

Date: January 30, 2024

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager



From: Brent Dennis, Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine



For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: Spay and Neuter Partnerships at Long Beach Animal Care Services

As part of the Fiscal Year 2024 Adopted Budget, the City Council agreed to distribute additional funds to Long Beach Animal Care Services (LBACS) in support of spay and neuter initiatives for shelter animals. These funds were provided to address the significant backlog of animals who were adopted unfixed through the HomeFirst Program, which was a program developed in 2020 as part of a COVID-19 response to a lack of access to spay and neuter. The HomeFirst program runs counter to City spay and neuter policy, which states that all animals should be spayed and neutered prior to adoption. It is proposed that, through the use of additional veterinarian services, all cats and dogs at LBACS would be fixed prior to exiting the shelter, the outstanding unfixed adopted cats and dogs could have access to spay and neuter services, and the HomeFirst program could cease to exist.

LBACS began immediately forming partnerships with mobile veterinarians to support the reduction of unaltered pets housed at the City of Long Beach (City) shelter and/or leaving the facility. These valuable partnerships include the Community Animal Medicine Project (CAMP), Helen Sanders Cat Paws (HSCP), and Amazing Small Animal Practice (ASAP). It is through these important relationships with low-cost mobile veterinary clinics that 430 in-house shelter animals have been altered at LBACS since mid-October 2023. The HomeFirst program is set to end early February 2024, which will put LBACS in compliance with City policy and cats and dogs will be altered prior to adoption henceforth.

Other brick-and-mortar, low-cost veterinary partners of note include Fix Long Beach (FIX), CAMP in San Pedro, Primary Veterinary Clinics, and Amazing Small Animals Practice in Gardena. These veterinary locations have provided LBACS with low-cost options to make additional spay and neuter surgeries available for HomeFirst adopters, community cats, shelter bunnies, and animals currently in foster care. Since August 2023, 450 HomeFirst cats and dogs have been altered. Outstanding HomeFirst adopters are being contacted over the next month to ensure they are aware of new surgery options. LBACS expects to complete the backlog by June 2024.

Currently, CAMP provides 25-30 surgeries weekly on Mondays at LBACS. Starting January 14, 2024, HSCP began visits to LBACS bimonthly to provide up to 40 surgeries per visit. Starting February, ASAP will provide up to 60 spay/neuter surgeries per visit, bimonthly. This leads to onsite spay and neuter access for up to 325 animals per month. This number will increase, as our mobile vet clinics onboard new veterinarians to pick up additional days. LBACS staff has colloquially named these services "Mobile Mondays." Volunteers have been instrumental in the success of this initiative.

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Future plans include onboarding additional veterinarian services to assist in the mobile units and offer an increased number of surgery days per week, as well as expanding the use of low-cost offsite veterinarians for HomeFirst animals. Current limitations to this include a national veterinarian shortage and increasing costs in the medical industry. Regardless, LBACS is prioritizing sterilization surgeries to ensure that all animals who are adopted from the shelter are altered prior to their departure into a forever home.

If you have any questions, please contact Brent Dennis, Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine, at (562) 570-3170 or Brent.Dennis@longbeach.gov.

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