

CP-16 - 1357

Item #7



Wildlife Learning Center

Summary of Organization And Operations

Introduction

Wildlife Learning Center respectfully asks that we be exempt from the Los Angeles City Exotic Animal Ban. We maintain the highest standards of animal care and public education in the zoological industry. We are confident that after reading this document you will have a thorough understanding of our institution and will continue to allow us to care for animals in need and educate the public in the life sciences and wildlife conservation.

The following is a description of Wildlife Learning Center, our purposes, and the high standards of care we provide for the animals.

About the Wildlife Learning Center

Wildlife Learning Center (WLC) is located in Sylmar, California, nestled in an old olive grove.

WLC was founded to provide public education in the life sciences, conservation, and the environment. As a wildlife sanctuary, WLC is dedicated to providing life-long care to animals in need. More than 40 different species of displaced, rescued, and zoo-born wild animals call this shady, natural environment home.

Improving the lives of animals and raising awareness

- Located in Sylmar, CA
- Wildlife Park for interactive life science education and recreation
- WLC educators share a passion for wildlife and the environment
- Inspire children to take a deep interest in the life sciences and conservation
- Animal sanctuary

The WLC staff is a team of 16 biologists with a passion for wildlife and environmental education that encourages the public to value, appreciate, and conserve our natural heritage. Each staff member has a minimum of a bachelor's degree in biology, zoology, or animal science from some of the top universities in the country.

Wildlife Learning Center employs a highly regarded veterinarian who has the distinction of being a Diplomate in the American College of Zoological Medicine. She is one of only three veterinarians in Los Angeles County who is Board Certified in Zoo medicine and she makes herself available to Wildlife Learning Center seven days a week, 24 hours a day. We are free to contact her at any time with any question or concern about an animal in our care. WLC has an onsite veterinary suite, allowing our veterinarian to give immediate care.

Mission Statement

To provide public education that inspires people to care for our wildlife, to care for our environment, to develop a deep interest in the life sciences, and to give sanctuary to animals in need.

Wild Animal Rescue and Sanctuary

Dozens of animals come to Wildlife Learning Center from unfortunate situations. Some animals were confiscated from people who kept them as illegal pets; some owners relinquish a pet because they no longer can or want to care for their animal; and some are rehabilitated animals that are determined to be non-releasable, meaning they cannot survive in the wild. Occasionally, we will acquire an animal from a zoo or wildlife facility that does not have the space

Animals In Need

- Unwanted pets
- Confiscations
- Non-releasable wildlife
- Zoo surplus

and is seeking to transfer that animal to a beneficial situation. For these animals, Wildlife Learning Center becomes their permanent home where they receive life-long care.

Life Science Education

Wildlife Learning Center was founded to provide public education in the life sciences. WLC biologists have given over 25,000 education programs in the Los Angeles Unified School District and in surrounding school districts. We have reached hundreds of thousands of children. Our classes focus on ecosystems and habitats, adaptations, and wildlife conservation. Studies conclusively show that live animals provide experiential learning that improves student comprehension and retention. In their journal article "Using Experiential Learning in Wildlife Courses to Improve Retention, Problem Solving, and Decision-Making," Kelly F. Millenbah and Joshua J. Millspaugh say that "experiential learning broadens, extends, and deepens the intellectual content of instruction by integrating theory and practice, increasing student motivation through the experience of applying knowledge."

WLC also offers adult education classes in the natural sciences. We give lessons on ecosystems and habitats, adaptations, wildlife conservation, feeding behaviors, and several more. After experiencing one of our classes, people undoubtedly gain a greater appreciation for wildlife and for conservation of our natural environment.

Wildlife Learning Center is open to the public seven days a week for visitors to see and to learn about wildlife from around the world. Annually, WLC draws over 35,000 onsite visitors. Each species of animal contributes to our educational goals and gives the public an opportunity to see and learn about animals they otherwise would not experience. Hourly talks and personal tours give visitors a special opportunity to see animals up-close and to receive in depth information.

WLC biologists have given life science presentations at multiple schools in the following Southern California school districts:

School Districts Where Wildlife Learning Center Has Given Life Science Education

- ABC Unified School District
- Acton-Agua Dulce Unified School District
- Alhambra Unified School District
- Antelope Valley Union High School District
- Arcadia Unified School District
- Azusa Unified School District
- Baldwin Park Unified School District
- Bassett Unified School District
- Bellflower Unified School District
- Beverly Hills Unified School District
- Bonita Unified School District
- Burbank Unified School District
- Castaic Union School District
- Centinela Valley Union High School District
- Charter Oak Unified School District
- Claremont Unified School District
- Compton Unified School District
- Covina-Valley Unified School District
- Culver City Unified School District
- Downey Unified School District
- Duarte Unified School District
- East Whittier City School District
- Eastside Union School District
- El Monte City School District
- El Monte Union High School District
- El Rancho Unified School District
- El Segundo Unified School District
- Garvey School District
- Glendale Unified School District
- Glendora Unified School District
- Gorman Joint School District
- Hacienda La Puente Unified School District
- Hawthorne School District
- Hermosa Beach City School District
- Inglewood Unified School District
- Keppel Union School District
- La Cañada Unified School District
- Lancaster School District
- Las Virgenes Unified School District
- Lennox School District
- Little Lake City School District
- Long Beach Unified School District
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Los Nietos School District
- Lowell Joint School District
- Lynwood Unified School District
- Manhattan Beach Unified School District
- Monrovia Unified School District
- Montebello Unified School District
- Mountain View School District (Los Angeles County)
- Newhall School District
- Norwalk La Mirada Unified School District
- Palmdale School District
- Palos Verdes Area Unified School District
- Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District
- Paramount Unified School District
- Pasadena Unified School District
- Pomona Unified School District
- Redondo Beach Unified School District
- Rosemead School District
- Rowland Unified School District
- San Gabriel Unified School District
- San Marino Unified School District
- Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District
- Saugus Union School District
- South Pasadena Unified School District
- South Whittier School District
- Sulphur Springs School District
- Temple City Unified School District
- Torrance Unified School District
- Valle Lindo Elementary School District
- Walnut Valley Unified School District
- West Covina Unified School District
- Westside Union School District
- Whittier City School District
- Whittier Union High School District
- William S. Hart Union High School District
- Wiseburn School District

This list does not include the many schools we have visited in the Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and other neighboring Southern California school districts. Wildlife Learning Center does not have the resource capacity to fulfill every request for wildlife presentations and must turn down a significant number of requests for presentations.

