

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: Submitted in opposition: LAAS GM Seeks \$60M for Feral Cat/TNR Plan as LAPD Animal Cruelty Program Cut PHYLLIS M. DAUGHERTY 11/23/20 ANIMAL WATCH-At the same time Chief Michel Moore is forced to make painful cuts to specialized units within the Los Angeles Police Department -- including the Animal Cruelty Task Force -- due to budget defunding by Mayor Eric Garcetti, LA Animal Services GM Brenda Barnette is anticipating Council approval of an estimated \$60-million program to spay/neuter 20,000 feral/stray cats annually for the next 30 years. At the November 10, 2020, meeting of the Los Angeles Animal Services Commission, as residents of Los Angeles reel under new COVID-19 restrictions and looming job and home losses, GM Brenda Barnette urged -- and received -- approval of the Citywide Cat Program which commits the City to provide annual spays/neuters for 20,000 TNR (trap/neuter/release) feral/unsocialized or stray cats per year. This is an estimated expenditure of \$2 million annually, based on current cost of approximately \$100 per cat. There is no identified source for funding as this proposal which would require the City to spend an estimated minimum of \$2 million on feral cat sterilization beginning in 2021, and a mandate to spay/neuter at least 20,000 wild cats every year for 30 years, if approved by the Council and Mayor by the end of the year. Since no budget is provided for this plan, which is now scheduled for City Council Committee hearings and anticipated approval, this total expenditure will automatically fall upon taxpayers. The City has already paid at least \$1.3 million to its own Planning Department for an EIR (Environmental Impact Report) which concludes that there will be no negative impact on neighborhoods or wildlife resulting from the release of 20,000 feral cats into the streets annually. (See: LA's Animal Services Chief Thinks \$800,000 Feral Cat Study is a 'Budget Priority') Although Barnette tacitly alluded to possible charitable fundraising under the \$1.5 million public relations firm recently awarded to The Glue by LA Animal Services, she has repeatedly bemoaned that it is very difficult to solicit donations for spay/neuter and humane education. PET SPAY/NEUTER FUND DEPLETED? On May 18, in a CityWatch article, we discussed that the balance in the LAAS' Spay/Neuter Fund, which provides pet sterilizations mandated by law for owned dogs, cats and rabbits, had dropped from \$5M to \$400,000. At the October 27 Commission meeting -- two weeks before approval of the feral cat plan -- Barnette announced that the City's Animal Sterilization Fund to assist owners of pets meet the City's mandatory spay/neuter requirement is depleted. This fund was originally designed to provide vouchers for low-income pet owners who cannot afford to comply with the City's mandatory pet-sterilization law. However, Barnette has distributed partial or full-payment vouchers to all Los Angeles residents, regardless of income and allowed recipients to "self-identify." A very clear analysis of this financial crisis for City animals and pet owners was provided by Senior Management Analyst II, Catherine Chico but is not even partially provided in the transcribed minutes for that meeting. The recorded meeting can be heard here, and seen on the Department of Animal Services Fiscal Year 20-21, 1st Quarter Financial Report Consolidated Overview. A detailed summary of this foreseeable problem was provided on May 15, 2020, in LAAS' Spay/Neuter Fund Drops from \$5M to \$400,000 - Is GM Brenda Barnette Clueless or Crafty? Barnette commented on this monetary crisis as if she is an innocent bystander who can't imagine who mismanaged LA Animal Services' funds. COMMISSION PRESIDENT URGED PLAN HE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND The lack of funding for owned pets was not considered as the feral cat program was approved. There seemed to be a major disconnect evidenced in an "oops moment" before the vote was taken to approve the potential \$60-million commitment when President Larry Gross jubilantly stated that it was a good move because, even if the City didn't meet the 20,000 per-year goal, it would still help the feral cat problem. He was quickly corrected by Dr. Jan Rebstock of the Bureau of Engineering, who clarified that, if this program is approved, the City MUST prove that 20,000 surgeries are being performed in order to be in compliance with the City's analysis, which is intended to overturn a court injunction obtained by the Urban Wildlands Group. Los Angeles is in big trouble when its guiding Commissioners don't clearly understand the impact and cost of their vote. CAT LIMITS INCREASED--BUT NO ACCOUNTABILITY Another component of the Feral Cat Program is that the cat limit per household will increase from three to five...(See: <https://www.citywatchla.com/index.php/cw/animal-watch/20793-laas-gm-seeks-60-million-for-defunded-feral-cat-tnr-animal-cruelty-program%20>)