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April 23, 2024

The Honorable Bob Blumenfield, Chair
Budget, Finance and Innovation Committee
c/o Holly L. Wolcott, City Clerk
200 North Spring Street, Room 395
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Councilmember Blumenfield:

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES FISCAL YEAR 2024-25 PROPOSED BUDGET

The Department of Animal Services (Department) has reviewed the Mayor's FY 2024-25 Proposed Budget. We would like to state that we appreciate the continued support of the Mayor, City Council, and members of the Budget, Finance and Innovation Committee. Considering the pending deficit and the shared sacrifices required from all departments, we are grateful for this opportunity to discuss how the Department will be impacted by this proposed budget, our recommended changes, and how we will continue to provide essential services to the residents of the City of Los Angeles and the animals we serve.

After 10 months on the job as the General Manager of this Department, despite being severely under-resourced, I am committed to maintaining public safety for the communities of Los Angeles, reducing and maintaining the City's animal shelter population to a 75% capacity rate and improving services for our customers and the animals in our care. The City has renewed its commitment to providing exceptional customer service as has been demonstrated by a Customer Service Task Force. In order for the Department to contribute to these important efforts, I want to ensure that we are able to provide to both in-shelter customers and callers an appropriate level of administrative support.

The Department recommends adjusting the number Animal License Canvasser positions being eliminated from two to three and adding three Administrative Clerk positions (see below):

Position	Service Area	No. of Positions	Total
Animal License Canvasser*	Licensing Enforcement	3	\$ 129,726
TOTAL		3	\$ 129,726

*12-months funding

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Position	Service Area	No. of Positions	Total
Administrative Clerk	Administrative Support	3	\$ 130,610
TOTAL		3	\$ 130,610

*Nine-months funding

The Department understands the need for these shared sacrifices and the decision to eliminate vacancies to help balance the budget. As a result, the Department will suffer a net loss of 16 positions. The elimination of these critical positions will negatively impact operations and critical services.

The elimination of the Animal License Canvasser positions may mean the loss of licensing revenue. However, that potential revenue would not be cost neutral as the cost of the position salaries, supervision, and clerical support would also need to be factored. As an alternative, the Department will mitigate these negative impacts by reinstating its Reserve Animal Control Officer Program. This program will recruit and train interested volunteers to work on the City's behalf to do similar work of the Animal License Canvassers with a focus on enforcing the City's Spay and Neuter ordinance, illegal breeding, and illegal animal sales. The Reserve Animal Control Officers will partner with our Animal Control Officers and each other to educate the community about and help enforce State and City ordinances related to the care, treatment, licensing and sterilization of animals.

Another potential impact to the level of services the Department can provide due to this permanent reduction in staffing is that the Department must consider the elimination of the graveyard shift for our shelter and field staff. Instead of having staff scheduled and assigned to this shift to respond to shelter and field needs from midnight to 8:00 a.m., the Department would assign key staff to be on-call to respond to any emergencies that may occur during those hours. This will allow us to move those staffing resources to other shifts to ensure coverage, increase service capacity during other working hours, and possibly extend shelter hours.

One of the most critical needs to our community relative to animal services is access to affordable veterinary care, especially spay and neuter services. The funding provided to the Animal Sterilization Fund mirrors what was provided in the current year budget for the Spay and Neuter Program and the Citywide Cat Program. Based on the current voucher rates and the rate of redemption, the \$2,385,000 and estimated revenues will be insufficient to meet the demand for next fiscal year for the Spay and Neuter Program. As the program continues to grow, the rate of redemption for Citywide Cat Program vouchers continues to increase. The \$500,000 budgeted for the Citywide Cat Program will only be sufficient for approximately the first quarter of FY 2024-25. In the current fiscal year, \$908,880 was spent through March in Citywide Cat Program voucher redemptions, resulting in the sterilization of 12,984 free-roaming cats. The proposed funding of \$500,000 will fund approximately 7,142 sterilizations, which is slightly over one-third of the projected goal of sterilization 20,000, in accordance to the Cat Environmental Impact Report, stating that a minimum of 20,000 surgeries is necessary to make a positive impact to the reduction of the free-roaming cat population.

In summary, we value your continued support for our important role in keeping our communities safe and providing humane care of the City's animals. The Department will make the hard decisions to adjust and refocus remaining resources where we can to continue providing vital services to the residents of Los Angeles. On behalf of the Department of Animal Services, I look forward to further discussion of this proposed budget and any other alternatives that may be possible.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SD', followed by a long horizontal line.

Staycee Dains
General Manager

cc: Councilmember Katy Yaroslavsky, CD 5
Councilmember Monica Rodriguez, CD 7
Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson, CD 8
Councilmember Tim McOsker, CD 15
Matt Hale, Deputy Mayor, Mayor's Office of Finance, Operations and Innovation
Bernyce Hollins, Budget Director, Mayor's Office of Finance, Operations and Innovation
Matthew Szabo, City Administrative Officer
Jacqueline Reyes, Office of the CAO