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**Sent:** Tuesday, May 7, 2019 12:01 PM

**To:** CityClerk <[CityClerk@longbeach.gov](mailto:CityClerk@longbeach.gov)>

**Subject:** TODAY'S COUNCIL MEETING

**This is a crucial time for our shelter. PLEASE  
COME TO THE MEETING AND TELL CITY  
COUNCIL TO STOP USING YOUR TAXPAYER  
DOLLARS TO KILL OUR PETS.**

Compassion Saves (CS) is old-fashioned ANIMAL CONTROL dressed up to look like No Kill. CS uses a lot of the vocabulary of No Kill but has enormous loopholes that will allow LBACS to continue killing animals and doing "business as usual.:

2. Compassion Saves does not implement a comprehensive adoption program that is fully independent of SpcaLA. SpcaLA has undue influence over the city shelter's adoption programs, implementing unreasonable adoption criteria and requirements and making it difficult for the public to adopt LBACS animals. This results in animals being killed at our city shelter. The LB City shelter needs to have its OWN adoption program that is completely independent of SpcaLA, which uses the Long Beach shelter as an animal supplier for its own adoption program, while leaving 75% of the animals on the city side without a crucial safety net.

3. Compassion Saves does not establish LBACS' autonomy from SpcaLA. SpcaLA diverts donations from LBACS, has open access to the city shelter, cherry picks the most adoptable animals from LBACS, dictates what signs will be put up, and

generally treats LBACS like a private resource that it can exploit. SpcaLA does this while getting nearly free rent on million-dollar taxpayer-owned property. LBACS needs full autonomy from SpcaLA so that it can do the work it's supposed to do - serve the people of Long Beach and work to save our pets when they unfortunately end up in the shelter.

**PLEASE STOP THE KILLING OF HEALTHY, INNOCENT CREATURES!!!**

"Compassion Saves," while pleasant-sounding, is an ineffectual placeholder meant to deflect deserved criticism of the shelter and give the appearance that there will be a deep change in philosophy and practices, when by all appearances, that is simply not the case.

Most telling was the fact that the main distinction between No Kill and "Compassion Saves" cited by City management is that animals with manageable conditions (like a cat with diabetes, the example given at Council) will still be killed, and dogs with behavioral issues that could be managed (like that of Trout, a dog who was killed by LBACS earlier this month, supposedly under a "Compassion Saves" framework) will also still be killed if placements can't be found. (Placement was strongly implied to mean a rescue organization, which is a very narrow definition of placement that excludes an adoptive family.) That is a big "if," and it's that "if" that provides the cover for "Compassion Saves" to continue killing.

Succinctly put: If your strategy to save a dog with kennel stress consists largely of contacting rescues, you don't have a comprehensive strategy, and you're not No Kill.

Likewise, if your strategy to save a cat that is diabetic is, again, to contact rescues, you don't really have a comprehensive strategy, and you're not No Kill.

The plan also features large numbers of loopholes that, again, provide cover for killing. While the plan states that no healthy or treatable animal will be killed, the "treatable" clause is significantly weakened by a qualifier: no treatable animal will be killed "without an aggressive search for a positive outcome." The question of how "aggressive search" is defined and how accountability measures will be built in so there is transparency to this process were not addressed. These are loopholes, as the saying goes, big enough to drive a truck through, and certainly enough to allow the killing to continue at LBACS in much the same way it did in the past.

Discussion of No Kill was open and acknowledged as an approach – this was a "first," and we attribute that to the fact that No Kill Long Beach has been persistent in educating the public about the killing practices at LBACS for the past seven years. Also coming into play in this acknowledgement is the fact that advocates have been attending City Council bearing signs

with the words "No Kill" on them and advocating for No Kill programs – which are common-sense programs that all shelters should have – consistently over the past 8 or so months.

However, throughout the presentation by City staff and Council, it was clear that an argument against No Kill was being constructed. This was largely due to council and staff consistently framing the discussion of No Kill as promoting closed, managed or limited admissions. Closed, managed or limited admissions are, indeed, not part of No Kill, and to imply that most, or many, shelters that embrace No Kill automatically shift to a limited admission model was, at the very least, misleading to the public.

