

Communication from Public

Name: Jeffrey Mausner
Date Submitted: 08/16/2022 08:26 PM
Council File No: 22-0943
Comments for Public Posting: Please see the attached emails, which discuss wrongful termination and suspension of shelter volunteers, as well as deficiencies in issuance of the RFP (Request for Proposals) for the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter. Sincerely, Jeffrey Mausner

Jeffrey Mausner

From: Jeffrey Mausner
Sent: Friday, August 12, 2022 12:39 PM
To: Larry Gross; mike.feuer@lacity.org; Eric Garcetti; Paul Darrigo; Kenneth@mejiaforcontroller.com
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Subject: RE: Northeast Valley Animal Shelter; Reinstate Volunteers - Petition for Grievances

To the Board of Animal Services Commissioners and Officials of the Los Angeles Animal Services Department:

At its monthly meeting on August 11, 2022, the Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils passed the following two resolutions:

1. Suspension or Termination of Animal Services Department Volunteers.

RESOLVED, that the Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (VANC), representing the 34 Neighborhood Councils throughout the San Fernando Valley, strongly condemns the suspension or termination of Volunteers for speaking with the press about conditions in the City Animal Shelters or exercising their First Amendment rights.

In discussion of the motion and in the Hot Topic #5 explanation attached to the agenda, it was noted that in the last month, the Los Angeles Times, as well as other news outlets, have run stories very critical of the Animal Services Department and conditions for animals in the City Animal Shelters, for example:

'It's Inhumane': Dogs At L.A. Animal Shelters Go Weeks Or Months Without Being Walked:
<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-07-14/la-city-animal-shelters-dogs-sit-in-kennels-weeks-months-without-walks>

'Horrificed': L.A. City Council Members Call For Action On Overcrowded Animal Shelters:
<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-07-16/l-a-city-council-members-called-for-action-city-shelters>

LA Animal Services Officials Blame Staff Shortage, Pandemic Challenges For Issues At City Shelters: <https://abc7.com/animal-shelters-la-city-council-concerns-emergency-meeting/12061158/>

Volunteers who spoke with the press and others about conditions at the City Animal Shelters have been suspended or terminated. As well as likely being a First Amendment violation subjecting the City to potential liability, this harms the animals who are deprived of the essential care given by these Volunteers, making the conditions exposed in these articles even worse.

The problems at the City Shelters have been brought up at the Board of Animal Services Commissioners (BASC) meetings for many months, to no avail. For the most part, the BASC and Department Management did little or nothing to fix the problems. And recently, the Commissioners have taken steps to severely limit public comment, and to prevent Neighborhood Council resolutions and Community Impact Statement from being heard at their meetings.

So it's no wonder that Shelter Volunteers, who care deeply about the animals, spoke to the press, newspapers and television news, about what is going on at the Shelters. The Commissioners and Animal Services Department management were ignoring their complaints. In a further attempt to cover-up conditions at the Shelters, the Animal Services Department management, with the apparent approval of the Commissioners, have suspended and terminated Volunteers, in an attempt to intimidate Volunteers into silence.

The above resolution passed with 17 in favor, 3 abstentions. (Only one representative from each Neighborhood Council is allowed to vote.)

2. Northeast Valley Animal Shelter

RESOLVED, that the Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (VANC), representing the 34 Neighborhood Councils throughout the San Fernando Valley, believes the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter should be a full-service municipal animal shelter as contemplated by Proposition F and that no action should be taken on the RFP (Request for Proposal) until it is determined if this can be done.

