



October 2, 2018

Dear Mayor Garcia and Members of City Council:

This letter is submitted as commentary on the performance of City Manager Patrick West. It is in regard to Mr. West's management of Long Beach Animal Care Services during his tenure as the city's top administrator.

The recent audits of Long Beach Animal Care Services ([Phase One](#) and [Phase Two](#)) have revealed how poorly managed this city bureau has been during the decade that Patrick West has been the Long Beach City Manager. The current chaotic condition of LBACS is directly attributable to Patrick West's negligence of the shelter and his failing to take into account the key role it plays in the lives of the people of Long Beach. In the wake of the troubling reports that have come out of the City Auditor's performance review of the shelter, there now can be no doubt that LBACS is a shelter in crisis – a situation that could have been prevented had Mr. West hired competent managers and carried out proper oversight. A review of the shelter's condition over the past 10 years shows that under Mr. West's management, LBACS has failed to hire managers with backgrounds in animal sheltering. In addition, it has lacked proper staffing and resources to maintain humane care of animals. Furthermore, LBACS has seriously mismanaged taxpayer funds in ways that show a gross disregard for or misunderstanding of fiscally-responsible management of taxpayer resources.

Based on the Auditor's findings, it is clear that LBACS has been chronically mismanaged under City Manager Patrick West's tenure, not only currently, but also at least since 2009, and likely earlier. Given the depth and breadth of the problems documented by the Auditor's review, and the nearly ten-year span of financial hemorrhaging of taxpayer dollars discussed in the report that has occurred through LBACS' mismanagement, it is clear that oversight of the shelter by the Mr. West has been inadequate, costing the taxpayers of Long Beach millions of dollars over the past decade. We submit the following for consideration in the performance evaluation of City Manager Patrick West.

- 1. Fiscal mismanagement at LBACS is a longstanding problem at LBACS. It has been the subject of two prior audits and the recent audit shows that LBACS continues to be fiscally mismanaged.** Phase Two of the Auditor's recent review notes that **LBACS has failed to collect nearly \$1 million in citations since 2009, collecting only 13% of the fees due to LBACS.** Nearly 2/3 of the outstanding amount can no longer be collected due to statutes of limitation in effect. This has occurred during the tenure of Mr. West as City Manager, starting two years after he was hired. Even more troubling: fiscal mismanagement is a pattern that has been in place at LBACS for nearly a decade. The Auditor's report alluded to, but did not explain, that **the City Auditor's Office (CAO) carried out an audit in 2011 that revealed that an LBACS employee had embezzled over \$250,000 from LBACS.** The audit found that the theft was made possible by lax accounting procedures in place at LBACS, an area that Mr. West

should have been monitoring via the Director of Parks, Recreation and Marine and the various managers LBACS has had over the past decade. Subsequent [news articles](#) reported that the employee had embezzled \$600,000 over the course of a career at LBACS. A [2014 audit](#) found that problems with LBACS' accounting procedures that led to the embezzlement had not been fully resolved.

2. **Mr. West has hired a series of inexperienced managers at LBACS who were neither educated nor qualified via experience to run the operations of a shelter.** Historically, City Manager Mr. West has hired managers from within the City's own departments, hiring people who don't have the specific training, education or experience in animal sheltering that is necessary to humanely run a shelter. These managers left after mismanagement or outright animal cruelty were revealed by the public or by the Auditor's office.

As told by media stories and city audits, the story of LBACS managers has been one of bumbling, stumbling and weaving, as animals were killed by the tens of thousands over the past 10 years. The past three managers that have been hired at LBACS under Mr. West's tenure have all resigned in the midst of crisis:

LBACS Manager Wesley Moore resigned from LBACS in 2008 after a dog was inhumanely killed in what was described in the press as a "grisly" scene. The LA Daily News/Press-Telegram at the time [described the horrific incident in detail](#). Rather than acknowledge the role of the manager in this situation, the City blamed the incident on a lack of resources. Mr. Moore resigned. City Manager Patrick West at the time said in the media that Moore's resignation had nothing to do with the dog's inhumane treatment.