Compliance

Wildlife Learning Center holds permits from, is inspected by, and is in compliance with the following agencies:

- City of Los Angeles Animal Services
- State of California Fish and Wildlife
- USDA Animal Welfare
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Permit for Migratory Birds
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Permit for Eagles

Wildlife Learning Center has never been in violation of any local, State, or Federal regulations, and in our 19-year existence we have never experienced a breach in safety.

Wildlife Learning Center is in the planning stages for accreditation from the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA).

Partnerships

Wildlife Learning Center partners with several organizations to give workplace experience and to bring life science education to their organizations. Every spring, WLC provides life science education for audiences at Disney's latest nature movie at El Capitan Theater, Hollywood. Before the showing of each nature movie, WLC educates viewers with an informative wildlife presentation as a special event for moviegoers. WLC has worked closely with the Los Angeles Zoo by caring for some of their surplus animals and exchanging husbandry information. WLC has an ongoing

relationship with Tierra Del Sol to offer community employment services for developmentally disabled adults. Participants gain real workplace experience to prepare them for future job opportunities. WLC partners with the Moorpark Community College's Exotic Animal and Training and Management (EATM) Program to give hands-on work experience to their students. Additionally, WLC Executive Director, David Riherd, is on the EATM Advisory Board. WLC fulfills biology student class projects for local colleges and universities including UCLA, California State University, Northridge, Loyola Marymount University, College of the Canyons, and Pierce College.

Partnerships

- Disney
- Los Angeles Zoo
- Tierra Del Sol
- Moorpark College Exotic Animal Training and Management Program
- UCLA
- California State University, Northridge
- College of the Canyons
- Pierce College
- Loyola Marymount University

Behavioral Enrichment

Wildlife Learning Center takes great care, time, and expense ensuring the well-being of the animals we provide lifetime care to.

Behavioral enrichment is an animal husbandry principle that seeks to enhance the quality of captive animal care by identifying and providing the environmental stimuli necessary for optimal psychological and physiological well-being. The goal of environmental enrichment is to improve or maintain an animal's physical and psychological health by increasing the range or number of species-specific behaviors, increasing positive utilization of the captive environment, preventing or reducing the frequency of abnormal behaviors such as stereotypes, and increasing the individual's ability to cope with the challenges of captivity. The purpose of behavioral enrichment is to improve the overall welfare of animals in captivity and to create a habitat similar to what they would experience in their wild environment.

The following describes just some of the methods by which Wildlife Learning Center provides our animals with behavioral enrichment.

- Environmental: enhancing the animals' captive habitat with opportunities that change or add complexity to the environment.
- Feeding: by presenting food to an animal in different ways, such as hiding or scattering food throughout their habitat, or buried. Natural hunting and scavenging behaviors are encouraged by requiring the animals to investigate, manipulate, and work for their food as they would in non-captive environments.
- Manipulation: providing items that can be manipulated by the paws, feet, tail, horns, head, mouth, and so on. This promotes investigatory behavior and exploratory play that is often closely related to behaviors that can be seen by the species in a natural, wild habitat. It is not uncommon to see manipulation and feeding techniques combined. Many objects offered to an animal in their habitat can contain treats that require the animal to open, break apart, and/or find the treats through obstacles within the enrichment object.
- Puzzles: requiring an animal to solve simple problems to access food or other rewards. These puzzles can include puzzle feeders that contain the animal's meal.
- Sensory: stimulating animals' senses: visual, olfactory, auditory, tactile, and taste. Olfactory senses can be activated by presenting scents that the animal would encounter while hunting and mating in the wild. Caretakers include prey, predator, and pheromone scents within the enclosure. Auditory senses can be activated by playing recordings of the animal's natural habitat, animal, and vocalizations that can be heard by the species in the wild.
- Social: providing the opportunity to interact with other animals, either conspecifics or interspecifics.
- Training: training animals with positive reinforcement or habituation. This technique not only helps the animal to become mentally stimulated, but also helps to create and form a bond between the animal and his/her caretaker, allowing the caretaker to get a closer look at the animal on a daily basis and to promote easier daily and veterinary care.

Wildlife Learning Center in the Community

WLC provides free programs, passes, and opportunities to dozens of local schools and various organizations. The following are just a few:

Make-A-Wish Los Angeles, Hope 4 Hanna, Shane's Inspiration, Kiwanis Club San Fernando, California State University, Northridge, Chabad of Northridge, Westchester Lutheran School, American Cancer Society Relay for Life, LAUSD, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Autism Speaks, MEND, Valley Care Community Consortium, Muscular Dystrophy Association, Motion Picture and Television Fund, Friends of Los Angeles River, Amgen, Theatricum Botanicum, Sylmar Women's Club, Tiputini Biological Research Station, Mercy House, San Fernando Valley elementary schools and hundreds more.

Annual Fundraiser: *Safari Night Awards Dinner*

Generous supporters of Wildlife Learning Center enjoyed an evening with family, friends, and a lovely reception and silent auction, followed by our awards dinner and special animal interactions, all under the stars at Wildlife Learning Center. Donors help to support WLC in our efforts to care for animals in need and to continue educating the public in the life sciences and wildlife conservation.



WLC honored legendary actress Betty White with our inaugural *TEACH Lifetime Achievement Award*. TEACH stands for Taking Environmental or Animal Causes to Humanity. Because of Betty's lifetime love of animals and her support of Wildlife Learning Center, she was our first choice to receive our inaugural award. Betty has been an inspiring public figure, encouraging people to care for animals from around the world. Betty supported our efforts to build an onsite veterinary suite, a heated night house for our beautiful macaws, and helped with general operating costs that often exceed \$2500 a day.



In addition to honoring Betty White, we honored NCIS star Pauley Perrette with our inaugural *Advocate Spotlight of the Year Award*. Because of Pauley's generous contribution to Wildlife Learning Center and her advocacy for human rights and animal welfare, she was the clear choice for our inaugural *Advocate Spotlight of the Year Award*. We honored Pauley with this award in recognition of her dedication to animal



rescue, to civil rights, and for the public awareness she creates to better the lives of people and animals everywhere.

A highlight of our Safari Night Awards Dinner was the announcement that Pauley Perrette would fund the development of a larger more enriching environment for our two sloths. Their new home will be temperature controlled and equipped with a misting system to give these rainforest dwellers the warm, humid environment they require.

