



MINUTES
BOARD OF ANIMAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Monday, May 22, 2006
10:00 A.M.
CITY HALL
200 N. Spring St.
Room 1060
Los Angeles, CA 90012



Commissioners: Kathleen Riordan, President
Tariq Khero, Vice President
Marie Atake
Glenn S. Brown
Deborah A. Knaan

COMMISSION MEETING

Commission President Riordan called the Commission meeting to order at 10:20 A.M. Present were Commissioners Riordan, Khero and Atake. Commissioners Brown, and Knaan were absent.

2. OLD BUSINESS

B. Discussion Item: Assistant General Manager Position Description (Taken Out of Order)

Ms. Margaret Whelan, General Manager, Personnel Department addressed the Commission regarding the questions on the job qualifications for the Assistant General Manager positions. Commissioner Riordan expressed concern that there was a failure to include unpaid volunteer experience as qualifying work toward meeting the minimum qualifications for the job. Commissioner Atake questioned the use of the term “professional” as the management of a large staff at any level should be sufficient. Ms. Whelan responded that the Personnel Department used the term “professional” to designate a particular level of employee, normally at the management level. In addition, the acceptance of applications must have some sort of foundation upon which to build to ensure the Department is getting what is expected. If the qualifications are too broad, you may end up with a majority of the candidate group not being qualified to perform the job. Although many people are familiar with shelter operations, few have had experience running a shelter, and therefore, maybe unqualified for the position. Commissioner Riordan related that this is an attempt to open the positions to locals, familiar with state laws and shelter operations. Ms. Whelan indicated that request could be accommodated. Commissioner Atake asked why the requirement was for four years of experience. It was explained that two years may be a little light at the AGM position, the second highest position in the Department. Ms. Whelan recommended that a wide net could be done for the operation position by using a two-year criterion for experience.

Public Comments

Teri Austin: The pool of candidates is narrow within the City, and as many people as able should be able to apply. Other Departments across the country cast the wide net for candidates.

Jane Garcia: Expressed concern about a long time staff member who is considered to be a front-runner,

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describing herself as an “old time dog catcher”. This person did not know her audience. Not appropriate.
Daniel Guss: Not only qualifications should be discussed but also disqualifications. This process is a mess.

Phyllis Daugherty: The safety issues for a shelter are different than the humane society. Must hire someone who understands the safety issues or you will have major personnel and public injuries.

1. REPORT OF THE GENERAL MANAGER – EDWARD BOKS

- Year to date, there was a 11.77% decline in the number of animals coming into our Centers. Only Harbor has an increase in the number of impounds at 5.19%. Adoptions have increased 6.57% across the board. New Hope placement decreased 20.16%. Some shelters, West Valley has experienced a 23% increase in placements. Euthanasia year to date, have decreased 25.15%.
- The New Hope Program has had a soft opening. This allows ironing out the wrinkles while at the same time affording rescue groups the benefits of the program.
- The overcrowded East Valley Shelter had weekend event entitled the Dog-Gone Cat-Tastrophe. The Department received positive feedback from the Office of the Mayor and the media. Over 100 animals were adopted.
- The Bottle Baby program is coming together and foster volunteers are increasing. The program must be constantly refreshed due to the grueling nature of the duties.
- There are signs at each shelter regarding the fate of animals relinquished to the Department. The signs, written in English and Spanish, state we cannot guarantee that the animals will be placed.
- People who may be involved in an animal auction are now being given information regarding the auction so that they are fully aware of the shelter’s policy.

Public Comments

Jane Garcia: No mention about the New Hope Alert and how the euthanasia list has vanished.

(The General Manager reported the System Group was working to ensure each list was sent out)

Daniel Guss: Asked Mr. Boks to begin talking about adoption in hard numbers not percentages. Stop using the word euthanasia. Call it the kill list. The numbers are flawed. The Dog-Gone Cat-Tastrophe event name is the asinine name for an event. One hundred animals were placed. Compare with other events.

Phyllis Daugherty: Recent bust on a major hoarder with horrible conditions. Of the hundred of animals that were taken and impounded by the County Shelter, 25% were taken from L.A. City shelters. If you are going to give away animals free, the Department should monitor the program.

