



PRESS RELEASE

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Long Beach City Auditor Completes Two-Part Animal Care Services Operations Review Phase Two Recommends Prioritizing & Maximizing Resources to Meet Shelter Goals & Objectives

Long Beach, CA – Long Beach City Auditor Laura Doud today released [Phase Two](#) of the two-part Animal Care Services (ACS) Review. The ACS Bureau – under the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department (PRM) – provides an open intake shelter and veterinary services for approximately 8,000 animals each year with a budget of \$5 million. While [Phase One](#) identified 173 extensive recommendations to improve day-to-day shelter operations and long-term planning, Phase Two assesses ACS's resources, including staffing and revenue.

The City Auditor's Office recommends that ACS immediately implement standard operating procedures, develop a shared vision and strategic plan, and then align resources and maximize revenues to meet the 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, including:

- Creating an operating agreement with spcaLA to define key roles, such as responsibilities in adoption programs;
- Developing a plan for each animal to expedite needed services and movement through the shelter to the best outcome;
- Strengthening process for working with rescue groups to more quickly identify and move animals into placement; and
- Enhancing foster program and increasing volunteer program with dedicated coordinators in each program.

Phase Two found that ACS needs to assess its resources, find opportunities to maximize revenue, and then align resources with the priorities as set forth in the agreed upon strategy. A lack of resources, including limited staffing levels, has resulted in ACS operating beyond its capacity as detailed below:

- Animal Care – Staffing levels do not allow for minimum care requirements - including proper animal feeding and cleaning - to be met as ACS animals received on average 6 minutes of care per day versus the 15-minute minimum requirement per industry best practice standard.
- Veterinary Services – The Medical Team cannot keep up with its significant workload. ACS had 1 veterinarian to 235 animals per day, compared to the peer shelter average of 1 veterinarian to 170 animals.
- Re-homing Animals – ACS has less staffing for adoptions. ACS has 1 full-time staff member handling 2,716 animals per year, compared to the peer shelter average of 1 full-time staff member to 1,923 animals.
- Volunteer Program – ACS lacks a robust volunteer program to provide needed support to almost all shelter functions. In 2016, ACS volunteers logged 6,094 hours, almost 16 times fewer than the Sacramento shelter's total volunteer hours of 97,147.

Phase Two also found lax revenue generating operations. For example, limited collection efforts of outstanding ACS citations has resulted in almost \$1 million in uncollected fines since 2009. Even though ACS had a license compliance rate comparable to other shelters, a compliance rate increase of 8% could generate an additional \$262,000 each year. To provide for much needed additional funding, the audit recommends maximizing citation and licensing revenues, as well as fully recovering costs for services provided to neighboring cities. To further augment shelter funding, the report also recommends that PRM review and reallocate resources where needed, as well as seek new, alternative approaches to resources and outside support. This includes building a robust volunteer

program that could help support staff as other cities have done, while fostering a stronger, collaborative relationship with the community.

"The animal shelter fulfills a vital role in our community. 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," said City Auditor Laura Doud. "I am pleased that this two-part Animal Care Services Review is serving as a catalyst and guide to the City and stakeholders to begin a new chapter for the shelter. Management has taken steps to address the 186 recommendations from both Phase One and Two, and we will continue to monitor the implementation of these important recommendations."

"Both Phase One and Two have given PRM an opportunity to assess its strengths and prepare action plans to improve in areas we agree need more focused attention," said Parks, Recreation and Marine Department Director Gerardo Mouet. "One of the more significant findings in Phase One was the need to develop a shared vision and strategic plan for ACS. Just last month, the Mayor seated an Animal Care Visioning Task Force to help define that vision for the shelter. Additionally, both reviews provide a great platform from which to launch the development of an ACS Strategic Plan, slated to commence later this calendar year."

"I'm very grateful that the entire Animal Care Audit we requested is now complete," said Mayor Robert Garcia. "While we have made great progress in lowering euthanasia rates, this provides an opportunity and roadmap for further reforms at the shelter. With the audit completed, and our new Animal Care Taskforce launching next week, we will focus on saving more lives and creating a shelter that is a national model."

The Animal Care Services Phase Two report can be viewed [here](#), and the Phase One report can be viewed [here](#). A Highlights Sheet for the two-part Animal Care Services Review can be viewed [here](#).

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