MINUTES
BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF LOS ANGELES
Tuesday, October 12, 2004
9:00 AM
CITY HALL
200 N. Spring St.
Room 1010
Los Angeles, CA  90012

Commissioners:  Kathleen Riordan, President
                 Alex Rubalcava, Vice President
                 Erika Brunson
                 Tariq Khero
                 Deborah A. Knaan

SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING, 9:00 A.M.

Commissioner Riordan called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.  Commissioner Khero, Knaan, Riordan and Rubalcava were present.  Commissioner Brunson arrived at 9:15 a.m.

Items 3 A and C were taken out of order.

1.  REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER

   A.  LAUSD:  October 28, 2004 LAUSD will be making a decision on the property.  LAUSD would have to pay approximately 23.5 million dollars to the Department for the property.

   B.  Administration Move:  The Administrative Offices will be moving to Figueroa Plaza in May 2005.

   C.  Furever Friends:  October 25, 2004 is the Departments big adoption project that is held twice a year in all shelters.

   D.  Pierce College:  New program starting this month with the college.  Vet techs will be working with the shelter and receiving college credits.

   E.  WLA Groundbreaking:  October 21, 2004, 10:00 a.m.

   F.  Position Unfreeze:  Successful in getting four veterinarians, one personnel analyst, and one Account I position unfrozen.

   G.  Canvassers:  The new canvassers have started and are in training.  Will soon be in the Metro area.

   H.  Kids Day LA:  Department attended the event on October 2, 2004.  Gave away spay neuter vouchers, and provided information on adoptions and the Department.

   I.  Neighborhood Congress:  The Department was represented at the event, which was held this weekend.

   J.  Latino Heritage Month:  An event will be held on October 17, 2004 and the Department will be represented.
K. **Department Identification:** The volunteers will have identification cards so they will be recognized in the shelters.

L. **Business Cards:** Business cards have been ordered for the Commissioners

M. **Website:** Posting special need animals on the website.

N. **New General Manager:** Expecting Mr. Stuckey to start in mid-November.

**Public Comment:**

Daniel Guss: There is free advertising on every television and radio station in the country. The report filed with Public Safety is going to be rejected.

Zsuzsa Blakely: South Los Angeles did not send all available animals to the Best Friends event.

Scott Sorrentino, Rescue Humane Alliance: Let the humane community knows if they can help with the East Valley Shelter situation. Was able to advertise through the newspaper and radio without spending any money.

Phyllis Daugherty: Media not as willing to help the City because they believe the City can pay. The first committee to select the new general manager did not believe that the person needed animal control experience.

2. **COMMISSION BUSINESS**

   A. **Approval of Minutes for the meeting of September 27, 2004**

      Commissioner Rubalcava made a motion to approve the minutes, Commissioner Brunson seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

   B. **Meetings/Events Attended – None to Report**

   C. **Consideration of Future Agenda Items –**

      Commissioner Knaan would like the Department to report on the type of training staff has received and would like staff to receive training in reporting of inappropriate behavior, dealing with the public and dealing with special needs animals.

      Commissioner Rubalcava requested Ms. Moriarty to provide a training update for November 22, 2004.

      Commissioner Khero requested the new volunteer manual to be calendared for a future date.

3. **REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS**

   A. **Update: Hiring Procedures and Criteria**

      At the Commissions request, Ms. Adams, Assistant General Manager presented a report to the on the Department’s and the City’s hiring procedures and criteria. Present were Bernie Leichter, Personnel

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Director for the Department and Rhonda Sims-Lewis, Assistant General Manager for the City of Los Angeles Personnel Department. Mr. Leichter gave a general overview of the City and Department’s hiring procedures.

At the request of Commissioner Knaan, Ms. Sims-Lewis provided the Commission with an explanation on what occurs if an employee is arrested and the rights of the employee.

Commissioner Khero requested information on the training an employee receives on working with the public or obtaining public service skills. Mr. Leichter indicated that the Department asks these types of questions during the interview, but that nothing is taken for granted. Employees receive training in this area by either the Department or the City.

Public Comment:

Daniel Guss, Stand Foundation: Has been investigating the Department for two years and has court records on Department employees. No one in the City has requested a copy of the records from him.