2. OLD BUSINESS

A. Board Report: Procedure for Handling Abused or Neglected Animals

Mr. Ross Pool, Management Analyst II, reported on the new Department procedures for handling abused and neglected animals brought to the shelters. In February, existing procedures did not include a means to determine the statistical information requested by the Board on the number of possibly abused or neglected animals. As a result, a more detailed policy was developed. Basically, when an animal is brought to the shelter, the Field Supervisor or officer in charge is immediately notified. A complete evaluation is performed on the animal and a report is filed which includes all information regarding the relinquishing

party. When it is determined that there is sufficient evidence to suspect animal cruelty, information is forwarded to the medical division who perform a follow-up investigation, take photographs, and prepare a Vet Statement. Commissioner Khero asked to clarify the language in the report that the follow-up investigation would be performed immediately, even in the absence of the veterinarian. Mr. Pool responded that the registered veterinary technician would follow the same protocol as the veterinarian and report the findings to a staff veterinarian. Commissioner Riordan expressed her desire for a more detailed and disciplinary training on reporting abuse and asked the Department look into the costs for special training previously mentioned by Commissioner Knaan. Commissioner Atake asked about the procedures for the handling of animals by shelter staff and requested if she could receive copies of the written guides available.

Phyllis Daugherty: The training for animal control officers is more stringent than the training for humane officers. Humane training is broader and only based on state law. ACO training is based on the LAMC, state laws, and federal laws. LAMC limits our ACOs. The citable list is made much shorter than it should be.

Jane Garcia: Spoke with a certified wildlife rehabilitator and asked if the Department had a citation system in place as opposed to having to go thru the whole investigative process for infractions.

Daniel Guss: Getting better training programs will not solve the problem. You need the vets. When internal injuries occur, animal control officers will not be able to identify them. If you do not get the vets in, you are doomed to fail. You cannot expect sophisticated conclusions to be made by an ACO on an animal's injuries.

Commissioner Khero motioned to approve the procedures for handling abused and neglected animals at the shelters with the recommended changes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Atake and passed on a vote of 3-0.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Commission Recommendation For New Agenda Items

- Commissioner Riordan asked for a report on the unsterilized animals that had been adopted out of the shelters and what the Department has done in terms of a follow-up on enforcement provisions.
- Commissioner Riordan wanted the Commission to look into a toy manufacturer distributing pit bull fighting figurines, and to consider drafting a blanket letter to denounce the sale of these items and the message that they send to the youth.

Public Comments

Phyllis Daugherty: The toy manufacturer is a local Mexican firm who has been featured on television before. The people that featured this toy manufacturer should also be addressed. The manufacturer is proud of his products and has said that they do what they see in their community.

Daniel Guss: Mr. Boks took down the BooBoo Report from the City website at the direction of City Hall. It was a flawed and incomplete report, and he was chastised by City Hall. Why now are their anonymous public comments that appear on the website applauding his report if he was ordered to take the report down?

(The General Manager responded that he was not ordered to take the report down. The report was to focus on the failures of the system, and that they were taking the appropriate action working with staff.)

Jane Garcia: Requested again if Dr. Katie Rainey could come in and speak on the medical staff training, especially for the South LA Center.

4. COMMISSION BUSINESS

A. Approval of the Minutes for April 24, 2006

Lisa Edmondson: Last name had been misspelled. Her comment on page 5 of the minutes should read, "There has not been any progress for the rabbits in the design at the new shelters." Said in her second comment, "In spite of Tori's very best efforts, the air-conditioning at South LA takes care of several rooms of different sizes, and the rabbit room is very hot when the weather is warm outside."

(Mr. Pool responded that he would review the tape from the 4/24/06 meeting and put her comments in verbatim so that no one would misconstrue what she had said.)

Phyllis Daugherty: Said that she was not the one who had made the comment suggesting that the shelter staff use the disinfectant Rocal to prevent the spread of disease.

Commissioner Riordan said that they table the approval of the April 24, 2006 minutes to the next Commission meeting on June 12, 2006.

Action Item: Approval of the Minutes for April 24, 2006 to be tabled as an agenda item for the next Commission Meeting on 06/12/06.