Additional Organization Information

History

- 1993 - Cofounders Paul Hahn and David Riherd began rescuing unwanted pets and taking them to local schools to act as living visual aids to teach the California State Standards for the Life Sciences
- 1998 - Formed S-Corp and won teaching contract with Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District
- 1999 - Won LAUSD contract for Beyond the Bell. Taught lessons at six schools a day, five days a week until recession caused budget cuts in 2009
- 2003 - Formed Nonprofit 501(c)3; began reducing S-Corp activities to transition to a fully nonprofit organization
- 2007- Moved to current Sylmar site (0.8 acre)
- 2008 - Opened to the public and began onsite programs
- 2010 - Began incorporating Common Core State Standards for Life Sciences into our presentations
- 2015 -To date, WLC has provided over 22,000 educational programs in the Los Angeles area to hundreds of thousands of children, with an especially high volume of Title I elementary schools. Their students come from low income areas and lack opportunities.
- WLC is working with City of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks on relocation to a new site to facilitate more animal rescue and public education.

Education

- What distinguishes WLC from other local animal sanctuaries and zoos is that WLC was founded to teach the life sciences. WLC only employs well-educated staff with degrees in biology. Our curriculum focuses on the Common Core State Standards for Life Sciences.

Organizational Structure

- WLC is undergoing a transformation from an S-Corp/501(c)3-hybrid organization to an entirely nonprofit organization. Expected changeover is early summer 2017.
- S-Corp "Wildlife Learning Center" was founded in 1998. Tax ID: 90-0044899
- Non Profit 501(c)3 "Wildlife Learning Foundation" was founded in 2004. Tax ID: 75-3100001

Evolution of Non-Profit 501(c)3 structure: Founders David Riherd and Paul Hahn started teaching children about the life sciences and caring for people's unwanted pets. David and Paul were in college studying biology at the time and were naïve about business structures. An attorney friend recommended that they incorporate for liability protection. David and Paul's life science programs gained the interest of many schools and teachers and because of the nature of their activities they were advised to structure their organization as a non-profit. Lacking experience and thorough understanding

about running a non-profit, they proceeded with caution by starting a non-profit arm and maintaining the S-Corp. Today, Wildlife Learning Center's activities reflect a non-profit structure and Wildlife Learning Center is in the process of transitioning solely to a Non-Profit 501(c)3.

Physical Grounds

- WLC began leasing the current site October 2007 on about a one-acre parcel, zoned A2.
- WLC has been well received by the surrounding community. The immediate community has been exceptionally supportive.
- WLC is in the process of renewing our lease in order to give time for the transition to a larger site.

Staffing and Leadership

- WLC's cofounders are David Riherd and Paul Hahn, Executive Director and President, respectively
- Wildlife Learning Foundation has an eight-person Board of Directors.

Wildlife Learning Foundation's Board of Directors

Paul Hahn, President and Cofounder WLC
David Riherd, Executive Director and Cofounder WLC
Amy Foote, Secretary and Professor, College of the Canyons
David Shikiar, Treasurer and Television Executive Producer
Tammy List, Member and Cartoon Network Story Board Editor
Nikki Osborn, Member and Professor, Pierce College
Alona Tal, Member and Actor
Ashley Erikson, Member and President of Magnolia Park Merchants Association

Wildlife Learning Foundation is looking to expand its Board of Directors and has extended an invitation to Brian Pendleton to join.

- WLC's daily operations are supervised by General and Operations Managers
- WLC programs are taught by 16 staff biologists, 6 interns, and 22 community volunteers
- WLC uses a pro bono employment attorney and has a well-developed Employee Manual and Policies and Procedures Manual, as well as a thorough hiring and training program.

Security

WLC has several audio pick-ups and video surveillance cameras throughout the facility. WLC's General Manager lives on site. Local LAPD officers enjoy making regular visits to WLC. They provide added security and security consultation.

Insurance

- WLC has been fully insured for 19 years
- General Liability with two million aggregate, which has never been used
- Workman's Compensation: Over 19 years there has been less than \$1000 in claims
- Officers and Directors Insurance (no claims)
- Business Practices Insurance (no claims)
- Automobile Insurance (Less than \$500 in claims in 19 years)
- Health Insurance is offered to all fulltime employees.

Thank you for taking the time to learn about Wildlife Learning and giving thoughtful consideration to exempting WLC from the exotic animal ban.

In closing, I would like to present to the City Council the support of former Council member Felipe Fuentes. Felipe Fuentes was a long time supporter of Wildlife Learning Center who greatly valued WLC as a meaningful asset to the community. Following is a letter demonstrating his support.



FELIPE FUENTES

City of Los Angeles
Councilmember, Seventh District
200 N. Spring Street, Rm. 455, Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 473-7007 • (213) 847-0707

Committees:
Energy & Environment
Chair
Housing
Vice-Chair
Health, Mental Health &
Education, *Member*
Planning & Land Use
Management, *Member*
Board of Referred
Powers, *Member*

August 26, 2016

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Los Angeles District
915 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Dear Army Corps of Engineers:

I am writing to express my full support for Wildlife Learning Center's (WLC) relocation to the Hansen Dam Recreation Area in Lake View Terrace, California.

WLC is a nonprofit animal sanctuary in Council District 7 that teaches life science education utilizing over 50 species of rescued and zoo-born wildlife as living teaching aids. Their outreach program alone has provided over 22,000 educational presentations to mostly Title I school children over the last 20 years. They are highly regarded throughout the Los Angeles area and work closely with the Los Angeles Unified School District, La Canada Unified School District, Palos Verdes Unified School District, and 80 other Southern California school districts. They have also worked closely with Disney and several television networks.

WLC is currently located on a one acre site in a residential area of Sylmar and is open to the public seven days a week. They have expressed an interest in expanding to meet the growing need for their programs. I have discussed the possibility of relocating to a site in Hansen Dam with the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks, adjacent to the Children's Discovery Cube museum, that I believe would be a wonderful new location for WLC and would greatly enhance the area and our community.

Relocating in Hansen Dam would provide synergistic opportunities with the children's museum and give the residents of the San Fernando Valley a zoological park to experience and to learn about nature and animals. WLC would make Hansen Dam a more attractive destination, with the potential to significantly

Sylmar Office
14117 Hubbard Street, D1
Sylmar, CA 91342
(818) 756-8409
(818) 362-4857

Pacoima Office
13520 Van Nuys Blvd., Ste. 209
Pacoima, CA 91331
(818) 485-0600
(818) 896-9250

Tujunga Office
7747 Foothill Blvd.
Tujunga, CA 91042
(818) 352-3287
(818) 352-8563



@Fuentes4LA



www.7thDistrict.net



7

Dear Committee on Personnel and Animal Welfare,

RE: **Opposition** to agenda item #16-1357 :

Please include this letter into public record to be included in any hearing, studies, and or reports pertaining to this issue.

My name is Elisa Lopez and I am writing to assert my opposition to the ban of exotic animals, agenda item 16-1357.

