

## **POLICY MOTION**

**COMMITTEE:** MVCC Board (WRAC Motion)

**TITLE:** WRAC letter regarding mistreatment of animals under LA City care

**PURPOSE:** MVCC support for a WRAC letter to Councilmember Koretz (CD 5) and Mayor Garcetti regarding the mistreatment of animals in the care of the Department of Animal Services.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Text of Council File 22-0943

“For the 2022-23 fiscal year the Los Angeles Department of Animal Services (DAS) received only enough of the City's General Fund monies to, according to department management, fully staff and operate four municipal animal shelters. As of August 1, 2022, however, the department is operating six shelters, all understaffed, with one additional shelter being operated under contract by a nonprofit organization. DAS now has seven shelters with the means to fully operate only four of them.

In the summer of 2022, with the city still plagued by periodic surges of COVID-19, the department's staff has been further depleted by sick leaves and quarantines. As a result, it has become impossible to accomplish all the tasks necessary to properly care for the animals housed in the shelters. Feeding the animals, cleaning the kennels and cages, providing exercise, enrichment, and veterinary care, and optimally showcasing animals for adoption opportunities has not been achieved to the degree desired by management, staff, and the public. Additionally, the constraints on shelter hours of operation limit the department's ability to serve the public and take full advantage of volunteers who are more than willing to assist with the animal welfare mission.

Despite this, the department has been able to maintain a high live-release rate, especially for dogs and cats that far surpasses what it was able to do even 15 years ago. However, it has been longer than that since the department had the resources available to be fully staffed. In the last two decades, a series of recessions and the pandemic have hobbled the City Budget and DAS has never been able to obtain the budget it needs. Under City law, its fundraising and grant-seeking efforts cannot be used to pay for staff, so addressing the issue becomes a matter of formal budgeting.

Animal Services is one of the few City departments whose staff is directly responsible for the care of living beings. As such, while the City has played a national leadership role with regard to animal welfare policy over the last couple of decades, a more reliable manner of funding DAS should be a priority going forward.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Department of Animal Services, the CAO, the CLA, and any other relevant departments and stakeholders to determine the budgetary needs for the department to fully staff, seven animal shelters and all programmatic and departmental administrative needs and report

back to the City Council in 60 days with that information, including responses on the following issues:

- A. Determine the percentage of the City's annual General Fund expenditures necessary to accomplish full staffing and expanded shelter operational hours.
- B. Explore additional funding options such as a parcel tax, sales tax, or other means of augmenting General Fund monies to achieve these goals.
- C. Options for utilizing general obligation bonds instead of general funds to improve DAS facilities built with G.O. bonds, such as Proposition F funds used to construct the facilities in 2000.
- D. Possibility of supplanting budgeted general fund monies for the DAS with funds received from a proposed parcel tax.
- E. Eligible uses of funds (construction, capital improvement, ongoing staffing, administrative, etc.) pursuant to the various proposition types that the City Council could approve to be placed on a future ballot.
- F. Structure of a possible oversight committee including proposed members and the level and nature of oversight.”

#### Bel Air – Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council Letter

“Dear Mayor Garcetti and Councilmember Koretz,

Like most Angelenos, members of the Bel Air-Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council were appalled and disappointed by the reports in the Los Angeles Times of mistreatment of animals in the care of the Department of Animal Services. It appears that the Department is understaffed and lacks skilled managerial leadership, and these shortcomings led to a profound breach of moral duty.

It is unfathomable how neither the PAAW Committee nor the Board of Animal Services Commissioners (made up entirely of Mayor Garcetti’s appointees) gave any public indication of these problems and left it to a newspaper exposé and the honest words of volunteers to make these conditions known to the wider public. Smaller news outlets have documented these conditions before, including occupied animal living quarters overrun by rats.

BABCNC has a liaison appointed to coordinate with the Department of Animal Services, but the Department has not communicated with Neighborhood Council representatives for years even before the pandemic.

Further, volunteers who were indefinitely “suspended” after speaking to the media must be immediately reinstated. Terminating highly skilled volunteers of longstanding who run shelter programs such as dog playgroups, train other volunteers, and walk the more challenging dogs materially and seriously harms animals in the shelters. Retaliation against employee whistleblowers is illegal, and

retaliation against volunteers is obviously wrong and erodes trust in our City's governance structures.

The City's leadership should also immediately consult with shelter volunteers on how to include them in discussions on solutions to the shelter system's problems. One option that could be considered is the formation of a volunteers' "Animal Services Advisory Committee," with representatives elected by the volunteers from each of the City's shelters.

The animals in the shelter system, the shelter volunteers, and the taxpayers, deserve the ethical treatment that would be provided by a better run department, and responsibility for delivering it falls to you and your appointees.

BABCNC will gather more information on this situation and engage with the Department directly. However, it seems clear that responsibility for the situation and a plan for action needs to be forthcoming from the Mayor's Office immediately.

This letter was approved unanimously by the Board of the Bel Air-Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council at a duly noticed regular meeting with a quorum present and voting on July 27, 2022."

**THE MOTION:** The Mar Vista Community Council strongly supports the sentiments, goals and requests made in the letter from Bel-Air Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council of August 10, 2022, to Mayor Garcetti and Councilmember Koretz concerning the mistreatment of animals at City Shelters.

**DIRECTED TO:**

Eric Garcetti,  
Mayor City of Los Angeles

Paul Koretz, Chair  
Personnel, Audits, and Animal Welfare Committee  
City of Los Angeles