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## **Auditor: Animal Care Needs More Resources**

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**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

Long Beach City Auditor Laura Doud said Monday that the city's Animal Care Services Bureau needs help with standard operating procedures, a strategic plan and more to become the type of shelter city officials say they want.

Doud made those conclusions and more in her office's Phase Two of its Animal Care Services (ACS) operations review released Monday. Phase One listed 173 specific recommendations; Phase Two looks at broader issues.

ACS is part of the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department, and operates the P.D. Pitchford Companion Animal Village in partnership with spcaLA. The bureau underwent a complete overhaul several years ago, but remains a target of criticism for animal advocates, particularly those seeking a no-kill shelter.

Doud's operations audit finds plenty of areas to improve.

It "recommends that ACS immediately implement standard operating procedures develop a shared vision and strategic plan, and then align resources and maximize revenues to meet service priorities, goals and objectives shared by stakeholders in the strategic plan. A shared vision and strategic plan will guide ACS to become the kind of shelter desired by stakeholders and address critical issues."

Long Beach's shelter handles about 8,000 animals a year. While euthanasia rates have gone down and adoptions gone up every year for the last few years, more can be done, Doud said.

As her report recommended last year, this phase also recommends a formal operating agreement with spcaLA regarding responsibilities for adoption. Currently, spcaLA is under no compulsion to take a certain number of animals for adoption.

The audit also recommends more formal and stronger procedures to work with rescue groups to move more animals to them more quickly. And both the foster program and volunteer program need strengthening.

"The animal shelter fulfills a vital role in our community," Doud wrote in the release. "It is critical that ACS provides essential care and medical treatment to animals in need. For this reason, ACS must align resources and maximize revenues to meet the shelter goals and priorities agreed upon by stakeholders."

Doud's audit estimates that ACS has uncollected citations since 2009 worth almost \$1 million. But that, like most of the other areas requiring improvement, is primarily the result of lack of staff and resources, the audit adds.

The audit recommends maximizing citation and licensing revenues, as well as fully recovering costs provided to neighboring cities, as ways to increase revenue. However, there is no estimate of cost to remedy lack of staff in all four of the primary service areas — Animal Care, Veterinary Services, Re-homing Animals and the Volunteer Program.

Recently appointed Parks, Recreation and Marine Department director Gerardo Mouet said the audit would provide a starting point for a full visioning and strategic planning process. He pointed to an Animal Care Visioning Task Force created by Mayor Robert Garcia as the focal point for that endeavor.

"While we have made great progress in lowering euthanasia rates, this provides an opportunity and roadmap for further reforms at the shelter," Garcia said in the release. "With the audit completed, and our new Animal Care Task Force launching next week, we will focus on saving more lives and creating a shelter that is a national model."

The complete audit can be found at the auditor's website, [www.cityauditorlauradoud.com/](http://www.cityauditorlauradoud.com/).