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February 18, 2021

The Honorable Paul Koretz, Chair  
Personnel, Audit, and Animal Welfare Committee  
Room 1050, City Hall  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

The Honorable City Council  
c/o City Clerk  
Room 395, City Hall  
200 N. Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**RE: WEST VALLEY ANIMAL SHELTER – LONG TERM PLAN (CF# 20-1114) - ADDENDUM**

**SUMMARY**

The Los Angeles Department of Animal Services (DAS) submitted a draft proposal for re-opening the temporarily closed West Valley Animal Services Center as an attachment with the mandated COVID Reconstitution Plan. DAS also submitted an updated proposal on January 28, 2021. Subsequently, a decision was made to open all six Animal Services Centers with our current staffing as soon as the COVID cases have been reduced to allow this to be done safely. The anticipated opening date is March 14, 2021 COVID cases permitting. If there is a spike in COVID cases, we may delay the reopening for six weeks until the end of April.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City Council RECEIVE and FILE this report.

"Creating a Humane LA"

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Visit our website at [www.LAAnimalServices.com](http://www.LAAnimalServices.com)

## **BACKGROUND**

On February 16, 2021 we held an all-staff meeting for our co-workers in Animal Services to announce that a decision has been made to reopen all six Animal Services Centers with the staffing that we have.

In light of the fact that our staffing levels are very low, it is more important than ever for our team to follow the instructions and scripts they have followed throughout COVID if we are to be successful and to not have to re-think this decision.

As we reopen North Central and West Valley, we will continue:

1. COVID precautions: masks and social distancing at all Animal Services Centers.
2. Adoptions, Surrenders, Fosters will continue to be handled by appointment only.
3. Intake without an appointment is for SICK or INJURED animals **only**.
4. Counter services will be limited. Dog Licensing will be done online or by phone and no trapping permits will be issued over the counters at this time.
5. The Animal Services Centers will not allow general public access to maintain social distancing and safety for staff, volunteers, and the public with appointments to adopt, surrender, or foster.
6. Animal Control Officers will pick up injured, sick animals or those running in the street who are likely to cause an accident or to be hit.
7. Our team will work closely with supervisors as we develop programs to keep families together so people do not have to give up their companion animals (i.e. Pet Food Pantries).
8. A temporary schedule for all six Animal Services Centers is being developed. This schedule may mean that, like other City Departments, our hours of operation could be impacted.

We have once again observed during COVID how animal loving Angelinos will help lost animals get home and how animals lost in their own neighborhood will get home faster if left in the neighborhood and neighbors help neighbors. With our current economic challenges, we invite and appreciate all of the community support we can get.

We have not yet experienced the evictions that are likely to occur here in Los Angeles due to the economy. We must keep space for these displaced pets in our service centers; we must keep space in our service centers for animals left behind by their humans' deaths, and other unforeseen emergencies. That is why we must be as strict as reasonable in following our intake protocols developed during COVID.

COVID is not over, although there does seem to be a decrease in cases. If the decrease continues, we plan to reopen North Central and West Valley by mid-March. If the COVID cases increase, depending on the recommendations that inform the decisions, we could delay re-opening until late April.

Reopening the two shelters that were temporarily closed signals the return to regular shifts for our team to coincide with the openings. Meanwhile, those working from home may be assigned to begin the cleanup, restocking, etc. to prepare North Central and West Valley to reopen.

Staff is working on a plan to bring back limited numbers of volunteers who will be required to follow all of the COVID safety protocols, including wearing masks and working in specific areas of the Animal Services Centers to maintain social distancing. Volunteers will work in 2-hour shifts in specific areas and will not socialize with staff and others when entering or before leaving at the end of their shift. This is complicated since all of the shelters are different sizes meaning we will need six different approved plans to bring volunteers back.

Like Democracy, this is a grand experiment. The success of reopening these two shelters will fall on DAS shoulders and require teamwork and community cooperation. If we are successful in following the strategies we developed during COVID—including new community partnerships—developing new strategies to help animals and the people who love them, this will be a win for the animals and for the communities we serve. If we are not successful, we will have to reevaluate in the future.

Sincerely,



Brenda F. Barnette  
General Manager