



PRESS RELEASE

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Long Beach City Auditor Releases Review on Animal Care Services Shelter Operations *The Report Recommends Comprehensive Improvements to Day-to-Day Operations and Long-Term Planning*

Long Beach, CA – Long Beach City Auditor Laura Doud today released [Phase One](#) of the two-part Animal Care Services (ACS) Review, which was requested by Long Beach City Mayor Robert Garcia. The ACS Bureau – under the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department – provides an open intake shelter and veterinary services for lost or homeless animals impounding approximately 8,000 live animals each year. The Review relied on expert assessment of the ACS shelter, and includes wide-ranging, comprehensive recommendations on day-to-day operations and management as well as on long-term planning.

“The Animal Care Services shelter plays an important role in our community providing essential care and medical treatment for the thousands of lost or homeless animals as they work to reunite these animals with their families or find them new homes,” said City Auditor Doud. “We expect that this report will serve as a guide as the City and other stakeholders make important decisions to take Animal Care Services to the next chapter. I am pleased the City has taken steps to address some of the recommendations which have the potential to greatly enhance shelter operations.”

For the Phase One Review, the City Auditor’s Office hired animal shelter consulting firm, JVR Shelter Strategies (JVR), to review ACS shelter operations, including animal intake, veterinary services, and programs designed for positive animal outcomes. JVR observed that ACS has a staff highly dedicated to animals’ welfare, and when compared to other open intake municipal shelters in the country – many of which focus more on animal control – is performing above average in recognizing the need for programming aimed at increasing positive outcomes for animals.

Phase One addresses the need for ACS to have a clear, shared vision with an effective, feasible strategic plan. Currently, there is a misalignment between stakeholder expectations and ACS’ capacity of care. JVR concluded that ACS has been attempting to provide service levels that are beyond what staffing and resources would allow, impacting overall service effectiveness and efficiency. As a result, the City is at a critical juncture. Stakeholders – City elected officials, City management and employees, and the community – must determine what kind of a shelter it wants ACS to be. Stakeholders must clarify and solidify a vision to develop a strategic plan that will guide policies and practices, outline initiatives and programs, and marshal and prioritize resources. Part of the strategic plan should address the consideration of a formal operating agreement with spcaLA, which shares the shelter facility with ACS and is responsible for most of the adoptions at the shelter. Currently, while the success of ACS and spcaLA are linked to one another, the City’s leaseback agreement with spcaLA does not address how they should work together.

Phase One summarizes JVR’s extensive list of recommendations for shelter improvement. The Review found that improvements to day-to-day shelter operations are possible and necessary. Documented policies and standard procedures for day-to-day operations provides consistency and predictability that helps make life less stressful for both staff and animals, and are integral to maintaining shelter health and wellness. Standard operating procedures are critical to animal care and result in consistent decision-making and shelter practice. There is an immediate need to standardize shelter operating procedures and practices which include controls and industry best practices.

Due to the numerous observations made during the review, Phase One includes a total of 173 detailed recommendation under fourteen categories such as animal care, veterinary services, adoptions, and volunteer

programs. There are 103 short-term recommendations ACS can begin to implement as soon as possible with its current resources and structure.

"I asked City Auditor Doud to complete this audit to ensure that we do everything possible to run a great shelter. While there have been some positive improvements in recent years and historically low euthanasia rates, we can do even better. I'm looking forward to working with animal care management to implement the recommendations," said Mayor Robert Garcia.

The City Auditor's Office is conducting additional work to assess ACS staffing and resources, and once Phase Two is completed a second report will be issued with the Office's results and recommendations.

The complete Animal Care Services Phase One report can be viewed [here](#).

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