

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES
SPAY / NEUTER ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES
December 1, 2008**

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m., by Laura Beth Heisen, Chairperson, Spay/Neuter Advisory Committee

Present were Committee members:

NAME	COUNCIL DISTRICT
Marie Atake	11
Dr. Bill Bender	12
Bobby Dorafshar	3
Laura Beth Heisen	10
Ricardo Mendoza	9
Elizabeth Oreck	5
Rachel Paap	4
Christine Peters	1
Theresa Sardisco	15
Cheri Shanker	6
Scott Sorrentino	2
Lezle Stein	14
Jean Marie Wisniewski	13

Absent were Committee members:

NAME	COUNCIL DISTRICT
Judie Mancuso	7
Willie Solomon	8

I. GENERAL BUSINESS

Chairperson Laura Beth Heisen (Heisen) announced that Christine Peters, who was initially assigned to the External group during her absence, would move to the Internal group which better matches her expertise.

II. MINUTES

Chairperson Heisen suggested postponing approval of the minutes for the meetings of September 22, 2008 and October 21, 2008 to the next meeting in order to give all committee members a chance to review them.

III. INFORMATION GATHERING

Ms. Heisen emphasized that the Committee is required to turn in a preliminary written report in March 2009 and a final report in October 2009. The report should contain suggestions for how to improve spay/neuter education and services in Los Angeles, with special emphasis on helping low income residents.

Ms. Heisen emphasized that ideas put forth by the Committee in its report should be doable, as opposed to a wish list. She noted that the Committee's report might discuss how LAAS could more effectively utilize its resources.

The role of the new Department Volunteer Coordinator (Jared Sorkow) was discussed as to the responsibilities of the position vis-à-vis spay/neuter, where he is located and how volunteers can be used to help spay/neuter education and services. It was decided that Ms. Stein and Ms. Wisniewski would meet with the Volunteer Coordinator.

Ms. Heisen encouraged all Committee members to read the City Controller's Audit of LAAS Spay/Neuter. She also encouraged all Committee members to read the Committee's and other spay/neuter pages on LAAnimalServices.com, which includes requirements to become an approved "registry" at referenced in a spay/neuter ordinance exemption.

An LAAS organization chart was distributed and made available for the public. Ms. Heisen noted that the chart could inform the Committee regarding LAAS persons responsible for spay/neuter and could help focus the Committee's recommendations.

Ms. Stein commented that LAAS staff training to make spay/neuter a priority is important. She has noticed that shelter personnel do not refer people to the Sam Simon or Amanda Foundation vans for spay or neuter services and do not offer spay/neuter coupons or certificates to people needing spay/neuter services.

The Committee discussed the progress that had been achieved since the last meeting. Different ways of gathering information were put forth.

Ms. Papp asked Ross Pool, LAAS Management Analyst II, when the questions she Emailed to LAAS would be answered. Mr. Pool stated that Ms. Papp would have the answers in one week.

a. LAAS administration, meeting November 24, 2008

Ms. Heisen described the November 24, 2008 meeting with Committee members Cheri Shankar, Judie Mancuso, Theresa Sardisco, Christine Peters, Bobby Dorafshar, and Ms. Heisen, a representative from the Humane Society of the United States invited by a Committee member, and LAAS administrative staff members AGM of Administration Linda Barth, Administration Supervisor John Forland, Computer/Chameleon Specialist Dara Ball and Spay/Neuter Program Administrator Brenda van den Bosch.

Ms. Heisen noted that Ms. Barth had said that nothing had changed regarding LAAS

spay/neuter efforts and all matters noted in the Controller's spay/neuter audit remain correct. Notes of the meeting were distributed and made available for the public.

Documents distributed by LAAS at the meeting were distributed to Committee members and made available to the public.

b. LAAS shelter/field employees -- Employee survey?

Ms. Heisen suggested that the Committee should find out what ideas the employees have to help spay/neuter education and services, since the employees work closely with the public throughout the city on a day-to-day basis. Ms. Oreck felt this would give the employees a feeling of ownership. It was decided that Ms. Heisen, Ms. Wisniewski and Ms. Sardisco develop questions and try to find out what the employees' ideas are. Their draft questions will be discussed at the next Committee meeting. There should be 10 easy answer questions that could be sent to each shelter employee, and a general question permitting written ideas. Ms. Papp said the survey could be done online using "Survey Monkey." It was suggested that LAAS send an EMail to all staff members telling them to go to the Survey Monkey. Ross Pool is to check with AGM Kathy Davis to be sure this LAAS EMail to all staff is possible.

Ms. Peters suggested that the Committee go to each shelter Captain to get the Captains' input. The questions should include a general request for ideas. The following Committee members represent Council Districts in the following shelter district areas. At least one person shown for each shelter should communicate with the Captain of that shelter. The people listed should choose which one or more for their shelter will make the contact.