LBACS Manager John Keisler was hired in the wake of Wesley Moore's resignation. Mr. Keisler left LBACS soon after a national scandal which implicated LBACS in the inhumane transport of more than 125 animals by a Long Beach rescue. According to the [Press-Telegram](#), LBACS supervised the loading of animals into a truck by a Long Beach rescue group in preparation to move the animals to Virginia. The truck was stopped *en route* and the rescue was charged with 128 counts of aggravated animal cruelty. The news outlet notes that "the animals were being transported in deplorable conditions" and "[o]fficers [in Tennessee] noted urine and feces all over the cargo compartment and located no food or water provided to the animals." **According to press reports, then-LBACS manager, Mr. Keisler, admitted that the Long Beach animal control officers who went to the loading of the animals in Long Beach did not do a final inspection, and likely had no idea that the rescue was transporting nearly 130 animals in spite of being present at the time of loading.** In the wake of press reports that LBACS was involved in the loading of the animals, Mr. Keisler promised to do an investigation into LBACS' procedures. To our knowledge, the results of that investigation were never made public. Not surprisingly, Mr. Keisler left the position of LBACS manager not soon afterward. When he left, LBACS was killing 55% of the animals in its care. And Mr. Keisler, like the managers before and after him, still made excuses for the killing. <https://goo.gl/gUuGfZ>.

Current LBACS manager Ted Stevens is also leaving at a time of crisis – the recent audit reports have shown the shelter to be currently suffering from poor management – clearly an indictment of Mr. Stevens’ lack of leadership. Mr. Stevens has been the manager of LBACS during the specific period during which the last two audit reports were prepared, and although the audits praised the staff of LBACS for their work, they also found that employee morale at LBACS is very low, that employees were given conflicting instructions and that operations were poorly managed. Furthermore, the audits found that LBACS lacks adequate housing, veterinary care or operational know-how to run a humane, well-run animal shelter. For example, the Phase One of the audit found LBACS engaging in numerous practices that do not meet minimum industry standards, including housing sick animals next to unvaccinated animals, a lack of proper monitoring of animals after veterinary care, contaminating dogs’ drinking water with detergent while cleaning and other similar issues that affect the care of animals.

Phase Two of the audit continued to document LBACS’ poor performance, revealing that LBACS provides grossly inadequate care to animals, including an inability to properly feed animals or clean animals’ housing. According to the report, animals receive only 6 minutes of care per day -- less than half the industry-recommended standard of 15 minutes. Even more troubling, the report finds that veterinary care is insufficient, with a very high ratio of animals to veterinary staff, and with veterinary staff at times unable to complete daily rounds to check on animals’ welfare. Daily rounds are a very basic requirement of animal sheltering, without which animals often fall ill. No Kill Long Beach’s research has shown that animals euthanized for illness at LBACS often come into the shelter healthy but suffer declines in health over time, and they are subsequently euthanized for illnesses caused by the shelter itself.

Further, during Mr. Stevens’ tenure, No Kill Long Beach found that at least one dog has been killed in violation of California’s Hayden Act, which establishes specific conditions under which an animal may not be euthanized. In addition, during Mr. Stevens’ time as manager, LBACS burned a dog so severely by leaving him on a heating mat during surgery, that he nearly died.

The Auditor’s review blames a lack of staffing for these deficits – an issue directly impacted by Mr. West. In addition, as mentioned above, Mr. West has repeatedly hired managers from within the City’s ranks with no experience in animal shelter management. It is difficult to believe that Mr. West’s practice of hiring managers with no animal shelter management experience has not affected staff’s ability to work at optimal levels.

Losses in the millions of dollars, the consistent hiring of shelter managers without appropriate education or experience, the resulting inhumane treatment of animals, and the ongoing problems stemming from the fact that the residents of Long Beach are unhappy with the direction LBACS has taken for the past decade or more are not hallmarks of a good manager.

We hope that in reviewing Mr. West’s performance as City Manager, the Mayor and City Council take into account the facts presented in this letter. Long Beach residents deserve an



animal shelter that is among the best in the nation, one that is befitting of the sixth largest city in California. Thank you for reading.

Best regards,

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URLs embedded in this letter:

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<http://www.cityauditorlauradoud.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Animal-Care-Services-Review-Phase-One.pdf>

<http://www.cityauditorlauradoud.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Animal-Care-Services-Phase-Two.pdf>

<http://www.cityauditorlauradoud.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Animal-Care-Services-Revenue-Audit.pdf>

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<https://www.presstelegram.com/2012/09/12/former-long-beach-employee-who-embezzled-money-sentenced-to-prison-restitution/>

<http://www.cityauditorlauradoud.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Animal-Care-Services-Revenue-Follow-Up-Audit.pdf>

<https://www.dailynews.com/2008/04/09/animal-control-manager-resigns/>

<https://www.presstelegram.com/2012/01/17/long-beach-hearts-for-hounds-operator-charged-with-128-counts-of-animal-cruelty/>

<https://lbpost.com/news/animal-control-turning-a-corner/>