In discussion of the motion and in the Hot Topic #4 explanation attached to the agenda, it was noted that at last month's VANC meeting, we passed the following resolution regarding the Northeast Valley animal shelter:

The Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (VANC) represents the 34 Neighborhood Councils throughout the San Fernando Valley, including all of the Neighborhood Councils in the vicinity of the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter. This shelter is a City facility built with Proposition F funds to be a municipal animal shelter, open to the public. It was not meant to be a private facility to house rescue organizations. Nevertheless, the Board of Animal Services Commissioners has issued an RFP (Request for Proposal) to do just that, lease the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter to rescue organizations to operate. The Board of Animal Services Commissioners and Animal Services Department did not provide an opportunity for the affected Neighborhood Councils to provide input into this decision. Therefore, it is RESOLVED that VANC takes the position that the Department of Animal Services and City Council should receive input from the affected Neighborhood Councils before releasing the Request for Proposal for rescue organizations to operate the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter.

The RFP was released without input from the affected Neighborhood Councils. In response to VANC's motion, the City Council introduced a resolution (Council File 22-0897, Koretz and Blumenfield) to amend the City Charter to make sure things like this don't happen in the future. The proposed charter amendment would require that the commission associated with any department contemplating the issuance of an RFP hold a public hearing or the department hold a public meeting, to provide members of the public an opportunity to offer relevant ideas for consideration by the department **prior** to the drafting of the RFP.

But the Animal Services Commission doesn't appear to be doing anything to stop the RFP for the Northeast Valley Shelter. So the resolution above was passed, 18 in favor, 3 abstentions.

(Disclaimer: This email is not sent on behalf of the Animal Services Department or as an attorney for any party, but in my individual capacity.)

Sincerely, Jeff

Jeffrey Mausner

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Cell phone: (310) 617-8100

From: Jeffrey Mausner <jeff@mausnerlaw.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 2, 2022 11:47 AM

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Subject: Re: Northeast Valley Animal Shelter; Reinstate Volunteers - Petition for Grievances

After having quickly reviewed the RFP, the following are my comments. These comments are sent in my private individual capacity. They are not on behalf of the Animal Services Department. They are not on behalf of any of the Neighborhood Council entities that I am an official or member of. (Outreach should have been done with the Neighborhood Councils and the Public months ago, so that they could have had input into the process in a timely and orderly manner.) These comments are not sent as an attorney for any party. Just in my private individual capacity. (However, it should be noted that the Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (VANC) passed a resolution regarding this matter, as detailed in the email dated July 15, 2022, below.)

What has the Board of Animal Services Commissioners (BASC) and Los Angeles Animal Services Department (LAAS) done to attempt to secure funding to run the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter as a municipal shelter? Has a budget proposal to run the Shelter as a municipal shelter ever been written or submitted? There is a great deal of money coming to the City from the State and Federal Governments; has any proposal been submitted to ask for a small portion of that money to run the Northeast Valley Shelter? There is a shortage of kennel space to care for the dogs, cats, and rabbits in the City shelter system. Before giving away hundreds of kennels, has a serious attempt been made to secure funding to keep them in the City shelter system? Who is watching out for the interests of the animals? And who is watching out for the interests of the stakeholders of the City who voted for, and paid for, the Northeast Valley Shelter to be a municipal shelter pursuant to Proposition F? Please see the first email in this string, dated July 15, 2022. As noted below, when Proposition F was passed by two-thirds of voters in 2000, residents were told that the Department of Animal Services would operate 8 animal shelters. Voters were told that additional space was needed for animal control officers to “solve problems of stray, abandoned, and dangerous animals” and the new facilities would

improve response times. The Prop F voter guide also acknowledged that additional funds would need to be appropriated to staff the two new animal shelters, one of which was Northeast Valley. However, that was never done, and I have never seen anything to indicate that the BASC or LAAS has made any attempt to secure the additional funds to staff the Northeast Valley Shelter (at least not in recent years).

