

January 8, 2018

Dear City Auditor Doud:

Thank you for the recently-released audit of the Long Beach Animal Care Services (LBACS) animal shelter. We would like to commend you and your team for carrying out a comprehensive and thorough study that will surely result in increased positive outcomes for both animals and staff at the LBACS shelter, should the City choose to implement the recommendations.

We would like to address the audit finding which ties much-needed improvements in shelter operations, animal care, veterinary care, programming and other areas to an increase in resources (i.e., budget and/or revenue) for LBACS.

While Stayin' Alive believes that all shelters should be adequately funded, we believe that many of the issues identified in the audit of Long Beach Animal Care Services are not resource-related. Comparing Long Beach Animal Care Services and Sacramento's Front Street Animal Shelter, we see that Sacramento spends significantly less per animal than Long Beach does. At the same time, Sacramento has a significantly higher live release rate (84% in Sacramento vs. 74% in Long Beach, according to LBACS-released charts).<sup>1</sup>

City	FY2016 Budget	2016 Live animal intake	Cost per animal	Live release rate
Sacramento ACS	\$4,061,230 <sup>2</sup>	10,939 <sup>3</sup>	<b>\$371</b>	84% <sup>4</sup>
Long Beach ACS	\$4,838,596 <sup>5</sup>	6,372 <sup>6</sup>	<b>\$759</b>	74% <sup>7</sup>

Given that Sacramento is achieving a significantly higher live release rate than Long Beach, with a larger number of animals taken in, on a significantly smaller budget, at approximately half the cost per animal, it is clear that there are other issues at play causing many of the substandard conditions identified in the audit. Among other positive aspects contributing to their cost-effective approach to animal sheltering, Sacramento has very competent, results-driven leadership, and they maximize the capacity of a sizable volunteer program to significantly reduce costs to the City.

In addition, LBACS' per animal cost is significantly higher than that of Austin, Texas, which is considered a national model for progressive sheltering. Austin achieved a 96%<sup>8</sup> live release rate at a cost of \$715 per animal in 2016.<sup>9</sup> The Austin cost includes providing care for *all healthy and treatable*

<sup>1</sup> Sacramento's Front Street animal shelter is an open-admission city-run shelter, like LBACS. Sacramento has a population, demographics and median income similar to those of Long Beach.

<sup>2</sup> City of Sacramento: <https://goo.gl/sxiy7W> p. 146.

<sup>3</sup> City of Sacramento: <https://goo.gl/axagdG>

<sup>4</sup> City of Sacramento: <https://goo.gl/yhwMt4>

<sup>5</sup> City of Long Beach: <https://goo.gl/sgnDqi>

<sup>6</sup> City of Long Beach: <https://goo.gl/hXKE6T>

<sup>7</sup> City of Long Beach: <https://goo.gl/hXKE6T>, Slides 1 and 2 indicate impound and euthanasia numbers. The 74% live release rate was calculated by dividing the euthanasia figure by the impound figure and subtracting from 100%.

<sup>8</sup> City of Austin: <https://goo.gl/gudLJF>

<sup>9</sup> University of Denver: <http://animalstudiesrepository.org/anilleg/1/> p. 36.

*animals*, including animals with significant medical needs, that enter their shelter per city legislation mandating such care passed in 2009-10<sup>10</sup>.

Turning to a local example, Los Angeles Animal Services accomplished an 84%<sup>11</sup> live release rate at a cost of \$526 per animal.<sup>12</sup> Long Beach outspends both of these cities and has a substantially lower live release rate to show for it.

In making a determination as to whether LBACS has enough resources to meet the needs of the community, these statistics are certainly worthy of additional investigation and analysis. The City of Long Beach should be realizing a much higher live release rate for the amount of money it spends, given these comparisons. This is a clear indication that resources are not the issue, and that solutions related to managerial acumen in programming, operations and budget stewardship would be a fruitful area for the City to pursue.

Should you wish to discuss this issue further, please feel free to contact me.

Best regards,

Patricia Turner, Ph.D.  
Stayin' Alive Long Beach

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<sup>10</sup> University of Denver: <http://animalstudiesrepository.org/anilleg/1/> p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> City of Los Angeles: <https://goo.gl/uivs1s>

<sup>12</sup> University of Denver: <http://animalstudiesrepository.org/anilleg/1/> p. 36.