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December 30, 2022

The Honorable Karen Bass  
Mayor, City of Los Angeles  
200 N. Spring Street, Room 303  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Attention: Ms. Heleen Ramirez, Office of the Mayor

**RE: REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL REGARDING DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES  
PLAN TO ENSURE THAT ALL DOGS IN ITS SHELTERS ARE REGULARLY EXERCISED  
AND PROPERLY ATTENDED TO**

Recommendation for Council Action, subject to the approval of the Mayor:

**NOTE AND FILE** this Memorandum as this Memorandum is for informational purposes only

Discussion:

This report is provided in response to the October 7, 2022 Council Motion (CF# 22-1187) that requested the Department of Animal Services (Department) to report back on a plan to ensure that all dogs in its shelters are regularly exercised and properly attended to, including whatever additional human and/or budgetary resources the Department feels would be necessary to accomplish this goal.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department was conducting playgroups and the Boredom Busters Program at each shelter. Playgroups allow dogs to socialize with one another and engage in natural behavior outside of their kennels. The Boredom Busters Program provides mental stimulation for the dogs while in the kennel.

During the pandemic, the Department had to stop administering both programs as volunteers did not have access to the shelters. After a while, the Department restarted the Boredom Busters Program as staff gradually became able to lead those activities. Once volunteers were permitted back into the facilities, the Department was able to implement playgroups again but with limitations as we were required to maintain social distancing. This made conducting the playgroups challenging.

On September 1, 2022, Wallis Annenberg Petspace partnered with the Department to help ensure that the dogs get enrichment and receive exercise every day. The Annenberg Petspace funded Dogs

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Playing For Life to hire two Canine Enrichment Coordinators to work with the Department five days a week.

Dogs in our shelters receive exercise through canine enrichment by engaging in activities designed to stimulate their mind, keep them active, reduce stress while also helping them to better engage with their surroundings. Enrichment happens both in kennel (via Boredom Busters) and out of the kennels, that may include walking, and/or other dog group activities. Enrichment activities happen daily and vary day by day and may be outdoors via playtime in the yards or walks, or in their kennels, when they get their daily treats from staff and volunteers; receive kong toys with treats inside; or when they enjoy frozen treats during hot weather.

To better monitor these activities, the Department worked with the Mayor's team to generate a tracking system for out of kennel enrichment which was never tracked previously even though it was being provided. By tracking the enrichment we can also identify which animals are in the most need of enrichment to be able to better focus staff and volunteer efforts.

Despite the Department's efforts to reestablish previous enrichment practices and implement these new measures, lack of sufficient staffing and funding still prohibits the Department from providing an ideal level of enrichment activities. The Department is still too dependent on volunteer assistance with these activities. When these programs were previously run by staff we were able to build these activities into set staff schedules. Now we are reliant upon volunteers' availability.

In previous years, the Department was able to administer staff led playgroups every day. Playgroups require a minimum of 4-5 people to run successfully. As part of our FY 2023-24 budget package, the Department is requesting additional Animal Care Technician position authorities, some that will be specifically assigned to run playgroups daily. We have also requested for additional funding to contract with an organization such as Dogs Playing For Life to continue administering playgroup activities as well as provide training for staff. In addition, Council recently approved the allocation of \$100,000 in additional funding for the Department to obtain a contractor that would provide dog training and behavioral assessment guidance to help improve the adoptability of dogs with behavioral issues. The Department is in the process of drafting a request for proposal to be released in early 2023 for these services.

Fiscal Impact:

This report is for informational purposes only. As presented, there is no impact on the City's General Fund.

If you have any questions on this matter, please contact Curtis Watts, Assistant General Manager via e-mail at [curtis.watts@lacity.org](mailto:curtis.watts@lacity.org).

Respectfully submitted,



Annette G. Ramirez  
Interim General Manager