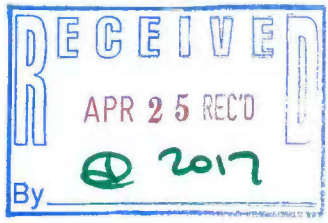
I feel that it is absolutely appalling that a law can be passed with such little regard to reality and based on the opinion of uneducated zealots. America is the land of the free... our system should be balanced. The committee reacted to the loud minority...the knee jerk reaction to the people claiming abuse. That is just not the case. The people who devote their lives to animals and their care represent the finest America has to offer. They respect animal life and welfare. They have the reputations to prove it. They give to the community through their hard work and dedication to these animals. Yes it is for profit, as it should be.

NOBODY can do things for free...Zoos get grants, thats money. Animal companies don't abuse their animals, its not good business. To be blunt, the opinions of a few people who think its "mean" or "cruel" to own and work with animals have and will skew the data to support their own agenda. They clamor, cajole and lie. Nobody beats their animals to make them do tricks; It is not how things are done. There are bad people in this world, but not all animal owners are automatically bad and abusive opportunists. Banning anything in America should be the last resort, NOT the first.

I **OPPOSE** the ordinance as written.
Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

Elisa Lopez

elisa5453@gmail.com



7

Dear Committee on Personnel and Animal Welfare,

RE: **Opposition** to agenda item #16-1357 :

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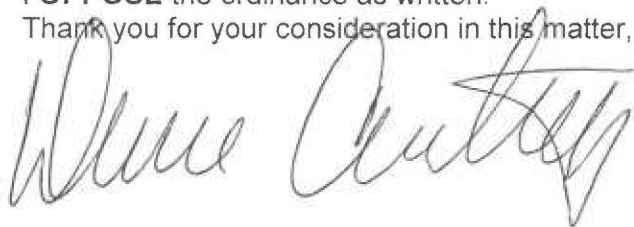
My name is Dawn Courtney and I am writing to assert my opposition to the ban of exotic animals, agenda item 16-1357.

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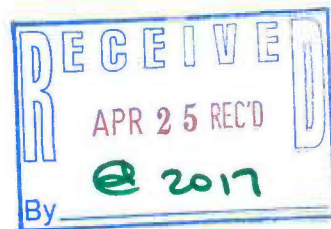
I **OPPOSE** the ordinance as written.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,



4.24.17

dawnbcourtney@yahoo.com



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Dear Committee on Personnel and Animal Welfare,

RE: **Opposition** to agenda item #16-1357 :

Please include this letter into public record to be included in any hearing, studies, and or reports pertaining to this issue.

My name is Silvia Ramirez and I am writing to assert my opposition to the ban of exotic animals, agenda item 16-1357.

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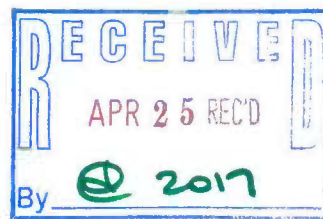
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I **OPPOSE** the ordinance as written.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,



ramirezsil56@gmail.com



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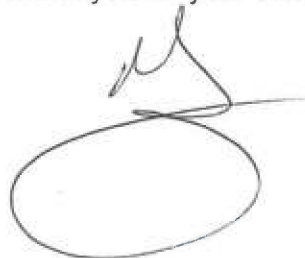
My name is Niki Schindler and I am writing to assert my opposition to the ban of exotic animals, agenda item 16-1357.

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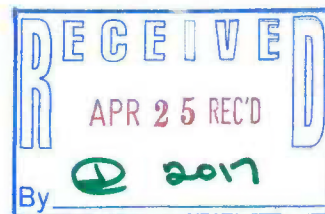
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I **OPPOSE** the ordinance as written.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,



MIBOEDITORA@ME.COM



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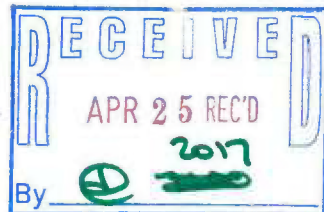
My name is Rachelle Oestreich and I am writing to assert my opposition to the ban of exotic animals, agenda item 16-1357.

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I **OPPOSE** the ordinance as written.
Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

Rachelle Oestreich, RVT.
roestreich@nwanet.com



7

Dear Committee on Personnel and Animal Welfare,

RE: **Opposition** to agenda item #16-1357 :

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My name is Michele Pitillo and I am writing to assert my opposition to the ban of exotic animals, agenda item 16-1357.

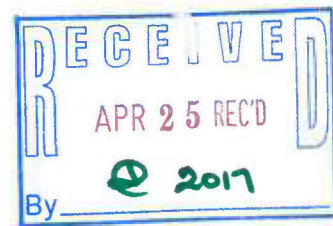
I feel that it is absolutely appalling that a law can be passed with such little regard to reality and based on the opinion of uneducated zealots. America is the land of the free...our system should be balanced. The committee reacted to the loud minority...the knee jerk reaction to the people claiming abuse. That is just not the case. The people who devote their lives to animals and their care represent the finest America has to offer. They respect animal life and welfare. They have the reputations to prove it. They give to the community through their hard work and dedication to these animals. Yes it is for profit, as it should be.

NOBODY can do things for free....Zoos get grants, thats money. Animal companies don't abuse their animals, its not good business. To be blunt, the opinions of a few people who think its "mean" or "cruel" to own and work with animals have and will skew the data to support their own agenda. They clamor, cajole and lie. Nobody beats their animals to make them do tricks; It is not how things are done. There are bad people in this world, but not all animal owners are automatically bad and abusive opportunists. Banning anything in America should be the last resort, NOT the first.

I **OPPOSE** the ordinance as written.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,


MPitillo@yahoo.com



7

Dear Committee on Personnel and Animal Welfare,

RE: **Opposition** to agenda item #16-1357 : Please include this letter into public record to be included in any hearing, studies, and or reports pertaining to this issue.

My name is Darrin Nason, and I am writing to assert my opposition to the ban of exotic animals, agenda item 16-1357.

My name is Darrin Nason and I have worked and hired animals in the industry in the last 5 years.

I even have friends that are studio animal trainers and I work for an accredited company where they have and continue to supply animals for the motion picture industry for over 30 years. In addition to studio work, They also provide animals for special events, presentations, outreach, etc.

I can speak on behalf of everyone in the animal industry when I say that we LOVE the animals. I know people that in the last few years I have been taking care of animals in extreme heat, rain, cold weather on weekends and Holidays. We as animal trainers and keepers are on 24 hour stand by 365 days a year and are often not able to spend Holidays with family and friends to take care of our animals.