North Central: Ms. Wisniewski, Ms. Stein, Ms. Peters and Ms. Papp

South LA: Ms. Heisen; Mr. Mendoza; Mr. Solomon

Harbor: Ms. Sardisco

Mission: Ms. Mancuso

West LA: Ms. Atake; Ms. Oreck

West Valley: Dr. Bender, Mr. Dorafshar

East Valley: Mr. Sorrentino; Ms. Shankar

It was suggested that LAAS management be advised that the Captain meetings and employee survey will take place, and that LAAS management should support the Committee's efforts to gain this information which will be useful.

Ms. Shankar noted that Committee members should visit their Council District's shelter. Ms. Heisen requested that, when Committee members visit the shelters, they take note of spay/neuter information made available for the public at the shelters, i.e., spay/neuter van schedule availability and placement, spay/neuter educational materials including in languages other than English, how easy the materials are to spot and to access, etc.

c. Veterinarians

Ms. Oreck commented that some rescue groups have been unable to give their LAAS spay/neuter coupons away because the public will not take them. Reasons?

- a) People do not know where to go for affordable spay/neuter.
- b) The coupons expire
- c) People do not know at the time of being offered the coupon which veterinarian they will ultimately go to for the surgery; since the coupons require that the veterinarian's name be written in upon issuance, these people do not take the coupon.
- d) \$30 off the spay/neuter price is not enough to motivate many people to spay/neuter (other than those who would likely spay/neuter anyway). Ms. Peters then questioned why the Department prints \$30.00 coupons
- e) Mr. Sorrentino said the process of receiving and using a coupon is too complicated.

The Committee should attempt to resolve as many of the coupon issues as possible.

- d. Community**
- e. "Regular and Systematic Input" on recommendations, especially from low income residents**
- f. Neighborhood Councils**

A discussion on the best way to obtain community information for the Committee ensued.

Ms. Heisen requested that all Committee members have a telephone or other conversation with their Council offices regarding any unusual spay/neuter concerns or opportunities in that Council District. This could include spay/neuter affordability, fairness, and also what spay/neuter needs and resources exist in the Council District and what ideas does the Council office have for what might help spay/neuter in the particular Council District.

Ms. Sardisco suggested each shelter sending volunteers into the communities to advertise spay/neuter. This could be handled by each shelter's volunteer group.

Several Committee members recommended that a comprehensive list of spay and neuter services available be compiled for the public.

Ms. Papp suggested sending a survey to all Neighborhood Councils. Ms. Stein commented that very few people were involved in Neighborhood Councils. Ms. Shankar suggested that the Committee put together questions that can be combined and sent to Neighborhood Councils. It was suggested that two types of questions be put forth: general, and specific to the areas involved. It was decided that Ms. Papp and Ms. Shankar would draft ten multiple choice questions to discuss at the next Committee meeting; after approval, the questions will be sent to Neighborhood Council Presidents and stakeholders.

Printing surveys if necessary: The major and some minor printing businesses will donate some or all of the printing cost in return for an acknowledgement of thanks somewhere on the flyer. Also Neighborhood Councils might have printing budgets.

Ms. Heisen stated that she had learned that the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) sends a newsletter and the Committee can request to have a notice of its survey included. Ms. Papp said she would draft a brief notice for the DONE newsletter.

IV. COMMITTEE'S ULTIMATE REPORT

A discussion on the format for the interim and final report ensued. One suggestion was to present the March 2009 preliminary written report presenting the Committee's key recommendations as of the preliminary written report date in a modified outline or list format with brief explanation only, and the final report fully explaining those key recommendations and making more recommendations as deemed useful and feasible. The goal of this approach would be to help LAAS get started on the Committee's important recommendations without need of waiting for the final report in October 2009.

Ms. Heisen noted that the terms "low cost" spay/neuter and "low income" residents may mean different things to different people at different times. The possibility of defining these terms, and whether a definition would be useful, will be discussed at the next Committee meeting. The question of residents with no transportation, shut-ins and other disabilities was discussed and if they were included in the low income definition.

Ms. Heisen questioned how the Department can measure success of spay/neuter programs on low income residents.

V. SUBCOMMITTEES: REPORTS, DISCUSSION, REPORT OUTLINES, BROWN ACT

Regarding the Brown Act, Mr. Pool stated that forwarding information to more than a quorum is allowable. However, comments on that information cannot be forwarded to more than a quorum. Documents can be posted on the Committee's website to be available to all Committee members and to the public.

