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ALARCÓN INTRODUCES MOTION CALLING FOR A VOTE OF “NO CONFIDENCE” IN ANIMAL SERVICES GENERAL MANAGER ED BOKS

Los Angeles, CA – Today, the Los Angeles City Councilmember Richard Alarcón introduced a motion calling on the City Council to take a position of “no confidence” in LA Animal Services (LAAS) General Manager Ed Boks. This comes on the heels of an incident where Mr. Boks unilaterally decided to revoke the City’s incredibly successful spay/neuter voucher program, only days after he joined Councilmembers to celebrate Los Angeles Spay Day 2009 and promote the spay and neuter vouchers at a San Fernando Valley spay and neuter event.

“Time and time again, Ed Boks has shown an inability to make competent decisions in his role as General Manager of the Animal Services Department, with his most recent move to revoke the spay neuter voucher program just the latest in a long line of questionable management decisions,” said Councilmember Alarcón. “The City of Los Angeles is committed to creating a more humane, no-kill city and it has become blatantly obvious that Ed Boks is not the correct person to get us to that goal.”

A report released today by the Spay/Neuter Advisory Committee today found that “spay/neuter is not a top priority for LAAS management” and “no employee is designated as responsible for spay/neuter program enhancement, nor is any employee tasked with seeking spay/neuter partners, resources or funds.” The report also found that “LAAS does not follow up on animals released from LAAS shelters on medical spay/neuter deferral” and that “management decision-making is handicapped by not taking advantage of data analysis to identify and play for spay/neuter target locations and animals.”

The Spay/Neuter Advisory Committee also reported the fact that LAAS also does not target spay/neuter resources based on when animals are most likely to be breeding nor does it use its data to create a program for outreach, education and services to be aimed at areas with higher levels of impounds and/or lower levels of spaying and neutering. In terms of work the Animal Services Department has done to create more opportunities for spay and neuter in the city, especially low-cost spay and neuter, the report finds that “there is currently no LAAS action being taken to encourage more Veterinarians within the community to provide affordable spay/neuter services to the public,” and “visits to shelters reveal an inconsistent level of spay/neuter information.”

As Councilmember Alarcón’s motion states, the City of Los Angeles faces a continuing crisis in the management of the Department of Animal Services by its General Manager, Ed Boks. These problems range across a gamut of issues: facilities, management and operations, and priority setting and follow-up. These problems have caused a severe problem for the City in implementing its laws, policies and procedures. The people of Los Angeles have responded to the uncontrolled growth of cats and dogs and a high euthanasia rate in the city with support for Proposition F to upgrade and build new shelters. Unfortunately, today the new and much needed Northeast Valley and the Harbor shelter facilities are unused or underused due to lack of proper planning and management.

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In 2008, the City of Los Angeles adopted one of the most comprehensive spay and neuter ordinances in the nation. Since the adoption of the new ordinance, as anticipated, there has been a significant and welcome increase in the demand for spay and neuter services. Rather than be prepared to address the increased demands, Boks unilaterally suspended the City's programs, causing confusion about the city's goals and its commitment to becoming a "No Kill" city. Upon being challenged, he "unsuspended" a part of the program, without any reasonable explanation of the original decision or the turnabout, other than as a response to a budget cut. Mr. Boks did not consult with the City Council, Animal Services Commission or the Spay and Neuter Advisory Committee.

The spay and neuter program blunders are not the only instances where Mr. Boks embarrassed the City. Previously, he worked on a promotion called "Hooters for Neuters" to raise funds for the Department. In 2008, Mr. Boks created and pushed the idea of a pit bull training academy to be run by ex-convicts. In both instances, Mr. Boks took unilateral action. Furthermore, upon examination, the decisions were found to have been made in private, without regard to City policies or practices. When challenged, these actions were reversed, but the damage to the Department's reputation had already been done.

As Councilmember Alarcon's motion states, "Los Angeles pays its general managers very well. In return, the city asks general managers to adhere to city laws, policies and procedures, to consult with the public and city advisory committees and to keep elected city leaders apprised of any significant changes in their department's operations and processes. Mr. Boks has consistently failed in his responsibility. He should know better. Because of his actions as described above and in the media, how can the City of Los Angeles have confidence in his ability and desire to do the best for Los Angeles? Obviously it can't."

The "no confidence" motion introduced by Councilmember Alarcón is an opportunity for the City Council to go on record opposing the continued employment of Mr. Boks as General Manager. It has been referred to the Public Safety Committee for a hearing before it comes before the full City Council.

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