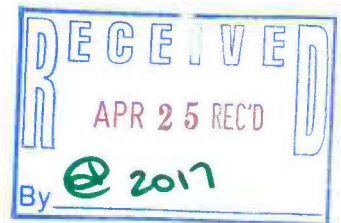
The majority 99% of us DO NOT ABUSE our animals. We love them and mourn them when we lose one just as anyone would with their dog or cat. All of these animals are cared for with the upmost respect. The animals have a nutritious diet for them to thrive on, provide them with behavioral enrichment, train them with behaviors to stimulate their minds, exercise them to ensure that they are in good physical health. We all care for the physical and psychological well being of these animals. Facilities are properly permitted by USDA, US Fish and Wildlife Service, California Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as city permits. When we take our animals to events, we establish rules and boundaries to assure the safety of the public and the animals. They are never left unsupervised or put in a dangerous situation. A majority of animals used for outreach and education are rescues from rehabilitation centers that can't be released into the wild and many of our facilities get contacted by Fish and Wildlife if they have animals in need of a home as in for example confiscated illegal pets or animals from illegal animal trafficking. Taking these animals to private events and educational presentations helps teach people of all ages about them and their environment and the threads they are currently facing and why they are not meant to be pets and need to be taken care of by trained animal professionals. People love what they know and nothing can replace a child in a school seeing an actual live animal up close and personal with a chance to ask questions.

I am writing to you as a concerned fellow citizen. I believe that this ban will jeopardize an important form of education for our future generations. Studies have shown that people learn best in a hands on environment, whether it takes place at a school or a private event. Passing this ban will not help any animals or make the city safer but only feed into the agenda of a minority group of people that want no animals in captivity including everyone's pet. Also on a personal note I do have to mention that this ban would devastate some of my friends and families way of making a living. It also everyone is so attached to the animals it would be like separating members of your family. These animals are a HUGE part of their life. Emotionally and also financially.

I do agree that there should be stricter laws for people that abuse animals or do not care for them properly. Please do not go to the extreme. Understand the business more before you destroy it.

I stand in strong opposition to this ban and urge you to do the same.


hinason@att.net



7

Dear Committee on Personnel and Animal Welfare,

RE: **Opposition** to agenda item #16-1357 :

Please include this letter into public record to be included in any hearing, studies, and or reports pertaining to this issue.

My name is Dr. Stephanie Hengst and I am writing to assert my opposition to the ban of exotic animals, agenda item 16-1357.

I feel that it is absolutely appalling that a law can be passed with such little regard to reality and based on the opinion of uneducated zealots. America is the land of the free...our system should be balanced. The committee reacted to the loud minority...the knee jerk reaction to the people claiming abuse. That is just not the case. The people who devote their lives to animals and their care represent the finest America has to offer. They respect animal life and welfare. They have the reputations to prove it. They give to the community through their hard work and dedication to these animals. Yes it is for profit, as it should be.

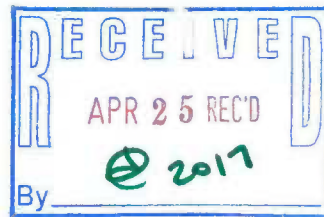
NOBODY can do things for free...Zoos get grants, thats money. Animal companies don't abuse their animals, its not good business. To be blunt, the opinions of a few people who think its "mean" or "cruel" to own and work with animals have and will skew the data to support their own agenda. They clamor, cajole and lie. Nobody beats their animals to make them do tricks; It is not how things are done. There are bad people in this world, but not all animal owners are automatically bad and abusive opportunists. Banning anything in America should be the last resort, NOT the first.

I **OPPOSE** the ordinance as written.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,



shengsta@nva.net.com



7

Dear Committee on Personnel and Animal Welfare,

RE: **Opposition** to agenda item #16-1357 :

Please include this letter into public record to be included in any hearing, studies, and or reports pertaining to this issue.

My name is Lisa Hill and I am writing to assert my opposition to the ban of exotic animals, agenda item 16-1357.

I feel that it is absolutely appalling that a law can be passed with such little regard to reality and based on the opinion of uneducated zealots. America is the land of the free...our system should be balanced. The committee reacted to the loud minority...the knee jerk reaction to the people claiming abuse. That is just not the case. The people who devote their lives to animals and their care represent the finest America has to offer. They respect animal life and welfare. They have the reputations to prove it. They give to the community through their hard work and dedication to these animals. Yes it is for profit, as it should be.

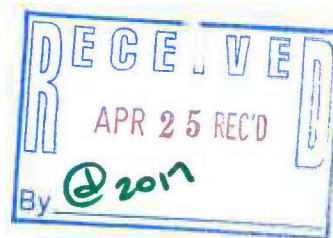
NOBODY can do things for free...Zoos get grants, thats money. Animal companies don't abuse their animals, its not good business. To be blunt, the opinions of a few people who think its "mean" or "cruel" to own and work with animals have and will skew the data to support their own agenda. They clamor, cajole and lie. Nobody beats their animals to make them do tricks; It is not how things are done. There are bad people in this world, but not all animal owners are automatically bad and abusive opportunists. Banning anything in America should be the last resort, NOT the first.

I **OPPOSE** the ordinance as written.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,



whahreception@vnet.com

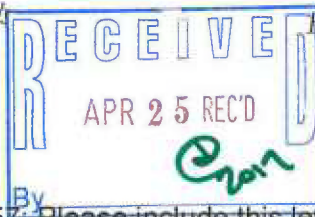




Hollywood Animals

Exotic and Domestic Animals

Film • Television • Stage • Events



April 25th, 2017

Re: Opposition to Agenda Item #16-1357. Please include this letter into public record to be included in any hearing, studies, and or reports pertaining to this issue

Dear Council Member,

My name is Eric Weld and my wife, Bettina Weld, and I own Hollywood Animals. We provide animals for special events, education (birthday parties; weddings; art installations, etc.) and for the film industry (please consider that an all-inclusive term for film, television, commercials, still shoots, etc.). Hollywood Animals has been in business since 1986 providing these animals, locally and around the world. We pride ourselves on providing the best care and husbandry for all of our animals - from adult big cats to our dogs, and everything in-between. We are professional animal trainers and members of the Teamsters Local 399 Union. I sit on the Animal Handler, Trainer, and Wrangler subcommittee for the Local 399 Union.