Assuming that sufficient, sincere attempts have been made to secure funding to operate Northeast Valley as a municipal shelter and that it is impossible to secure that funding now, my comments on the RFP are as follows:

1. What services will the rescue organization provide to the people who approved the funding to build the shelter and paid for it? The RFP is very light on the required services and level of services.
2. The RFP does not specify how many animals the rescue organization will be required to take from LAAS. It does not specify what animals the rescue organization will be required to take from LAAS. Will they be required to take dogs who are difficult to adopt, or can they meet their quota by taking easily adoptable kittens?
3. The RFP does not specify how kennel space will be used. LAAS often has a shortage of kennel space. Will the arrangement with the rescue maximize the amount of kennel space that will be available for the Valley's homeless animals, and how will that be enforced?
4. The RFP specifically provides that "[t]here will be no intake of animals from the public, no public calls for animal pick up ..." RFP page 4. "Proposer will not provide any animal intake at the Shelter and will not accept animals brought to the Shelter by members of the public." RFP page 6. That was never proposed to, discussed, or approved by the stakeholders.
4. The RFP specifically provides that "[t]he City will not allow any Animal Control and Law Enforcement Services to be conducted at the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter." RFP page 7. "The Department is not operating in the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter." RFP page 4. "The Proposers are not to operate a fully functioning animal shelter." RFP page 4. That was never proposed to, discussed, or approved by the stakeholders who paid for the Northeast Valley Shelter facility.

I suggest that LAAS and the BASC immediately attempt to secure funding for the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter to operate as a municipal shelter, including from the General Fund, State and Federal grants and funding. I suggest that you keep the Public (including Neighborhood Councils) advised of those efforts. Keeping us advised will allow us to mobilize support for the attempts you make to secure funding, and if you are ultimately unsuccessful, will at least gain public acceptance of the RFP route. I also suggest that you do outreach to the Public (including Neighborhood Councils) regarding what they would like to see in an RFP. The Stakeholders should not be shut out of something as important as how a multi-million dollar facility that they paid for will be operated.

Regarding the suspended and terminated Volunteers, again, these comments are sent in my private individual capacity. They are not on behalf of the Animal Services Department. They

are not on behalf of any of the Neighborhood Council entities that I am an official or member of. These comments are not sent as an attorney for any party. Just in my private individual capacity.

(However, I will note that several years ago when issues of Volunteers being terminated for exercising their First Amendment rights came up, the Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates passed a resolution regarding that. Please see: <https://citywatchla.com/index.php/budget-advocates-2/19044-budget-advocates-call-for-investigation-of-animal-services-department-volunteer-program>)

The suspension and termination of Volunteers for criticizing the Department or speaking to the press is highly damaging to the Department. The damage to the Department for the suspensions and terminations is as damaging as the revelations those Volunteers have made. The suspensions and terminations exponentially increase the number of people who will see the revelations these Volunteers have made and be concerned about them. The number of people on this email string is continually growing (including bcc's), and more and more people will know about it, including the media.

I have previously written to you (in my individual capacity, not as an attorney for any party) regarding the vague, ambiguous, unpublicized, and unknown media policy regarding Volunteers speaking with the press. It was not until after the latest suspensions that the policy was clarified, in an email to me, but not in a blast email to all of the Volunteers. This whole thing has been handled in a terrible manner. Again, not speaking as an attorney for any party (but as someone who is knowledgeable on the subject as a former attorney for more than 35 years in both private practice and as a former Federal Prosecutor, a former law professor, etc.), you are subjecting the Department, City, and individuals to potential legal liability. I strongly suggest that you immediately reinstate the Volunteers. As Paul Darrigo said, let's complete this and move on. This will not go away until the Volunteers are reinstated, because it is the animals (as well as the principle of Free Speech) who are suffering. Someone please take responsibility for this and see that the Volunteers are reinstated.

Sincerely, Jeff

Jeffrey Mausner

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From: Paul Darrigo <fedguy2@pacbell.net>

Sent: Tuesday, August 2, 2022 12:10 AM

To: Kenneth Mejia <kenneth@mejiaforcontroller.com>; Larry Gross <commissioner.gross@yahoo.com>; Jeffrey Mausner <jeff@mausnerlaw.com>; mike.feuer@lacity.org <mike.feuer@lacity.org>; Eric Garcetti <mayor.garcetti@lacity.org>

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Subject: Re: VANC Resolution re Northeast Valley Animal Shelter - Petition for Grievances

Jeff,

If you are going to Ombudsman for the volunteers, in my opinion, you will have to ask if they want to seek counsel at this point. If a complaint is drafted and petitioned to the city, they will have to answer or it will have to go to the grand jury for a various list of grievances to be discussed side bar.

