



KAREN BASS
MAYOR

April 17, 2026

Honorable Members of the City Council
c/o City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall

Re: Appointment of Permanent General Manager, Department of Animal Services: Ms. Gabrielle Amster

Honorable Members:

Pursuant to Charter §508(b), I hereby appoint Ms. Gabrielle Amster as the permanent General Manager of the Department of Animal Services, effective as of the date of your confirmation of her appointment.

I certify that in my opinion Ms. Amster is especially qualified by reason of training and experience for the work which shall devolve upon her, and that I make the appointment solely in the interest of the City. Attached please find a copy of Ms. Amster's resume, which provides greater detail about her experience.

Sincerely,

KAREN BASS
Mayor

KB:ta

Attachment

cc: The Honorable Ysabel Jurado, Chair, Arts, Parks, Libraries, Community
Enrichment Committee
Matt Szabo, City Administrative Officer
Sharon Tso, Chief Legislative Analyst
Heather Holt, Ethics Commission
General Managers' Association
Patrice Lattimore, City Clerk
Malaika Billups, Personnel Department
Nicole Enriquez, Ethics Commission

Gabrielle Amster

Professional Summary

Accomplished animal welfare leader with 19 years of experience advancing innovation, collaboration, and life-saving outcomes. Known for leading with diplomacy, building high-performing, mission-driven teams, and leveraging technology to strengthen the human-animal bond. Committed to professionalizing the sheltering field, fostering staff development, and mentoring with optimism and joy in a purpose-driven, complex industry.

Education & Certifications

Certified Animal Welfare Administrator (CAWA)
(2020, 2023)

Best Friends Executive Leadership Certification
(2022)

BA / Communications & Journalism, University of New Mexico
(2001)

Professional Experience

Executive Leadership & Sector Engagement 2025–Current

Provided senior leadership across nonprofit and corporate animal welfare environments, supporting large-scale agencies with strategy, operations, and partnership development.

- Served as Vice President of Shelter Engagement for a national pet industry corporation (DocuPet), working directly with municipal and nonprofit shelter leaders to strengthen partnerships, evaluate contract alignment, and support operational performance in complex service systems.
- Led strategic advising and merger exploration efforts between two established animal welfare organizations (Dogs Playing for Life and Furry Friends Humane), guiding executive leaders through financial review, staffing structure analysis, governance alignment, and long-range sustainability planning.
- Developed multi-month budget forecasts and program cost analyses to inform board and CEO decision-making.
- Facilitated leadership discussions around reporting lanes, accountability structures, risk management, and organizational readiness.
- Supported marketing and donor development strategy to strengthen long-term revenue infrastructure.

Wallis Annenberg PetSpace, Director

Los Angeles, CA • September 2021 – February 2025

A visionary community space, PetSpace offers pet adoptions, humane education, and academic convening around the human/animal bond.

- Led a high-performing leadership team and 40 staff in all aspects of operations.
- Developed and managed a \$10M annual operating budget ensuring fiscal health and alignment with organizational goals.
- Championed the creation and integration of core values into daily operations, reinforcing PetSpace's mission and culture.
- Maintained the Foundation's commitment to innovation through in-space technology.
- Increased adoptions by 60% through inventive programming, branding initiatives, and viral media campaigns.
- Launched the organization's first community cat TNR and high-volume spay/neuter clinics.
- Directed an industry-leading animal care and veterinary program grounded in best practices and continuous improvement.
- Boosted staff retention from 30% to 70% in two years through culture-building and leadership development.
- Represented PetSpace nationally across media, advisory panels, oversight bodies, and professional organizations.
- Oversaw a results-driven marketing team that grew Instagram engagement by 44% and TikTok from 1,000 to 100,000 followers - without paid media - through celebrity engagement and viral content.
- Identified key funding priorities for the Foundation to support Los Angeles-based animal welfare organizations.

Gabrielle Amster

Board Involvement

California Animal Welfare Association (CalAnimals) Legislative Committee, Marketing Task Force Committee Chair, Statewide Adoption Marketing Campaign (2022 – 2025)

Professional Experience, Continued

- Recruited PetSpace Leadership Institute fellows and advanced scholarly research on the human-animal bond.

Palm Springs Animal Shelter, Executive Director

Palm Springs, CA • September 2018 – September 2021

An open admissions municipal shelter, serving the city of Palm Springs and providing community programming across the Coachella Valley.