The discussion of adoptions was similarly disappointing, as the City seemed to be talking out of both sides of its mouth on this question. The message coming out of City staff about adoptions was guarded, with the lack of funding for spay/neuter cited as one reason why LBACS apparently (it was implied) won't be operating its own adoption program. This is not a particularly strong reason for not having an adoption program, when one takes into account the fact that LBACS takes in approximately \$1 million in animal licensing revenue per year, which is largely enough for any spay/neuter funding deficits that may currently exist. However, all of that money goes to the General Fund currently (this is still a fact the City has not been forthcoming about – licensing income does NOT go back to the shelter or animals, though it absolutely could. Instead, it goes back to the city coffers to fund other City projects. It is our stance that these licensing fees, paid for by Long Beach's large responsible animal guardian community, should be used to fund programs at LBACS and bring it to No Kill.)

The message coming from Mayor Garcia, perhaps because he was elected in 2014 on a promise to substantively improve adoptions that he never fulfilled, was that he enthusiastically acknowledged that the adoption numbers should be better at LBACS. This is a limited acknowledgement of the adoption problem at LBACS, at best. Therefore, we have to remind the people of Long Beach of some reasons to be skeptical of this. First and foremost, Mayor Garcia's 5-year-long broken promise of a full adoption program at LBACS has resulted in over 8,000 animals being killed at LBACS since Mayor Garcia was first elected in 2014 – proving once again it's not enough simply to make promises; you have to act on them. Second, we are about 7 months away from the beginning of another election cycle – an election that Mayor Garcia would likely to see his City Council colleagues re-elected in. It has so far cost the Mayor nothing to claim to want to increase adoptions and then not deliver. In fact, at the State of the City this year, Mayor Garcia erroneously stated that adoptions increased in 2018 over 2017, which was not accurate, according to City records. In 2018, LBACS adopted out only 632 animals, compared to 682 in 2017, which is clearly a decrease. If this was an error, we've seen no correction of it publicly or in the media.

Perhaps one positive thing to come out of this is that this is the first time that the words "healthy and treatable" have been discussed as a relevant construct in Long Beach. We count this as a victory, small though it is, and a direct result of our work to educate the public and City about the need to understand this terminology in sheltering and use it as a framework for a humane approach to operating a city shelter. Victories in this fight are few and far between, so as victories go, we at No Kill Long Beach will take it.

Second, this is the first time there has been a conversation about the shelter where we saw what may be a kernel of real interest in and a glimmer of critical thinking about the shelter from City Council. This is by no means enough, but it's a start. Getting the City to this point has been a promethean task that No Kill Long Beach has had to move along millimeter by millimeter, but it goes to show that holding our politicians accountable, though it can be a very long task with only a small team working on it, is entirely possible and needs to continue in order to protect the shelter animals of Long Beach. It goes without saying that the more people who can join us in this endeavor, the better.

We believe that LBACS will improve its live release rates in the coming year, but that will not be due to any real change in the City's sheltering philosophy, so much as it is due to the fact that the City has finally hired a manager with some kind of shelter experience. However, in order to achieve a true No Kill shelter, it requires more than a superficial name change and rewriting operational protocols – it requires a true, on-the-record, commitment, ideally in the form of an ordinance, to saving all healthy and treatable animals in our shelter, and though the City may have taken a very small step in that direction, we are still far from having the compassionate, No Kill shelter that Long Beach needs and deserves.

The proof is in the pudding, as the old saying goes. Shelter statistics and records will tell us whether our animals are doing better in the coming year. Meanwhile, Long Beach residents who want a No Kill shelter in Long Beach will need to continue to be proactive about making their wishes known to City leadership because it is still far too easy for shelters to kill animals rather than save them. A "Compassion Saves" philosophy is not No Kill, and if you want to have a truly progressive shelter, No Kill is, and will continue to be, the gold standard. Long Beach deserves a shelter that operates at its highest potential, and that is No Kill.