We have reviewed the LAAS Volunteer handbook and find it vague and ambiguous.

But.

LAAS has an easy win on these suspensions; LAAS has counseled with the volunteers, explained the rules (which are contradicting, vague and ambiguous) and the volunteers grievances have been heard and are being mitigated. They agree to adapt their 1st amendment rights to not speak for LAAS unless given permission and will distinguish when they are expressing their personal opinion. The Volunteer handbook will be revised for clarity and compliance. They can now be reinstated.

Easy win for all.

Let's complete this and move on. Please let me know when you want to talk further on this.

Paul Darrigo
CHULA - Citizens for a Humane Los Angeles
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/773416409436730/>
323-244-8020

On Monday, August 1, 2022 at 08:04:44 PM PDT, Jeffrey Mausner <jeff@mausnerlaw.com> wrote:

Hi Kenneth, thank you for your email, and thank you in particular for your support for the Volunteers who have been terminated (which has been discussed in another email string).

Every current office-holder seems to take the position that they do not have the authority to reinstate the Volunteers. I think everyone who is taking that position is underestimating their authority, or at the least underestimating their influence, to have the Volunteers reinstated. The suspensions have gone on for too long and it is the animals (as well as the principle of Free Speech) who are suffering. Someone please take responsibility for this.

The City Controller may not have the direct authority to reinstate a terminated Volunteer, but I have no doubt that a good Controller could see that Volunteers are reinstated.

Best regards, Jeff

From: Kenneth Mejia <kenneth@mejiaforcontroller.com>

Sent: Monday, August 1, 2022 7:12 PM

To: Larry Gross <commissioner.gross@yahoo.com>

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Subject: Re: VANC Resolution re Northeast Valley Animal Shelter

Hi all, my name is **Kenneth Mejia** and I am the leading candidate to be the next City of LA's **City Controller**. The City Controller is also the City's Auditor in charge of auditing city departments and programs.

I encourage employee heads at LAAS, the Commission, and other City Officials to do a better job in providing transparency AND accessibility when it comes to handling our City of LA animal shelters. For something as important as managing a city animal shelter (e.g. the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter), the public shouldn't have to be given transparency AND accessibility in the form of a Commission President emailing a PDF of the RFP to 70 people on an email thread to make the RFP publicly available.

As others have stated, you cannot access the RFP easily without creating an Angeleno account (why if the public just wants to read the RFP? Larry Gross literally just emailed it to everyone for us to share with the public). In addition, once you create an Angeleno account, you have to have a business to access the RFP doc:

ⓘ You currently do not have a RAMP acc

In addition, I would encourage department heads, the commission, and city officials to **please reinstate volunteers who have been suspended for speaking up about our city animal shelters**. At least, provide suspended volunteers with transparency and courtesy in terms of how long they will be suspended, why they

were suspended, and what can be done to be reinstated (reconciliation process). You all talk about how much LA Animal Services rely heavily on volunteers, well let's make it happen then and work together.

Kenneth Mejia, CPA

Mejia for LA City Controller 2022

mejiaforcontroller.com



Paid for by Mejia for City Controller 2022, FPPC ID#: 1435234

1001 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 102, Los Angeles CA 90017.

Additional information is available at ethics.lacity.org.

On Mon, Aug 1, 2022 at 6:47 PM Larry Gross <commissioner.gross@yahoo.com> wrote:

I downloaded the RFP for you from RAMPLA.org. It is attached.

