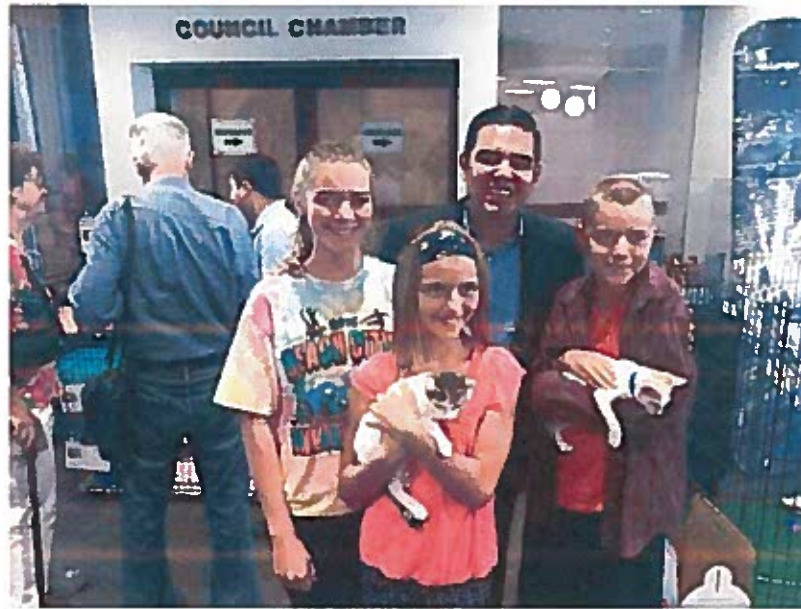


LONG BEACH POST



THE SCRATCHING POST

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Passionate for Pet Advocacy? Join the Mayor's Shelter Task Force!

by [Kate Karp](#) in [Pets](#)



Many of the voices for the Long Beach-area voiceless are invited to have their words heard. Mayor Robert Garcia is presently taking applications for a task force to form a pack that includes shelter management staff, city officials and members of the animal-advocate community—shelter volunteers included—to develop a vision for the shelter at Long Beach Animal Care Services (ACS) and get it going. If you want to help raise the bar for shelter animals, you're invited, too.

The task force comes in response to one of the recommendations in the first part of the City's shelter audit released to the public late last year (the full text of the audit can be accessed [here](#)). The document stated that the shelter's overall performance is above average when compared to other national open-intake shelters, i.e., shelters that do not turn away any animal brought in. They also acknowledged the continually increasing numbers of pets released to adopters, rescues and owners, and the corresponding decreasing numbers of euthanasia procedures. ACS's strong, committed staff was also praised.

However, the main body also detailed 173 recommendations for short-term, long-term and best-practices that need to be addressed. They include animal care, veterinary services, adoptions and

volunteer programs. The auditors strongly recommend that all stakeholders join forces to put them into practice.

The task force will address what was stated in the audit as the absence of “a clear, shared vision for the animal shelter, creating a misalignment between stakeholder expectations and ACS’ capacity of care.” The authors call for shelter management and employees as well as elected officials and the pet community at large to determine and plan what kind of shelter it wants developed. Of course, resources and other services are paramount, and those must be taken into account and planned for as well.

“This is something that has not been accomplished in a long time,” said Tim Patton, the mayor’s senior executive deputy. “We’re trying to keep with all the legal requirements and our moral responsibilities at the same time. This task force will give a consensus. And the longer the list [of applicants], the better the task force.”

This endeavor, to say the least, will be spirited. Genuine animal advocates make tiger moms and mama bears look like stuffed toys. Like cats, if they’re discouraged from an endeavor or in any measure turned away, they’ll figure out another way in. One sizeable and fierce aggregate, Long Beach Animal Advocates, member held vigils during a Mayoral appearance at the Art Theatre to get Mayor Garcia’s attention. They got everyone else’s, too. The venerable Friends of Long Beach Animals has forever funded the SNIP program to turn off the taps with low-cost spay/neuter vouchers. Volunteers from Fix Long Beach plead, with some success, for city officials to sponsor free spay/neuter clinics to address the people who fill up the shelter in the first place (it’s a people problem, people, like everything else). Trappers and rescues plug up holes in the newborn-kitten dam with their pinkies, and shelter staff and volunteers work with equal amounts of heart and body to socialize pets and get them adopted.

There is an appeal among a good number for a no-kill shelter, which is defined as no healthy pet being put down because of a lack of space or a “time’s up.”

“I don’t think there’s any debate among our membership about no-kill as our goal,” said LBAA member Candace Lawrence.

No-kill is a challenge and a goal to work toward. There isn’t a consensus among advocates about how to reach it, but the one thing that the community agrees on is that every animal should be wanted and enjoy a healthy, complete life, no matter its length.

If you have a passion for animals and want to help in this effort, email mayor@LongBeach.gov by May 18. Include your interests and qualifications as they relate to animals, and why you want to serve on the task force.

“I am going to apply to give a volunteer’s perspective,” said Pamala Machado, who volunteers at ACS. “I’m looking forward to doing everything possible to improve the daily lives of the animals at the shelter.”

“It takes a village...” ~ Hillary Clinton