Ms. Heisen stated that the subcommittee structure has issues and Committee members would have individual assignments rather than working in Subcommittees. There will be no subcommittees and as in the past no subcommittee final decision-making. Committee members are, consistent with the Brown Act, free to discuss the subject matter of the Committee's work with other Committee members including with persons with similar areas of responsibility but only if fewer than a quorum of the full Committee (that is, fewer than eight members of the full Committee) are involved.

Mr. Sorrention reported that what had been the Internal subcommittee had begun developing a list of questions for LAAS.

Mr. Mendoza reported that what had been the External subcommittee is waiting for information from LAAS that had been requested by Ms. Papp.

Dr. Bender reported that what had been the Veterinary subcommittee had faxed its survey to the SCVMA, which will distribute the survey to member Veterinarians throughout the city. The survey seeks information including numbers of procedures done, coupons acceptance, and factors that encourage or discourage Veterinarians from participating in low-cost spay/neuter programs.

VI. INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENTS

The Committee began identifying individual topics of assignment for each Committee member to be responsible for producing the topic section(s) of the Committee's report, as follows:

a. Internal topics:

Mr. Dorafshar: (a) Enforcement; (b) ordinances

Ms. Heisen: (a) LAAS staff/organization/priorities; (b) clinics; (c) ordinances

Ms. Mancuso: (a) Statistics; (b) costs

Ms. Sardisco: (a) Certain s/n programs; (b) miscellaneous internal matters

Mr. Sorrentino: (a) Certain s/n programs; (b) miscellaneous internal matters

b. External topics: [**Topics are still pending;** so far actions.]

Mr. Mendoza: a) Meet with South LA shelter Captain;

Ms. Papp: a) Create questionnaire document to be distributed to point person on every Neighbor Council; b) identify and establish contact with Dept. of Neighborhood Empowerment to distribute questionnaire; c) create questionnaire for Rescue Organizations that distribute s/n vouchers and coupons; d) meet with North Central shelter captain;

Ms. Peters: a) meet with North Central shelter captain; b) research the idea of a Deposit so when an unfixed animal is impounded, the owner must pay a deposit refundable upon proof of s/n surgery done for pet.

Ms. Shankar: a) Create questionnaire document to be distributed to point person on every Neighbor Council; meet with East Valley shelter Captain

Ms. Stein: a) meet with North Central shelter captain; b) meet with new LAAS Volunteer Coordinator; create agenda for that meeting; c) investigate status of S/N vouchers and coupons.

Ms. Wisniewski: a) meet with North Central shelter captain; b) meet with new LAAS Volunteer Coordinator; create agenda for that meeting.

c. Veterinary topics: [**Topics are still pending**; so far actions.]

Ms. Atake: Evaluate the number of surgeries performed under the various Department of Animal Control programs and the number of veterinarians participating in these programs. Evaluate the number of surgeries performed under the auspices of certain of the animal welfare groups throughout the City of Los Angeles and the number of veterinarians participating in these programs.

Dr. Bender: Develop a questionnaire to be distributed to veterinarians which can evaluate both their current level of participation in spay/neuter programs available to low income residents and the potential for increased participation in these or as yet other undefined programs.

Ms. Oreck: Evaluate the number of surgeries performed under the auspices of certain of the various animal welfare groups throughout the City of Los Angeles and the number of veterinarians participating in these programs.

VII. LAAS DRAFT SPAY/NEUTER ORDINANCE DOCUMENT

Mr. Dorafshar passed out an information booklet that has been prepared by LAAS, regarding the new spay and neuter ordinance and LAAS actions to assist and enforce compliance. Mr. Dorafshar stated that Mr. Boks had provided the document and that the document had already been distributed by LAAS to each of its shelters. Mr. Dorafshar had read the document and did not find new enforcement or progress. He believes that the law should be fine-tuned.

Ms. Shankar stated that the law-abiding with spay/neuter. She stated that the Committee should include recommendations to have those not inclined to spay/neuter to have their pets spayed and neutered.

Ms. Shankar and Mr. Dorafshar stated that the total enforcement time should be shortened from what is provided in the ordinance. Mr. Dorafshar noted that the enforcement time provided in the ordinance is long enough to result in the conception and birth of another litter of puppies or kittens.

VIII. TASKS FOR NEXT MEETING

SAME AS VI.

IX. FUTURE MEETING DATES

Future meeting dates are:

January 5, 2009

January 26; 2009
February 16, 2009
March 9, 2009

The locations are to be determined.

If a meeting is held at the North Central shelter, 7:00 pm meeting start time is acceptable to Committee members.

X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

LAAS spay/neuter coupon recommendations

LAAS free certificate recommendations

\$70 amount appropriate?

Income level for qualification appropriate?

XI. PUBLIC COMMENT

A member of the public stated that she would like to help the Committee with its work in any way needed. She has a background in public policy and with animals. She provided her contact information to the Committee.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:35 p.m.