Larry Gross

Commissioner - President

City of Los Angeles

Board of Animal Services Commissioners

Email : commissioner.gross@yahoo.com

<http://www.laanimalservices.com/about-us-2/commission/>

On Monday, August 1, 2022 at 06:26:45 PM PDT, Jeffrey Mausner <jeff@mausnerlaw.com> wrote:

I still have not been able to access the RFP because I do not have a Company Name and Company Tax ID Number. Has the RFP been posted yet where members of the General Public or Neighborhood Councils can see it?

There is a meeting tonight of the Mission Hills Neighborhood Council (MHNC) in which the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter is on the agenda. As far as I know, members of the MHNC

have also not seen the RFP and their input regarding the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter has not been sought by the Animal Services Department. The Northeast Valley Animal Shelter is located in Mission Hills.

Sincerely, Jeff

From: Jeffrey Mausner <jeff@mausnerlaw.com>

Sent: Monday, August 1, 2022 10:17 AM

To:

Cc:

Subject: Re: VANC Resolution re Northeast Valley Animal Shelter

Thank you Curtis. However, if you go here: [Opportunity Details \(rampla.org\)](https://rampla.org)

it requires a Login (upper right corner).

When you click on Login, you then need to sign in with your Angeleno Account, which I happen to have from the Neighborhood Council.

When you log into the Angeleno Account, it states: "You currently do not have a RAMP account. If you would like to register please check first if your company is already registered by entering the information below." Among the information required to be entered is "Company Name" and "Tax ID." Since I am retired and have closed down my law firm, I do not have a Company Name or Tax ID. The website does not allow you to get further without entering this information. And because of that, even if you were able to get past providing that information, it seems that you will not be able to register without having a Company Name or Tax ID. Members of the public and Neighborhood Councils should be able to view the RFP without having a Company Name or Tax ID.

Thank you. Best regards, Jeff

From: Curtis Watts <curtis.watts@lacity.org>

Sent: Monday, August 1, 2022 9:42 AM

To: Jeffrey Mausner <jeff@mausnerlaw.com>

Cc: Larry Gross <commissioner.gross@yahoo.com>; oliviaegarcia@outlook.com <oliviaegarcia@outlook.com>; alisafinsten@gmail.com <alisafinsten@gmail.com>; jsandoval91402@gmail.com <jsandoval91402@gmail.com>; jill_cohen@sbcglobal.net <jill_cohen@sbcglobal.net>; Francine Acuna <francine.acuna@lacity.org>; Annette.Ramirez@lacity.org <Annette.Ramirez@lacity.org>; steve.houchin@lacity.org <steve.houchin@lacity.org>; Jennifer Curiel