B. Meetings/Events Attended

Commissioner Atake volunteered at dog adoption events on April 29, May 13, and May 20. She also attended the Best Friend Society's presentation on May 6, the Walk For the Underdog event on May 7, and the Animal Friendly Relations event on May 20. Commissioners Riordan and Khero had nothing to report.

Daniel Guss: The Dog Gone Cat Cat-Tastrophe event did not have one sign posted in the parking lot promoting the event. Despite Mr. Boks's assertion that the problem with the email for this event and the New Hope events is due to html on his email, he was able to receive pictures that morning.

5. GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FOR NEW BOARD ACTION

A. Board Report: Do Not Adopt Policy

Mr. Pool commented that Department had been working on a Do Not Adopt Policy at the request of the Board. Upon its reviewal several structural errors were found. The Board Report was then modified to request that the Commission would adopt the policy and direct staff to return within thirty days with the procedures that would implement the policy. Commissioner Riordan asked to consider changing the name of the policy from Do Not Adopt to be called the Adoption Policy since it would already include criterion for not adopting.

Public Comments

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Tina Clark: Suggested that there be more criteria for those that can adopt. Knew of a person who was put thru an entire screening process even before adopting at Pasadena.

Jane Garcia: Shocked it took Commander Diliberto three months to do the Board Report. Another example of Diliberto's delaying tactics and deliberately trying to misunderstand. Commented on a father and son, turning in their older dog just a day after they had adopted a puppy from South LA.

Daniel Guss: Diliberto is not capable of writing legislation. Said that he had ten years of experience in writing policies, procedures, and RFPs and would gladly volunteer his services.

Evelyn Walton: Wanted to see something implemented to prevent the spouse or child of an individual on the Do Not Adopt List. Also wanted to get volunteer input at the time of adoption.

Zsuzsa Blakely: Cautioned to not be overly restrictive with the guidelines. Recommended that the Department only allow healthy puppies and kittens to be adopted out to the rescue groups and not the public.

Phyllis Daugherty: No mention in the report that when an animal comes in and there are obvious signs of abuse, there is no violation of law to dispatch an animal control officer to the location of the relinquisher and investigate if there are other animals on their premises.

Commissioner Atake motioned to rehear the agenda item on the Board Report for the Do Not Adopt Policy. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Khero and passed on a vote of 3-0.

2. OLD BUSINESS

A. Board Report: Procedure for Handling Abused or Neglected Animals (Reheard)

Mr. Lesel pointed out that the item would be reheard to add a particular procedure raised by the comment made by Ms. Daugherty that when neglected or abused animal is brought in to the shelter, the Department would dispatch an animal control officer to also check the residence from where it allegedly came from.

Public Comment

Phyllis Daugherty: The person in charge of operations needs to be experienced in a shelter, not just in the humane society. This is the type of thing the Director of Operations or General Manager would be in charge of. If they do not know these details, nothing will get done. Needs to be an extremely specific procedure.

Daniel Guss: The policy needs to be expanded to include immediate response to emails and photos as well.

Zsuzsa Blakely: People who bring in animals in bad condition often do not admit that they are the owners. You have to balance however, and not just simply chastise owners when animals are brought in, but being responsible in follow-ups, treating them, and getting them homes. Suffering isn't the worse thing, killing is.

Commissioner Khero motioned to approve this item with the addition of the specific changes that were articulated. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Atake and passed on a vote of 3-0.

5. GENERAL MANAGER RECOMMENDS FOR NEW BOARD ACTION

A. Board Report: Do Not Adopt Policy (Reheard)

Public Comment

Michelle Kelly: Agreed with Ms. Walton on preventing related individuals of persons on the Do Not Adopt List from adopting. Appropriate to have species-specific adopting standards, and had prepared some for the rabbits. Suggested that the Department have pre-adoption requirements as soon as possible, such as reading a handout and receiving counseling. Putting policy in place is one thing, and implementing them is another.

Commissioner Khero motioned to table and continue the approval of the Do Not Adopt Policy, with staff developing a new adoption policy to the June 26, 2006 Commission Meeting.

