



May 20, 2014

Mayor Tom Bates and Members of the City Council of Berkeley  
c/o City Clerk  
2180 Milvia Street  
Berkeley, California 94704

Re: FY 15 Proposed Budget for Berkeley Animal Care Services

Dear Mayor Bates and Members of the City Council of Berkeley:

We are Friends of Berkeley Animal Care Services, a 501(c) charitable organization dedicated to supporting the shelter. We are writing to urge you to provide Berkeley Animal Care Services with the funds it needs to operate. To do anything less would be a betrayal of the public trust.

BACS is a beloved Berkeley institution that provides essential services for some of the city's most vulnerable residents: its homeless animals. The shelter is already operating on a shoestring budget. The anticipated shortfall in the 2015 budget will force the shelter to cut crucial programs and services, with devastating consequences.

Berkeley voters demonstrated their commitment to BACS and its mission when they approved the new shelter. The updated facilities include a basic veterinary clinic, equipped by funds raised by Friends of BACS. The city now has a duty to protect the residents' investment by providing the shelter the funds it needs to maintain and run its facilities.

By failing to provide adequate funds to the shelter, the city threatens to gut something it should take pride in. The BACS staff has done a phenomenal job with the resources available. BACS has formed a partnership with perhaps the leading pit bull advocacy group in the nation, BAD RAP, to train Berkeley's abandoned pit bull-type dogs and make them more adoptable. This partnership has become a model program. In fact, animal welfare administrators from across the country come to watch the shelter dogs perform in obedience class.

The shelter also works closely with other community nonprofits to rehome animals and to ensure that neonatal kittens, which arrive in droves every spring and fall, get the foster care they need to survive. On-site spay/neutering of shelter animals at the in-house medical clinic help keep the animal population in check. Every day, dozens of volunteers pour in, providing more than 400 collective hours of service every week enrich the lives of the resident animals.

**Friends of Berkeley Animal Care Services**  
**1 Bolivar Drive • Berkeley, CA 94710**  
**(510) 859-8196 • [info@friendsofbacs.org](mailto:info@friendsofbacs.org)**  
**[www.friendsofbacs.org](http://www.friendsofbacs.org)**



Through the efforts of the staff, volunteers, and animal welfare community, the shelter has a very low euthanasia rate, particularly for a municipal shelter that must take in all animals from the cities it serves. In the past few years, the shelter has had to euthanize only 8 to 10% of the animals in its care; the rest were rescued by nonprofit organizations, returned to their owners, or adopted into new homes. The shelter has committed to not euthanizing any healthy, adoptable animal. So far, it has managed to keep that commitment.

This is a critical point for the shelter. BACS will likely be hard pressed to maintain its excellent service record if it does not receive more money. Budget shortfalls in recent years have left the shelter struggling to meet its mission. Already, the shelter has had to rely on donor support to fund essential programs, some of which -- such as microchipping animals before they are adopted -- are city-mandated, and thus are clearly the city's responsibility.

Friends of Berkeley Animal Care Services has stepped in to provide stop-gap funding to continue the shelter's BAD RAP classes, pay for emergency medical services, and support foster care for neonatal kittens, among other things. The shelter's own donors, whether they like it or not, are now financing the city's spay/neuter program for low-income residents, necessary medical care, and basic supplies from toilet paper to leashes.

This is completely untenable. Why must the shelter rely on charity to fund its most basic services and pay its bills? Providing for the shelter's essential operations is beyond the scope of our mission as a nonprofit. Donors should not have to take up the slack for the city's obligation, and we certainly cannot make up the entire amount the shelter will need to run effectively. What happens in future years if donors choose not to give? The city must allocate adequate funding so that the shelter can continue to meet its basic financial needs.

If the city fails to provide BACS with a sufficient operating budget, the shelter will be forced to further reduce its services, with potentially catastrophic results. With fewer enrichment and training opportunities, fewer animals will be adopted out, leading to overcrowding in the shelter, and ultimately more animals put to death. If basic medical care cannot be provided, more animals will be put to death. If low cost spay/neuter services are not provided, more unwanted animals will crowd the shelter, and more animals will be put to death. If the shelter is forced to reduce its hours, Berkeley residents will have a harder time locating lost pets, and fewer adopters will come to find new ones. Animals will spend longer in their kennels and cages, and their behavior will deteriorate. Again, more animals will be put to death. Fewer volunteers will come, meaning animals will get less socialization and enrichment -- again, leading to more animals being put to death. That's the bottom line: More animals will be put to death. And that's something Berkeley residents already demonstrated they do not want when they voted to fund the new shelter.



We urge you, Mr. Mayor and the Members of the City Council, to consider that you have in your hands the lives of the hundreds of cats and dogs that pass through the shelter doors, the hopes of residents seeking their beloved lost companions or of families seeking a new pet, the enthusiasm of the hundreds of volunteers who dedicate their time to the shelter, and most of all, the trust of the residents of the city of Berkeley that you will do what is right and provide the funds the shelter needs to fulfill its mission.

Sincerely,

On Behalf of Friends of Berkeley Animal Care Services,  
Eleni Sotos, President