<jennifer.curriel@lacity.org>; paul.koretz@lacity.org <paul.koretz@lacity.org>;
councilmember.rodriquez@lacity.org <councilmember.rodriquez@lacity.org>; Councilmember Bob
Blumenfield <councilmember.blumenfield@lacity.org>; Lisa.Hansen@lacity.org <Lisa.Hansen@lacity.org>;
john.popoch@lacity.org <john.popoch@lacity.org>; Jeff.Jacobberger@LACity.org
<Jeff.Jacobberger@lacity.org>; Jake Flynn <jakebflynn@gmail.com>; Semee Park <semee.park@lacity.org>;
Mirna Ezquivel <Mirna.Ezquivel@lacity.org>; Jill Barad <jbbarad@gmail.com>; Linda Gravani
<Lindag@lakebalboanc.org>; Linda Gravani (lgravani@hotmail.com) <lgravani@hotmail.com>; Michelle
Cornelius <artshapeslife@gmail.com>; Sherry Brown <sherrymandalay@gmail.com>; Glenn Bailey
<glennbaileyncba@yahoo.com>; Glenn Bailey <glennbaileynco@gmail.com>; cindy cleghorn
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<slowtony@gmail.com>; Corinne Ho <corinnemho@gmail.com>; Ginny Hatfield <Ginnyaauw@gmail.com>;
judi <judi13@gmail.com>; Kathy Delle Donne <kadedo@earthlink.net>; mark seigel
<mark.seigel@gmail.com>; Mary Garcia <MaryAGarciaA@sbcglobal.net>; Saul <saul.daniels@gmail.com>;
Ken Ross <kenrossnenc@yahoo.com>; kenrossdds@aol.com <kenrossdds@aol.com>; Cathy Serksnas
<serksnas@aol.com>; David Hernandez <drhassoc@earthlink.net>; Haze <tmhrescue@gmail.com>; Joy
Freiberg <joyfreiberg@yahoo.com>; Lydia Grant <fivegrants@msn.com>; Michael Bell
<brooklynboymike@gmail.com>; Paul Darrigo <fedguy2@pacbell.net>; whitney smith
<whitneysmith3@gmail.com>; dduukkee11@aol.com <dduukkee11@aol.com>; Gail Raff
<valleyvillagecat@gmail.com>; Leonard Shaffer (l.shaffer@tarzananc.org) <l.shaffer@tarzananc.org>; James
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Michelle.Vergara@LACity.org <Michelle.Vergara@lacity.org>; Erin.Seinfeld@lacity.org
<Erin.Seinfeld@lacity.org>; contactCD4@lacity.org <contactCD4@lacity.org>; paul.Krekorian@lacity.org
<paul.Krekorian@lacity.org>; councilmember.martinez@lacity.org <councilmember.martinez@lacity.org>;
sophie.gilchrist@lacity.org <sophie.gilchrist@lacity.org>; arianna.miskin@lacity.org
<arianna.miskin@lacity.org>; Kenneth@mejiaforcontroller.com <kenneth@mejiaforcontroller.com>; Kiernan
<kiernan.elam@gmail.com>

Subject: Re: VANC Resolution re Northeast Valley Animal Shelter

Hi Mr. Mausner,

The RAMPLA website is the City's public website where contracting opportunities are posted. Anyone is able to create an account and obtain information regarding the opportunities listed on the site.

Thanks,

Curtis R. Watts

Assistant General Manager

Los Angeles Animal Services

221 N. Figueroa Street, Suite 600

Los Angeles, CA 90012

O: (213) 482-9558

E: curtis.watts@lacity.org

On Sun, Jul 31, 2022 at 1:08 PM Jeffrey Mausner <jeff@mausnerlaw.com> wrote:

The Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter should be posted in a location that is accessible to the general public. It appears that the RFP was posted on the website www.Rampla.org on July 27, but that website requires credentials to access the RFP and appears to make the RFP available only to potential bidders. There has been a complete lack of transparency and failure to get input from the public in connection with the Northeast Valley Shelter.

Please post the RFP so that it is available to the public and publicize where it is posted, including publicizing by email to the Neighborhood Councils.

Sincerely, Jeffrey Mausner

From: Jeffrey Mausner

Sent: Friday, July 15, 2022 3:06 PM

To: Larry Gross <commissioner.gross@yahoo.com>; oliviaegarcia@outlook.com <oliviaegarcia@outlook.com>; alisafinsten@gmail.com <alisafinsten@gmail.com>; jsandoval91402@gmail.com <jsandoval91402@gmail.com>; jill_cohen@sbcglobal.net <jill_cohen@sbcglobal.net>; Francine Acuna <francine.acuna@lacity.org>; Annette.Ramirez@lacity.org <Annette.Ramirez@lacity.org>; Curtis.Watts@LACity.org <Curtis.Watts@LACity.org>; steve.houchin@lacity.org <steve.houchin@lacity.org>; Jennifer Curiel <jennifer.curiel@lacity.org>

