \$9.30 in Long Beach. The live release rate for ACS in FY 17 is on track to be approximately 93 percent for dogs and 73 percent for cats.

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If you require additional information, please contact me at (562) 570-3170.

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