I submit to you that a ban on Exotic animals in the City of Los Angeles for all purposes except filming, and other noted exemptions, is not in the best interest of Los Angeles. At every event we have attended with a large cat, or other exotic animal, there has been nothing but praise and awe at the beauty and majesty of the animals we provide. Guests engage the trainers on site with questions about the animals, such as his/her normal daily routine, his/her living area, his/her contentment or happiness, etc. These conversations always shift to their 'brethren' living in the wild and topics that affect these animals. The guests of these events truly appreciate these animals for who they are and I have yet to meet one person whose demeanor or words invoke the belief that they view these animals as "toys". This 'education through sight' leads to greater understanding of all animals and provides people with a platform to become properly educated and, hopefully, greater advocates for all animals and their plight against potential extinction.

As animal caregivers, we don't have the luxury of turning off our computers at 5pm on Friday and coming back to work at 9am on Monday morning. Animal care is a 24/7/365 work ethic. The animals' demands are high and even higher are our demands on ourselves to deliver the best for these animals. We come into this occupation knowing that vacations are often canceled, family dinners often moved to the following night, promises to humans placed second to those of our animals. These are the choices we have made in order to be able to spend time with these magnificent animals. This is a lifestyle we have chosen. Calling it a career or occupation would belittle and demean the emotional and physical attachments we feel towards these animals. They are our loved ones and our family members. It is important for you to know this as we are constantly ridiculed to the contrary.

Our safety measures and mindset are the same whether we are on a film set or at an event: the safety of the people around us (film crews or guests at an event) and our animals' psychological, emotional, and physical well-being is paramount. Ensuring our animals are safely secure in a viewing enclosure allows us to present these animals at events, and show

the guests their magnificence and discuss them individually as well as that particular species overall. This platform breeds respect for these animal species and teaches people information most are not aware of before talking to the trainers.

Professional animal companies are inspected, monitored, and regulated by many government bodies. At the Federal level, the USDA/APHIS, whose Animal Welfare Act covers almost all animals and the proper care required for these animals; unannounced inspections; the holding of us to proper animal husbandry regulations. At the State level, California Fish and Wildlife monitors our animal facility for animal husbandry, properly sized and outfitted enclosures, and public safety concerns. Los Angeles County monitors us for our animal menagerie and our dog kennel. They all concern themselves with proper animal care, proper animal husbandry, and a properly maintained facility for animal welfare, cleanliness, and public safety.

Lastly, we are permitted and monitored by the Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS) whenever we come into the city of Los Angeles, or any other City that has a contract with LAAS for animal enforcement. We have a very good working relationship with LAAS' employees. They have a large file on Hollywood Animals - and any other professional animal company doing business in Los Angeles - including current copies of our USDA, CA Fish and Wildlife permits, proof of our General Commercial Liability Policy, our Emergency Action Plan and Protocols, and contact details of our veterinarian for emergency purposes. Furthermore, LAAS vets each event for public and animal safety. LAAS' tasking of the animal company and the event source to provide critical information on each event has gotten stricter and better. These rules, regulations, and vetting processes are fair, and are easy for any professional animal company to be compliant with. It is unfair to lump-sum these professional companies and their trainers with unpermitted and lascivious-minded people who do not follow the simple rules of animal care and public safety.

In closing, taking away the ability to have exotic animals on display at events would limit the exposure people have to these magnificent creatures. It would furthermore limit their learning about these animals and cultivating visceral feelings about them and the continued need for conservation efforts. They say knowledge is power and there is no better way to empower and engage people than seeing the beauty of an animal up close. As lifelong animal advocates and professionals, we always hope that our passion and appreciation for our animals passes onto all those we talk to at these events.

I am asking you to reconsider the exotic animal ban on behalf of all animal advocates everywhere: professional animal trainers, educators, researchers, scientists, caretakers, and animal lovers. Having animals at public and private events is an important part of making sure our kids will care about taking on the complicated environmental challenges that face our communities and our planet.

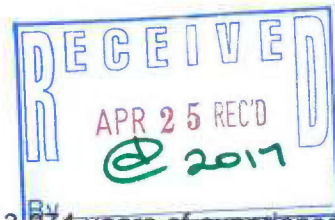
I thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and ask that you oppose this agenda item #16-1357

Sincerely,



Eric M. Weld

April 25th, 2017



We, the undersigned animal care specialists, with a combined 3,074 years of experience, strongly oppose any ban presented by the Los Angeles City Council pertaining to the exhibition of wild and exotic animals. We represent true animal experts, as proven by our extensive years of service working directly with exotic animals, and our individual and collective work in management, exhibition, education, outreach, and conservation programs.

While activists may claim that a proposed ban is necessary, the truth is that exotic animals are already regulated on the federal, state, county and local levels. Any ban/restriction of exhibiting or working with exotic animals is unnecessary. Please do not waste legislators' time and taxpayer money when there are already laws in place to prevent animal cruelty while promoting public safety. The animal facilities that exhibit exotic animals are strictly regulated through the USDA/APHIS and the Animal Welfare Act, as well as California Fish & Wildlife Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Exhibitors not only have regularly scheduled inspections at their facilities, at on site projects, but also are open to 24 hour surprise inspections while traveling, as they must submit a travel itinerary to the USDA for all overnight stays. The American Humane Association, Movie Animals Protected, and Animal Protection Agency regulate film productions from beginning to end for animal health and welfare.

Exotic animal related injuries are extremely rare, yet are always sensationalized so activists can make them seem more prevalent. Statistics show there are more than 4.5 million dog bites per year resulting in 300,000 seeking medical attention and 9,500 being hospitalized and causing 30 deaths. Horse related accidents cause almost 80,000 emergency room visits and 30 deaths per year. Trampolines result in over 1 million emergency room visits and 25 deaths per year. Even wild deer cause 200 death related accidents per year and cows (yes cows) 28 per year. In comparison since 1990 (almost 30 years) there have been less than 1,500 injuries from animals in human care (including AZA accredited zoos) and more than 1,200 of those were from illegal pets, not from animals cared for by professionals. As professionals, the safety of our animals and the public is always our number one priority.

Our animals are not forced to perform for any reason. Any "trick" you may see an animal perform is an example of a natural behavior, brought about with positive reinforcement. Trained behaviors are all based on the animal's natural ability and only serve to enhance their physical conditioning and mental well-being. If an animal is stressed or refuses to perform they are immediately removed from the situation.

As of the beginning of May there will no longer be traveling circuses coming into the city of Los Angeles, as the Shrine Circus decided to remove animals from their shows in 2014 and Ringling Brothers will no longer be touring. To propose an ordinance addressing the circus is no longer pertinent.

As children become more disconnected from nature and more connected to digital and electronic devices; as the Federal Government slashes important organizations' budgets (i.e. The National Parks Service), the services we provide may be their only connection to wildlife and nature.