Cc: paul.koretz@lacity.org <paul.koretz@lacity.org>; councilmember.rodriquez@lacity.org <councilmember.rodriquez@lacity.org>; Councilmember Bob Blumenfield <councilmember.blumenfield@lacity.org>; Lisa.Hansen@lacity.org <Lisa.Hansen@lacity.org>; john.popoch@lacity.org <john.popoch@lacity.org>; Jeff.Jacobberger@LACity.org <Jeff.Jacobberger@LACity.org>; Jake Flynn <jakebflynn@gmail.com>; Semee Park <semeepark@lacity.org>; Mirna Ezquivel <Mirna.Ezquivel@lacity.org>; Jill Barad <jbbbarad@gmail.com>; Linda Gravani <Lindag@lakebalboanc.org>; Linda Gravani (<lgravani@hotmail.com>); Michelle Cornelius <artshapesslife@gmail.com>; Sherry Brown <sherrymandalay@gmail.com>; Glenn Bailey <glennbaileyncba@yahoo.com>; Glenn Bailey <glennbaileyncs@gmail.com>; cindy cleghorn <cindycleghorn@gmail.com>; tonyw.civic@gmail.com <tonyw.civic@gmail.com>; slowtony@gmail.com <slowtony@gmail.com>; Corinne Ho <corinnemho@gmail.com>; Ginny Hatfield <Ginnyaaauw@gmail.com>; judi <judi13@gmail.com>; Kathy Delle Donne <kadedo@earthlink.net>; mark seigel <mark.seigel@gmail.com>; Mary Garcia <MaryAGarciaA@sbcglobal.net>; Saul <saul.daniels@gmail.com>; Ken Ross <kenrossnenc@yahoo.com>; kenrossdds@aol.com <kenrossdds@aol.com>; Cathy Serksnas <serksnas@aol.com>; David Hernandez <drhassoc@earthlink.net>; Haze <tmhrescue@gmail.com>; Joy Freiberg <joyfreiberg@yahoo.com>; Lydia Grant <fivegrants@msn.com>; Michael Bell <brooklynboymike@gmail.com>; Michelle Cornelius <artshapesslife@gmail.com>; Paul Darrigo <fedguy2@pacbell.net>; whitney smith <whitneysmith3@gmail.com>; dduukkee11@aol.com <dduukkee11@aol.com>; Gail Raff <valleyvillagecat@gmail.com>; 'Leonard Shaffer (<l.shaffer@tarzananc.org>)' <l.shaffer@tarzananc.org>; James Bickhart <james.bickhart@lacity.org>; mayor.helpdesk@lacity.org <mayor.helpdesk@lacity.org>; Michelle.Vergara@LACity.org <Michelle.Vergara@LACity.org>; Erin.Seinfeld@lacity.org <Erin.Seinfeld@lacity.org>; contactCD4@lacity.org <contactCD4@lacity.org>; paul.Krekorian@lacity.org <paul.Krekorian@lacity.org>; councilmember.martinez@lacity.org <councilmember.martinez@lacity.org>; sophie.gilchrist@lacity.org <sophie.gilchrist@lacity.org>; arianna.miskin@lacity.org <arianna.miskin@lacity.org>

Subject: VANC Resolution re Northeast Valley Animal Shelter

To the Board of Animal Services Commissioners and Officials of the Los Angeles Animal Services Department:

At its meeting on July 14, 2022, the Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (VANC) unanimously (with one abstention) passed the following resolution:

The Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (VANC) represents the 34 Neighborhood Councils throughout the San Fernando Valley, including all of the Neighborhood Councils in the vicinity of the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter. This shelter is a City facility built with Proposition F funds to be a municipal animal shelter, open to the public. It was not meant to be a private facility to house rescue organizations. Nevertheless, the Board of Animal Services Commissioners has issued an RFP (Request for Proposal) to do just that, lease the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter to rescue organizations to operate. The Board of Animal Services Commissioners and Animal Services Department did not provide an opportunity for the affected Neighborhood Councils to provide input into this decision. Therefore, it is RESOLVED that VANC takes the position that the Department of Animal Services and City Council should receive input from the affected Neighborhood Councils before releasing the Request for Proposal for rescue organizations to operate the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter.