Action Item: Approval of the Board Report for the Do Not Adopt Policy to be tabled as an agenda item for the Commission Meeting on 06/26/06.

B. Board Report: RFP For Spay and Neuter Clinic Operations

The General Manager commented that the Department had prepared an RFP for Commission approval to go forward to the City Attorney's Office for final approval. The focus of the Department was to continue moving the process in the direction of being able to provide the proper staffing for the spay and neuter clinics when they begin to open later this year. Mr. Pool had pointed out that the Report had been revised over the weekend and that none of the Commissioners had yet the opportunity to review it. Commissioner Riordan advised that they bring back the Board Report to the next Commission meeting, allowing time for both the Commissioners and the public to review the RFP.

Public Comments

Daniel Guss: Had written RFP responses for Arthur Anderson and KPMG. A lot should be learned from the spaymobile RFP. Fraud warnings went unheeded. The losing vendor scored ten points higher than the awarded contractor. Mr. Lesel, unavailable at that time, would have caught many of the flaws in the process.

Teri Austin: In the previous spaymobile RFP, she did not see anything that stated that the Commission had any input in the selection process, which was a sham. It is important that the Commissioners meet the contractors. The previous General Manager had the opportunity to meet first with the vendors, and did not. Hoped to see that the clause on "Sham Proposals" receive more than two lines in the proposal to ensure that language in a proposal can be put into a contract.

Action Item: Board Report on the RFP for the Spay and Neuter Clinic Operations to return as an agenda item for the Commission Meeting on 06/12/06.

REGULAR AGENDA DISCUSSION ITEM

C. None

6. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Daniel Guss: Would publish a communication from Mr. Bickhart to Mr. Boks if he did not retract his statement that there have always been signs in the shelters on the likelihood of the kill rate. Questioned how Mr. Boks could enact changes in the BooBoo Report after failing to talk to a key witness. Should consider

putting on the agenda severe penalties for individuals who violate employee privacy rights. Needs to be an ethics guideline. Wants exact figures for the Dog Gone Cat Cat-Tastrophe event. Indicated that three of the best candidates for the AGM positions would not qualify.

Jane Garcia: Unaware that the Department is offering vaccinations at the clinics. No signs at South LA. A Captain, who trains on animal handling at North Central, has two rottweilers he will not allow to be adopted. Commented that on a problem that occurred involving a staff member and a long-time volunteer.

Phyllis Daugherty: May 28 - June 9 will be the first convention for veterinarians on spay/neuter in Mexico; there will be a rush order for the translated version of "Quick Spay" to be distributed. Impounds are going down, but animals on the streets are going up. Officers need to cite for dogs of leash and impound them. Requested to have signs posted throughout the City, addressing the off-leash and abandonment issues.

Michelle Kelly: Commended on the increase in impounds and adoptions at the Harbor Center. The animals are perceived to be safer under Capt. Michelle Roache. She takes transfers when there is available space. Would like to see the breakdown on dogs, cats, and rabbits adopted and altered and on those that are not. Also requested a breakdown on the euthanasia rate.

Zsuzsa Blakely: If you don't do it to humans, don't do it to animals. There is no such thing as euthanasia and it's not forgivable. It is killing. The LAMC refers to the General Manager as the one who can authorize the killing. Most of the adoptable animals at the shelters are being killed and nobody knows. Appalled at the New Hope Program. Has been cut off on knowing who is at risk. New Hope List is useless.

Tina Clark: Put out the Kill Lists along with the New Hope Lists. Confused that several lists do not include animals from South LA. Communications have stated that South LA has not had any healthy adoptable animals available. Confused that another email stated that animals behaviorally unsound and pets that are under met would not be put on the list.

Teri Austin: Thru a cooperative effort with Kitten Rescue and the Feral Cat Alliance and forty trappers, the Amanda Foundation performed sterilizations for 153 feral cats. The trappers are really starting to work with the community. Such efforts are needed in San Pedro and Wilmington.

Evelyn Walton: In March, North Central had seventeen rabbits and seventy rabbits throughout the whole shelter system. Today, North Central has seventy-seven rabbits and 125 overall. For other animals in March, there were 180. Today there are 380. The solution is finding the breeders and stopping them.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 12:50 P.M.