There are over 50 licensed and regulated organizations that conduct business with exotic animals in the city of Los Angeles. These organizations, their employees, and the public that benefit from the programs they provide will suffer if this ban is passed. These organizations together conduct outreach, educational programs, and exhibits to more than 4 million people per year – this being a conservative estimate!

Please acknowledge the expertise of the undersigned animal care specialists charged with the care and well being of exotic animals. Passing a ban that would limit their continued ability to reach and educate the public would be detrimental to the conservation message they all play a part in, and detrimental to animals themselves.

*Nick Toth - 53 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Steve Martin - 50 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Cheryl Shawver- 50 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Jules Sylvester- 50 years experience

*Sled Reynolds – 50 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*David McMillan – 45 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Hubert G. Wells – 45 years experience
Moorpark College EATM program Co-Founder
Teamsters Local 399 - Retired

*Kari Johnson - 42 years experience
Professional member Zoological Assn. of America
CA Dept. of Fish & Game Animal Welfare Advisory Committee member
Elephant Managers Assn. Member

*Sue Hanson - 42 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Rob Bloch- 41 years experience
Bachelor of Science Degree
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program
Member Teamsters Local 399

*Larry Madrid - 41 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Larry Payne – 40 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Bob Dunn - 40 years experience
Teamster Local 399 - retired

*Karin McElhatton - 40 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Joe Camp - 40 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
BS – Rutgers Univ

*Bobbi Edrington – 40 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Gayle Phelps - 39 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Steve Berens – 38 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Mark Harden - 38 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Keith Bauer - 37 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Carol Sonnheim – 37 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Chris Edrington – 36 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Mark Jackson – 35 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Catherine Pittman- 35 years experience
Pre-vet Cal Poly Pomona
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Tammy Maples - 35 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

Doree Sitterly – 35 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program
BFA - CalArts

*Cindi Cavallini- 34 years experience
Zoological Association of America-Professional Member
Co-Chair- Animal Welfare Committee Circus Fans of America
American Association of Zookeepers- Professional Member
International Outreach Committee Member-AAZK
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Karla Majewski-34 years experience
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program
Professional Development Chair- Western Fairs Association
Service member board president WFA

*Teresa Ann Miller -34 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Christie Miele-33 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Benay Karp - 33 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Janine Aines - 33 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Hayden Rosenaur - 32 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399 – retired

*Kari Toth - 32 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Scott Davis -32 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Thomas Roach - 31 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Ursula Brauner – 30 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*David Allsberry – 30 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Mark Forbes - 30 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Titus Reynolds - 30 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Mathilde DeCagny - 30 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Gregg Pittman – 30 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Pierce College Graduate – Animal husbandry and Farm Management

*Bobby Lovgren – 28 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Stacy Gunderson – 28 years experience
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

* Jackie Navarro- 28 years experience
Director of Wild Wonders, Inc., a Zoological Association of America accredited facility
Past president of Association of Wildlife Educators
Member of American Association of Zoo & Aquariums
Institutional member of American Association of Zookeepers
Bachelor of Science degree in wildlife biology

*Tom Gunderson - 28 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Melinda Eichberg - 27 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Stephanie Taunton - 27 years Experience
State Certified K9 trainer
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Tony Suffredini -27 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Dale Anderson – 26 years Experience

*Brian Turi- 26 years experience
BS- animal science
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Melinda Eichberg- 26 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Michael Morris, Jr. - 26 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Sue Chipperton- 26 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Tamara Reynolds – 26 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Paul Hahn – 25 years Experience
BS – Biology Cal State

*David J. Riherd- 25 years experience
BS UCLA – Biology
Masters – Biology Cal State
Zoological Association of America — Professional Member
Masters of Science-Molecular Genetics

*Kimberly Wright- 25 years experience
Zoological Association of America-Professional member
Bachelor of Science-Biology

*Susan Benedon - 25 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
BS Animal Science, UMASS

*Carolyn Doherty – 25 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Tiffany Wall – 24 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Denise Saunders - 24 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Steve Solomon – 24 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Nerissa Forbes - 24 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Debbie Pearl – 24 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Deborah Dellosso - 23 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Joe Suffredini - 23 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Tracy Kelly- 23 years experience
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Diane Branagan – 22 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Marissa Schwierjohn - 22 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Diane Wickenheiser- 22 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Eadie Chassie – 22 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Chris Pollard- 21 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Guin Dill - 21 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Janice Gantenbein - 21 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Sheri Aparicio – 20 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Alexis DeMangelaere – 20 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Veronica Jaimerson- 20 years experience
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Todd Forsberg - 20 years experience
Member Teamsters Local 399

*Tonia Forsberg - 20 years experience
Member Teamsters Local 399

*Mary Kate Gallivan – 20 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program
BS in Biology, College of Charleston, SC

*Jeff Lee – 20 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Jen Rios- 19 years experience
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Claire Dore – 18 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Kelli Brownell-Fulco – 18 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Mark Schwaiger – 17 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program
*Linda Dunn-17 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Christina Tomas - 17 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*John McCormack - 17years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program
U Mich Grad - Animal Behavior

*Mike Milliotti - 17 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*David Meyers – 16 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Eric Weld- 16 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Wendy DeCoito – 16 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Karl Miller – 16 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Wendy Debbas - 16 years experience
President – Project Survival
BS – Animal Science
Masters – Animal Science
Professional Membership – Zoological Association of America

*Tina Weld- 15 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Heather Long- 15 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Sarah Taylor -14 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Judy Taunton – 13 years Experience
Vet Tech 10 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Amy Borowski – 13 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Charlotte Woertler - 13 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Javier Aguilar - 12 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Sarah Schwaiger - 11 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Stacey Johnson- 11 years experience
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Kimberly Andrews - 11 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
BS in Biology – Western Oregon U.
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Tuesday Torrese - 11 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Alison Smith - 11yrs experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Christina Guerrero – 11 years experience

*Erin Stonerook – 11 years experience

*Justin Pittman – 10 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Alyson Rousseau – 10 years Experience

*Jessica Cervantes – 10 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*James Rodriguez - 10 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Kelly at Phil's – 10 years Experience
Animal Vet Tech -7yrs
American Humane Association representative, 3 years
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Richard Nyberg- 9 years experience
Member, Teamster Local 399

*William Warden- 9 years experience
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program
Member Teamsters Local 399
Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Exposition
Certified Veterinary Assistant

*Jaimie Councilor – 9 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Tyler DeTrude - 9 years
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Candice Dymec- 8 years experience
Professional member of American Association of Zookeepers,
Professional member of Zoological Association of America
Member of ABMA, IMATA and IRKA
Degree in psychology