The Resolution passed with 24 in favor, none against, and one abstention. (Only one vote can be cast per Neighborhood Council.) The following background information was provided for the Resolution:

When Proposition F was passed by two-thirds of voters in 2000, residents were told that the Department of Animal Services would operate 8 animal shelters. Voters were told that additional space was needed for animal control officers to “solve problems of stray, abandoned, and dangerous animals” and the new facilities would improve response times. The Prop F voter guide also acknowledged that additional funds would need to be appropriated to staff the two new animal shelters, one of which was Northeast Valley. However, instead of operating the facility as a municipal shelter as contemplated by Prop F, the Animal Services Department leased the facility to Best Friends rescue organization.

Best Friends publicly announced on June 29 that they intended to vacate the Northeast shelter when their contract expires on December 31, 2022 (they began operating the Northeast shelter in January 2012). The Department of Animal Services did not publicly announce their intention to release an RFP for the Northeast Shelter until Friday July 8 when they placed the item on their meeting agenda. This short time frame did not allow the affected neighborhood councils to provide any input regarding whether the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter is operated by the City or by rescue organizations, or the terms under which a rescue

organization would operate the facility. Nevertheless, on Tuesday, July 12 the Board of Animal Services Commissioners approved releasing an RFP for rescue organizations to operate the Northeast Valley Animal Shelter.

There are several ways in which the Board of Animal Services Commissioners (BASC) and Animal Services Department (LAAS) can provide the public information and receive input regarding a major decision such as this:

1. You can hold town halls regarding the issue, in which information is provided and the public can voice their views. The Neighborhood Councils and Neighborhood Council Alliances would be happy to help publicize these town halls and distribute information to their constituents. Adequate time must be given for people to express their views; cutting them off after one or two minutes is not sufficient in a town hall.
2. Representatives of BASC and LAAS can appear at individual Neighborhood Council (NC) meetings to discuss the issue. These appearances should be agendaized so that there is sufficient time for discussion and NC members and the public can ask questions.
3. Representatives of BASC and LAAS can appear at Neighborhood Council Coalition meetings. VANC would be happy to have you, as we do with other departments that are considering major projects or decisions.
4. You can send out email blasts on your mailing list regarding such matters.

These are all things that other Departments do. I would be happy to help with any of those alternatives. Among many other things, the following questions need to be answered and discussed:

- a. Why isn't the Northeast Valley Shelter being opened as a municipal shelter, as contemplated by the voters who approved it and paid for it?
- b. What has BASC and LAAS done to secure funding to run the Northeast Valley Shelter as a municipal shelter? Have you submitted any budget proposals to do so?
- c. What are the terms of the RFP that you voted to release on July 12? The RFP wasn't even attached to your agenda.
- d. What services will the rescue organization provide to the people who approved the funding to build the shelter and paid for it?
- e. How many animals will the rescue organization be required to take from LAAS? Will they be required to take dogs who are difficult to adopt, or can they meet their quota by taking easily adoptable kittens?
- f. How will the kennel space be used? LAAS often has a shortage of kennel space. Does the arrangement with the rescue maximize the amount of kennel space that will be available for the Valley's homeless animals? If there is a provision to maximize kennel space, how will it be enforced?
- g. What are the consequences if the organization does not meet its contractual obligations?
- h. Why won't the rescue organization provide intake for animals?

- i. Will the rescue organization provide working space for Animal Control Officers?
- j. What type of oversight will the public have of the operations of the rescue organization at the shelter?

None of these issues, and more, have been discussed with the public. The lack of transparency is very concerning on a matter as important as who will operate the Northeast Valley Shelter and the terms of operation. I can tell you that many people I've heard from are very angry about this.

Sincerely, Jeffrey Mausner, Member of the VANC Executive Committee and VANC Animal Representative.

Jeffrey Mausner

(For identification purposes)

Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils and Tarzana NC Liaison to Los Angeles Animal Services Department

Board of Directors and 2nd Vice President, Tarzana Neighborhood Council

Chairman, Tarzana Neighborhood Council Animal Welfare Committee

Neighborhood Council Budget Representative

Volunteer, West Valley Animal Shelter

Retired Attorney and Former Federal Prosecutor, United States Department of Justice

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