

From Councilmember Bob Blumenfield

### **Funding Critical Programs at Animal Services**

Great news: Also on Friday, I and the other members of the Budget committee voted to restore funding to several critical programs in the Department of Animal Services (LAAS). Budgets are always full of difficult choices, but the proposed cuts did not make any sense and I'm thrilled that we were able to reverse them. I am hopeful and confident that when the Budget gets considered by the full City Council this week, the funding restorations will not be altered.

Dogs Playing for Life is a critical non-profit partner that ensures every dog in our shelter system has at least one walk a day while offering other welfare programs. Their funding had been slated for elimination, but we fully restored it. Also, the budget for the animal's food and most of their medical care had been zeroed out from the general fund budget, instead it was proposed to be funded out of the Animal Welfare Trust Fund (AWTF). However, the problem with funding medicine and food through the AWTF is that the AWTF consists of dollars voluntarily given by Angelenos to help enhance the department's ability to go above and beyond for the animals. It was never intended to be the primary source of funds for day to day care, let alone for basic food and medicine. Spending it on food and medicine would likely mean that donors would feel betrayed and would stop donating to it. Fortunately, we were able to reallocate general fund dollars to food and medicine thus enabling more of the AWTF to go to its intended use.

Thousands of advocates had made urgent calls and written letters/email urging the committee to make these restorations and to put more money toward spay and neuter. I'm proud that we listened and acted. Consequently, over \$2 million additional dollars will now be allocated to LAAS for these specific needs. Pending full council approval, Dogs Playing for Life will be fully funded this year, there will be an almost 20% increase in spay and neuter funds, and the cuts to food and medicine have been mostly restored to ensure the animals health and well being.

Those cuts were unacceptable- LAAS is used to working on a shoestring

budget, but these cuts would have essentially left the department without a shoestring. I'm immensely grateful that through our shared advocacy, we were able to find the funds and help LAAS maintain these critical services. Much work remains to be done to ensure necessary care and enrichment is given to all animals in the LAAS shelters. I will continue to explore reforms including new partnerships with our nonprofit rescues to ensure the City's animals have the best possible outcomes.