*James Woodard - 8 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

*Rachael Greenstone - 7 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Molly O'Neill - 7 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
*Kirsten Otto - 7 years Experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Crystal Chen- 7 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Exotic Animal Training and Management Program

*Joy Rondstadt - 6 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Jennifer Hart- 6 years experience
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program
Bachelor of Science-Biology

*Amanda Daudo – 6 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Elizabeth Smith –5 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Michelle Engler- 5 years experience
Bachelor of Science –Zoology

*Nicola Aringer – 5 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

*Mandy Lee May – 5 years experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program

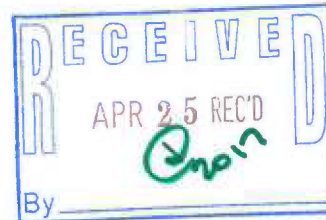
*Jessica Malley- 4 years experience
Bachelor of Science- Biology
American Association of Zookeepers-Professional member

*Adriana Garcia - 4 years experience
Moorpark College Graduate - EATM program
Member Teamsters Local 399

*Aaron Wells - Animal Trainer, 4yrs experience
Member of Teamsters Local 399

April 25, 2017

Dear Committee on Personnel and Animal Welfare,



OPPOSITION to agenda item #16-1357: Please include this letter into public record, and it is to be included in any hearing, studies, and or reports pertaining to this issue.

I am an animal trainer for the film, television, and advertising industry. Over the past 25 years I have worked for multiple companies who supply these animals and have had the opportunity to raise, care for, train, and work not only dogs and cats but many of the species being designated "exotic" in this proposed ban. I STRONGLY OPPOSE this motion as it is currently written, as it will have a huge negative fiscal impact on hundreds of businesses and wage earners in LA County by eliminating our industry, while its "benefits" are solely to placate extremist anti-animal groups such as PETA and alleviate the political pressure they put on the Council to bring such motions.

If the goal of the ban is to put a stop to unregistered and unmonitored "traveling zoos and circuses," a goal I would definitely support, then the wording needs to be much more precise. As currently written it says it excludes all "legitimate filming purposes, research facilities, and legitimate conservation-related programs or presentations." However, it does not define what makes any of these exceptions "legitimate."

I am highly concerned that this vague language was chosen intentionally to increase the likelihood of the motion being passed, with a larger agenda of amending it in the future to define "legitimate" in a way that excludes our entire local industry. PETA has made no secret of their ultimate goal of prohibiting animals being used for entertainment of any kind, and during previous public discussions of this matter some councilmembers openly stated they support eventual complete removal of live animals from the film industry, suggesting they can just be created with CGI.

This motion claims to be coming from a goal of stopping inhumane practices with these animals, going so far as to state they currently "suffer from loneliness, malnutrition and the overwhelming stress of lengthy confinements during transport" and that "handlers have been repeatedly shown to use inhumane training techniques." This is rhetoric fed directly from extremist organizations, based on misleading and manipulated propaganda pieces such as Blackfish. No, those of us who are dedicating our lives to loving and caring for these animals are not using inhumane techniques and causing our animals overwhelming stress; we are devoting 7 days/week to care for them, living our lives covered in fur and feathers because we're constantly interacting with them, using various forms of positive reinforcement to capture their natural behaviors on cue such that we can ask for those behaviors while a camera rolls and they'll happily do them. An overwhelmed, stressed, malnourished animal will not walk about a film set, tolerate the chaos of a shoot, take direction from its trainers and successfully offer the same behavior for multiple takes. The idea that these animals are horribly unhappy is simply wrong and ignorant. We are monitored by a multitude of agencies who can back up the assertion that we provide clean, comfortable environments for our animals and train them with the utmost of humane, positive techniques.

On the back of this letter is a list I put together of what I think are the pros and cons to this motion. I urge you to re-word it in such a way as to protect all the good of our industry while rightfully protecting us from what is bad.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Doherty
Studio Animal Services
661-257-4798
StudioAnimals@gmail.com

In regards to Agenda Item #16-1357, LA Ban on Exotic Animal Use

Pros to this motion, as currently written:

1. It would prohibit the use of wild and exotic animals for profit by individuals and businesses with no demonstrable training or expertise.
2. It would prohibit the use of wild and exotic animals for profit by individuals and businesses which are not being monitored and inspected by any of the locally and federally established QC organizations.
3. It would prohibit use of wild and exotic animals for profit by individuals and businesses which are not registered and permitted by the city.

However this Motion, as currently written, is very detrimental to the people and city of Los Angeles:

1. It makes no mention of the significant negative fiscal impact to the city of Los Angeles by banning hundreds of legitimate, permitted, monitored and provably humane animal projects which happen in our city annually, within the entertainment industry as well as for education and conservation.
2. It makes no mention of the projected amount of revenue the city will lose when legitimate and humane animal film, television, and commercial industry work, the majority of which happens here in Los Angeles, moves to locations outside Los Angeles in places without a similar ban.
3. Similarly, attempting to “replace animals with CGI” will result in vastly higher production expenses, as well as the export of jobs to locations outside Los Angeles (commercial CGI work is primarily outsourced to India and Canada).
4. It is ill-defined in establishing what is considered a “wild or exotic” animal, and makes no basis for such categorization
5. It is ill-defined in establishing what is a “legitimate filming purpose” and “legitimate conservation-related program or presentation.”
6. It includes only the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) as a monitoring organization which would grant an organization exemption from this ban, while animal companies who participate in legitimate filming purposes and conservation-related programs and presentations are not monitored by AZA, but instead are stringently inspected and monitored by the US Department of Agriculture, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Fish and Wildlife Service.
7. It fails to consider the already significant oversight of additional monitoring organizations such as American Humane Association (AHA) and similar organizations concurrent to legitimate filming projects.
8. It gives no support for the provably false assertions that the use of exotic animals “has taught our children that it is perfectly acceptable to treat wild and exotic animals as objects or toys.” Attendance at a wildlife educational presentation by any one of the several legitimate conservation organizations here in LA will demonstrate that the primary goal is to teach respect for wildlife and the idea of conservation. Professionally handled exotic animals receive the highest possible care and attention, with facilities being continually inspected and certified.
9. It mentions the “misuse of wild and exotic animals,” states they often “suffer from loneliness, malnutrition and the overwhelming stress of lengthy confinements,” and assert “handlers have been repeatedly shown to use inhumane training techniques,” yet provides no references. This language is completely false (and incendiary) with regards to professional animal handlers. These atrocities, though horrific-sounding, do not represent the conditions nor practices of the legitimate, permitted, and highly-monitored animal organizations that exist in Los Angeles.