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## ***MEMORANDUM***

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR &  
CITY COUNCIL**

**FROM: Sabrina B. Landreth**

**SUBJECT: Status of Oakland Animal Services Staffing**    **DATE: May 3, 2018**

### **INFORMATION**

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the status of the City's efforts to fill vacant positions at Oakland Animal Services (OAS) and present an update about other investments of funding and resources the City has made to support OAS operations.

As some of you have inquired, recently OAS Director Rebecca Katz submitted her resignation, effective June 15, 2018. The City recognizes and appreciates the outstanding results that Ms. Katz has achieved over the past 3.5 years, despite many challenges, to turn OAS around. Specifically, she has:

- Completed a complex transition of OAS from the Oakland Police Department to a standalone department, making critical operational and staffing improvements;
- Stabilized the management of shelter operations with a strong, experienced leadership team and dedicated staff;
- Restored a previously fractured relationship with the corps of 240 volunteers who donate more than 25,000 hours of care to Oakland's animals each year, and without whom the shelter could not run; and
- Increased the live release rate of animals from 56 percent in 2014 to 81 percent, while continuing to serve more than 6,000 animals and thousands of families per year.

### **Investments to Improve OAS Operations**

The City recognizes how difficult this work is, and how taxing it is for staff. For the past four years, supporting OAS has been a top priority. As detailed below, the City has made significant investments in OAS, starting with the transition to a standalone department and allocation of

additional funding prior to Ms. Katz' arrival, and the City has continued to increase staffing and funding for OAS as approved by the City Council each year.

***Budget Increases***

As shown in Table 1 below, in July 2013, OAS' operational budget was \$2,724,800. Recognizing the inadequate funding of the shelter operations, as part of the mid-cycle budget in June 2014, the City Council allocated an additional \$400,000 in one-time funding for additional staffing. When Ms. Katz arrived in late 2014, OAS' operational budget was \$3,495,191. **In FY 2017-19, the operational budget for OAS has grown to \$4,259,366, a 56% increase over a five-year period.**

*Table 1: OAS Budget: 5-Year Trend*

July 2013	July 2014	July 2015	July 2016	July 2017
2,724,800	3,495,191	3,803,558	4,056,262	4,259,366

In addition to budget increases, the City has prioritized the investment of \$1.6 million in the first round of Measure KK capital improvement funds to purchase a new heating, air conditioning, ventilation, and energy system at OAS. OAS operations are further supported by two outside contracts totaling \$500,000 to provide veterinary and spay/neuter services.

***Staffing Increases***

Staffing at OAS has increased by 24 percent over the past 3.5 years, with 7 more full-time equivalents (FTEs) on staff than in December 2014, as detailed in Attachment A. **Even when the current vacancies are accounted for, there are 23% more FTEs working at OAS now than there were in late 2014** when Ms. Katz began her tenure at OAS. While OAS staffing may still fall below recommended industry standards to meet the community's growing needs, this still represents a significant staffing increase, demonstrating the high priority the City has placed on securing more funding and resources for OAS.

**Efforts to Address Staffing Vacancies**

The staff vacancy rate, always a snapshot in time as new employees are hired and others move on to other opportunities, has held steady with a slight increase over the past 3.5 years, from 25.8 percent in 2014 to 26.3 percent currently; this is compared to a 9.8 percent overall vacancy rate citywide. As animal welfare organizations across the region will attest, the high cost of living in the Bay Area coupled with a high demand for skilled workers and low unemployment rate has made it especially difficult to recruit and retain shelter staff.

To better attract and retain qualified applicants for these critical positions, during recent labor negotiations, the City Administrator prioritized and negotiated equity pay increases to several Animal Service job classifications, including 4% for Animal Control Supervisors, 3% for Animal Control Officers, and 3% for Animal Care Attendants. These increases are in addition to the general 4% cost of living (COLA) wage increase. These wage increases affected 60% of the

budgeted positions in OAS, demonstrating that Animal Service positions are an organizational priority.

***Status of Recruitment Efforts***

Filling the 9.5 vacancies at OAS remains a challenge for the reasons detailed above, as well as the well-documented challenge citywide to fill vacancies quickly given the time-consuming and complex recruitment and hiring process, coupled with limited staff resources handling personnel matters in Human Resources and every City department, including OAS.

The Human Resources and Management Department (HRM), with support from senior staff in the City Administrator's Office, have prioritized filling vacancies at OAS and have worked diligently to expedite the lengthy process. The following information summarizes the status of recruiting and hiring to fill OAS vacancies:

- *Animal Control Officer*: 3 full-time vacancies and 0.5 part-time vacancy  
Job announcement closed on April 27 and HRM staff is reviewing applications for minimum qualifications. Those who meet the minimum qualifications will be invited to a written exam tentatively scheduled for May 30.
- *Animal Care Attendant*: 1 vacancy  
Job announcement closed on April 27 and HRM staff is reviewing applications for minimum qualifications. Those who meet the minimum qualifications will be invited to a written exam tentatively scheduled for May 15.
- *Animal Control Supervisor*: 1 vacancy; temporarily filled  
The City has conducted several recruitments for this position and the OAS Director has declined to hire the candidates. A new recruitment has been initiated and the wage for this position has been increased to better attract qualified candidates. This position is currently being staffed by a retired annuitant.
- *Veterinary Technician*: 1 vacancy  
This position has been vacant for an extended period of time, as the City was legally unable to fill it as a result of a confidential personnel matter. It is untrue that the City had not prioritized recruitment for this position or had simply failed to post the job listing. Recruitment for this position will begin within the next several weeks.
- *Volunteer Program Specialist*: 1 vacancy (limited duration, donation-funded position approved by the City Council in March 2018)  
Funding of first payment has been received by the City. The job announcement will post within the next several weeks.
- *Veterinarian*: 1 pending vacancy; temporarily filled with three part-time vets, plus contracted support  
The current veterinarian has resigned her full-time position effective May 18 and will be re-hired as a part-time veterinarian for one day a week effective May 19. Recruitment for

this full-time position will begin within the next several weeks. Meanwhile, the City has hired a part-time veterinarian, and is in the process of hiring a second part-time veterinarian, to provide medical services during the recruitment process, in addition to the \$250,000 available for contracted veterinary services.

- *Administrative Assistant I*: 1 vacancy  
OAS is scheduling interviews from an existing list of eligible candidates.

### **Other Challenges**

It must be noted that working in animal welfare is an extremely difficult job, and running a municipal shelter is particularly challenging. As “open admission” shelters (unlike private, non-profit shelters), municipal shelters like OAS do not have the option to turn anyone or any animal away, and the conditions that animals arrive in is often dire. The burnout rate of employees working in animal welfare, particularly in municipal settings, is high. The very nature of the work exacerbates the challenge of recruiting and retaining shelter staff, leading to a persistently higher-than-average staff vacancy rate.

### **Conclusion**

The City continues to prioritize filling these critical positions at OAS, despite the many challenges in the industry. We look forward to discussing additional resource needs as part of the upcoming FY 18-19 Midcycle Budget later this month.

We appreciate Ms. Katz’ fierce advocacy for the sentient beings who have no voice, and we are grateful for her leadership in transforming OAS over the past 3.5 years. We thank Ms. Katz for her passionate contributions to the Oakland community.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/  
SABRINA B. LANDRETH  
City Administrator

Attachment (1)

**A:** OAS Staffing Levels—December 2014 and May 2018 (FY 2017-19)

**B:** Background Information about OAS

**Attachment A: OAS Staffing Levels—December 2014 and May 2018 (FY 2017-19)**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Dec 2014 Budgeted (FTE)</b>	<b>Dec 2014 Vacancies (FTE)</b>	<b>May 2018 Budgeted (FTE)</b>	<b>May 2018 Vacancies (FTE)</b>
Director of Animal Services	1	0	1	0
Assistant to the Director	N/A	N/A	1	0
Administrative Assistant I	N/A	N/A	1	1
Animal Care Attendant	N/A	N/A	7	1
Animal Care Attendant, PT	10	1.5	3	0
Animal Control & Shelter Manager	1	1	1	0
Animal Control Officer	11	3	9	3
Animal Control Officer, PPT	1	0	1	0.5
Animal Control Supervisor	1	0	1	1
Executive Assistant to the Director	N/A	N/A	1	0
Public Service Representative, PPT	N/A	N/A	0.5	0
Public Service Representative	N/A	N/A	2	0
Veterinarian	1	1	1	1
Veterinary Technician	2	1	2	1
Volunteer Program Specialist II	1	0	1	0
Volunteer Program Specialist *	N/A	N/A	1	1
<i>Temporary/Limited Duration Unbudgeted Positions</i>	N/A	N/A	2.5 **	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>9.5</b>
<b>Number of FTEs on site</b>	<b>21.5</b>		<b>26.5</b>	
<b>Increase in FTEs over 3.5 years</b>	<b>7 FTEs</b>	<b>24.1%</b>		
<b>Vacancy Rate</b>	<b>25.8%</b>			<b>26.3%</b>

\*Two-year limited duration, donation-funded position approved by the City Council in March 2018.

\*\* 1 FTE part-time vet to begin 5/12/18 and 5/19/18, respectively.

## **Attachment B: Background Information about Oakland Animal Services**

OAS is Oakland's only "open admissions" shelter that accepts all of Oakland's homeless, injured, orphaned, unwanted, lost, abandoned and mistreated animals, including companion animals, farm animals, exotic animals, and native wildlife.

Every animal brought to OAS's door is admitted, regardless of age, breed, temperament or medical condition. In this way, OAS differs from other shelters and animal welfare organizations that are limited admissions, meaning that they only accept some of the homeless animals in their communities and may refuse those animals they deem difficult to place.

OAS's staff provides critical services to our community, sheltering thousands of Oakland's stray animals each year and responding to animal-related calls for service in Oakland. The Department enforces animal-related welfare laws, rescue lost and abandoned animals from the streets, protect animals from abusive owners, assist in prosecutions for abuse and neglect, investigate animal bites, and promote responsible pet ownership and humane care — while ensuring the public's safety.

OAS provides critical and essential services to not only the animals, but to the residents of Oakland. OAS shelters nearly 6,000 animals annually, enforces animal welfare laws, works with at-risk community members, investigates cruelty and neglect, and works in collaboration with many health and human service agencies to ensure public health and safety. In addition to City budgeted staff, OAS has more than 240 volunteers who assist with the care and services OAS provides.