

LAAS TOWN HALL MEETING
9/16/2010
Dog/Cat Limits

There were probably 60-70 people in total including ~15+ people from our side, & the room was overflowing. Notables from the other side included: Jenn W & Elizabeth Oreck -- Best Friends Missy Woodward -- Stray Cat Alliance Phyllis Daugherty -- Animal Issues Movement Jim -- PAW Project Kathy Riordan -- LAAS commissioner Laura Beth Hiesen -- former commissioner & former candidate for director Jim Bickhart -- Mayor's office Print & broadcast media were well represented.

New Director Brenda Barnette got in her photo ops at the beginning for the press -- snaps with a puppy/kitty from the shelter where the meeting was being held. She made welcoming introductory remarks & discussed the process for this proposal to increase dog limits from 3 to five & the same for cats: open public meetings, LAAS commissioners' meeting, LA City Council Public Safety Committee, LA City Council meeting, i.e., LOTS of opportunity for public comment.

According to my count, there were 45 speakers in FAVOR of the proposal to either completely lift the limit laws/raise the number of animals allowed in homes & 4 against it.

The evening was a virtual love fest with people complimenting Brenda & holding her up almost as LA's new Messiah. Of course the opposition made a point of noting that Ms. Barnette had no prior animal control experience.

People talked about how nearby cities like Santa Monica & San Diego didn't have limits & that there were no issues with hoarders, the ARs' latest buzzword. They also stated how those cities' shelters were MUCH better off than LA's or Glendale, which apparently has a limit of 2 animals. People spoke about how raising the limits would allow rescuers to foster & help more foundlings & shelter animals, & how it could potentially increase adoptions & alleviate the shelters. People spoke about how with expanded limits, communities could help more feral cats. One man spoke about how his apartment complex had come to develop a sense of ownership of the feral cats rather than viewing them as a detriment.

The detractors spoke about nuisance barking dogs & dogs running wild on streets. They spoke about feral cats having a negative effect on the bird population. Proponents countered with the fact that there are no limits on how many children people can have & that there is no enforcement for those screaming children or for music played too loudly. Enforcement is ALWAYS the bottom line issue with such matters. This is really about owner responsibility, which came up time after time.

There were varying degrees & varieties of support. Some wanted a tiered system with rescuers possibly having no limits, or an open limit that could be downwardly restricted if there were complaints. Some implied fees & some spoke about potential license revenue. People talked about turning LA from a very animal UNfriendly city to a model No-Kill city. Of course, the opposition got in their digs at Nathan Winograd & the No-Kill Movement. A few from our side were quite candid about being breeders from the show community & about how we wanted to & could help. There were no boos.

After the meeting, there was some discussion about how some people thought that next week's meeting might be more contentious as many of the opposition was absent last night. It remains to be seen.

Florence Blecher
California Responsible Pet Owners' Coalition/CarPOC