- Led a team of 12 direct reports overseeing 50 staff, driving improved accountability, cross-departmental collaboration, and performance.
- Managed a \$3M operating budget, reducing expenses by 10% through strategic cost controls and resource optimization.
- Oversaw a multi-million-dollar municipal contract with the City of Palm Springs; served as primary liaison to city officials and partners.
- Secured over \$3M in annual revenue through private donations, grants, and high-impact fundraising campaigns.
- Boosted online giving by 50% by launching an internal marketing program focused on digital strategy and donor engagement.
- Recovered lost event revenue by scaling public clinics and launching new fee-for-service offerings.
- Conducted a feasibility study and developed a business plan for an offsite spay/neuter and wellness clinic.
- Implemented SOPs and best practices across departments to ensure high-quality, consistent program delivery.
- In collaboration with a skilled HR leader, reduced staff turnover by 65% through revamped recruitment strategies and retention initiatives.
- Directed the organization's COVID-19 response, establishing a task force and implementing safety protocols.
- Increased adoptions by 46% over two years by redesigning the adoption process to be more inclusive, accessible and barrier-free.
- Reduced average length of stay by 35% via enhanced canine and feline enrichment strategies.
- Established a canine transfer-in program bringing in 400+ dogs annually to diversify adoptable population and drive traffic.
- Strengthened volunteer engagement through quarterly roundtables and inclusive communication strategies.
- Partnered with local government and code enforcement to modernize animal ordinances and improve community support.
- Collaborated with a 13-member Board of Directors to establish mission, vision, and multi-year strategic priorities.
- Built strategic partnerships with local and national organizations to expand services, enhance reach, and elevate the organization's visibility.

Development & Marketing Director

Woods Humane Society, CA • October 2017 – October 2018

An independent nonprofit organization dedicated to the humane care of homeless dogs and cats in San Luis Obispo County.

- Strategic planning, oversight, and implementation of all fundraising activities.
- Relationship building with donors, foundations, corporations, community leaders and partner organizations.
- Creation of marketing campaigns and messaging for events, appeals and demographic targeting.
- Oversight of the acquisition, retention, and growth strategies for an aggressive direct mail marketing program.
- Strategy for social media and online communication.

Gabrielle Amster

Core Competencie

Organizational Leadership
Internal & External Communications
Budgeting & Financial Strategy
Project Management
Program Development
Social Media Marketing
Branding & Design
Community Engagement

Pre-Animal Agency Roles

University of Virginia,
Stewardship

St. Vincent Regional Medical Center,
Marketing

United Way of Central New Mexico,
Corporate and Foundation Relations

Professional Experience, Continued

- Planning, coordination, and staff oversight for two annual large-scale events and smaller events as needed throughout the year.
- Management and direction of staff providing regular performance reviews, feedback, and coaching to ensure positive results.
- Worked with the Executive Director and other directors to provide input, suggestions, and recommendations.

Director of Growth & Sustainability Santa Fe Animal Shelter, NM • 2014 – 2017

Northern New Mexico's largest open-admission shelter

- Directed marketing, communications, development, and resale operations teams, including project managers, assistant managers, and store associates.
- *Led multi-channel fundraising strategies—appeals, e-blasts, crowdfunding, direct mail, print/TV ads, social media, galas, and third-party events.*
- *Designed and launched a business and marketing plan for the Shelter's estate sale venture.*
- *Oversaw expansion of resale stores, resulting in a \$2M increase in annual revenue.*
- Managed development department and store budgets, including forecasts and revenue/expense projections for new initiatives.
- Led donor stewardship efforts and built strong relationships with board members, individual donors, foundations, corporations, and community partners
- Built and managed the growth/development department annual budget as well as budgets for each resale store. Created forecasts and revenue/expense projections for new projects and startups.
- Oversaw the development and stewardship activities and programs; fostered positive and collaborative relationship with donors, board members, foundation, community and corporate partners.

Animal Trustees of Austin (ATA), Director of Development & Marketing Austin, TX • 2010 – 2014

A veterinary clinic serving economically disadvantaged pet owners and pet owners without shelter across the state of Texas and beyond.

- Launched new ATA brand, developed a full style guide and corresponding collateral material. Performed a website rebuild and updated messaging across all programs and service lines.
- Created and maintained annual development department budget, monthly dashboards and board fundraising and departmental reports.
- Oversaw social media and print, radio and media buys and multiple large-scale events.
- Supervised remote and office staff, a donor relations manager, grant writer, communications specialist, development coordinator and marketing coordinator.
- Designed and executed the annual development plan, crafted direct mail appeals and donor acquisition mailings, performed grant writing and stewarded funders, collaborated with board of directors and executive director on major gift planning.

Santa Fe Animal Shelter, Director of Development & Communications NM • 2006 – 2010

Northern New Mexico's largest open-admission animal shelter

- Created and executed integrated marketing plans to drive awareness and engagement across digital, social media, email, and traditional channels.
- Led fundraising initiatives, including donor campaigns, events, and outreach programs.

Gabrielle Amster

Professional Experience, Continued

- Maintained and strengthened the shelter's brand identity, ensuring consistency across platforms and materials.
- Supervised and mentored a team of marketing and development staff, fostering collaboration and innovation.
- Built and cultivated relationships with corporate sponsors, community
- Launched the shelter's first resale store; developed a full business conducted a feasibility study for the Santa Fe market.
- Managed development department and store budgets, including forecasts and revenue/expense projections for new initiatives to ensure resource efficiency and maximize ROI.
- Led donor stewardship efforts and built strong relationships with board members, individual donors, foundations, corporations, and community partners
- Built and managed the growth/development department annual budget as well as budgets for each resale store. Created forecasts and revenue/expense projections for new projects and startups.
- Oversaw the development and stewardship activities and programs; fostered positive and collaborative relationship with donors, board members, foundation, community and corporate partners.