B. Review: Adoption Policy

Ms. Morris indicated that the report was a result of an incident that occurred where a person had adopted an animal but never was able to take possession of the animal. As a result, The City Attorney assisted the Department in revising Item 11 of the adoption agreement as follows: “If the legal owner of your selected companion animal redeems the animal prior from its removal from the shelter or the Department’s position you will be notified. You have the option of receiving a full refund of your deposit or selecting another animal.”

Assistant Deputy Attorney Dov Lesel provided additional explanation to the Commission on the owners rights to the animal.

A discussion occurred between the Department, City Attorney and the Commission regarding redemption of unaltered animals to their owners. The City cannot force a person to sterilize their animal.

Public Comment:

Scott Sorrentino: The situation was an alliance member. She wanted the animal because the stray came in unaltered and the owner may be considered unsuitable.

Zsuzsa Blakely: Thinks the redemption fees are too high.

Phyllis Daugherty: State Law states the first time owners animals escape from their yards no penalty fee is imposed, but second time it is a nuisance and a fee should be imposed on the owner and collected by some jurisdictions. After legal hold the animal should be the City’s property.

C. Discussion: Volunteer Appeal Process

At the request of the Commission to obtain information on the volunteer appeal process, Ms. Adams presented a report that indicated volunteers cannot appeal their termination to the Commission. If a

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volunteer was able to appeal their termination to the Commission it would provide the volunteer with more rights than a Department employee. Ms. Rhonda Sims-Lewis explained to the Commission that volunteers are “at will” employees. They can be hired and fired without going through the Civil Service process.

Ms. Sims-Lewis indicated that the way the volunteers are treated in the Department is consistent with the process by which volunteers are treated in other City Departments.

Ms. Morris indicated that the volunteer manual is currently being rewritten and it will state very clearly what the duties of the volunteer are. Ms. Sims-Lewis indicated that it should be made very clear from the beginning that volunteers are “at-will” employees.

Commissioner Riordan requested the updated manual to be shared with the Commission when it is completed.

Ms. Heidi Huebner, Volunteer Coordinator, indicated that currently there are 197 volunteers but is still waiting responses from 600 letters that were sent to volunteers on file. Commissioner Rubalcava does not see that three to five volunteers who indicated they were unfairly terminated out of the current 197 indicates that there is a problem with the volunteer program.

Public Comment:

Zsusza Blakely: The Department is trying to take all the power and give nothing to the volunteers. Volunteers do not work for the Department they work for the animals.

Phyllis Daugherty: The Department has built the volunteer program to what it is. Being a volunteer is dangerous work. The decision by whether someone should stay or not should be made by people who are in the shelters.

Daniel Guss, Stand Foundation: Has a letter regarding the retaliation and punishment from people who speak up against the Department.

Scott Sorrentino, Rescue Humane Alliance: Frustrated with all the things the Department says they can’t do. Should be a way for a volunteer to feel secure in their position. There should be an informal process for appeals.

Ms. Adams reminded the Commission that things cannot be put into place where volunteers would have more rights than a City employee. Ms. Sims-Lewis suggested the City Attorney be brought into the discussion.

**GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FOR BOARD ACTION:**

A. Board Report: Commission Rules

The report was presented by the Assistant City Attorney, Dov Lesel that dealt with rules and regulations for public participation in commission meetings. The report also provides a Standard of Conduct for speakers.
Public Comment

Scott Sorrentino, Rescue & Humane Alliance: It would be easier to make one minute comment if the Commission information were available before the meetings like on the website.

Daniel Guss, Stand Foundation: the Commissioners should also follow The Standards of Conduct.

Zsuzsa Blakely: Requesting three (3) minutes for public comments period.

Commissioner Rubalcava made a motion to approve the report, Commissioner Brunson seconded motion. Motion passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD - (Comments from the public on items of public interest within the Board’s subject matter jurisdiction.)

Zsuzsa Blakely: Volunteers don’t work for LAAS, but work for the Mayor’s office and the animals. Questioning the chain of command.

Phyllis Daugherty: Dr. Mackie’s new DVD is being distributed in Japan. There is dog beheaded case where the owners is facing a possible felony charge.

Daniel Guss, Stand Foundation: The SLA report from the Department will be rejected by the Public Safety. Requested suspension of Regina Adams for controlling the Department Employees right.

Jackie David: Provide a tribute to ex-Commissioner Helen Ann Johnson.

5. ADJOURNMENT –

Commissioner Riordan adjourned the meeting at 12:10 p.m.