



City of
OAKLAND
California

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News from: **Office of the City Administrator**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 29, 2014

City of Oakland Announces New Director of Oakland Animal Services

Seasoned, Innovative Leader and Animal Welfare Advocate Takes Helm of New Department, Focuses on Collaboration to Improve Operations and Increase Rescues/Adoptions

Oakland, CA — Mayor Jean Quan and City Administrator Henry Gardner today announced the appointment of the new Director of Oakland Animal Services (OAS), Ms. Rebecca Katz. Ms. Katz is a progressive leader in the field of animal welfare and public safety with a focus on the human-animal bond and its impact on health and human service programs. She is dedicated to representing and advocating for the most underserved who often do not have a voice.

“Rebecca Katz is a seasoned and capable leader with experience running a successful municipal animal shelter in the heart of the Bay Area,” said Mayor Jean Quan. “Oakland’s animals will benefit from her innovative approaches to enhancing animal welfare, collaborative efforts to find homes for hard-to-place animals and demonstrated success. The City Council and my administration have made these improvements a top priority, improving our policies and support for animal services, and bringing Rebecca to the team is another important step forward. With everyone in the animal welfare community bringing their collective support to Ms. Katz and her hard-working team of staff and volunteers at OAS, we will make the changes now underway a resounding success.”

Ms. Katz will oversee the transition of OAS into a standalone department in the City Administrator’s Office, managing a staff of 31 FTEs and an operating budget of \$3.5 million. OAS currently takes in about 6,000 animals per year.

Ms. Katz is a licensed attorney who has devoted her life and career to public interest, social justice and advocacy for the most vulnerable communities. An East Bay native, she grew up in Berkeley prior to receiving her Bachelor’s Degree from the University of California, Santa Cruz and her Juris Doctor from University of California Hastings Law School.

For the past six years, Ms. Katz served as the Director of Animal Care and Control for the City and County of San Francisco, where she pioneered new policy initiatives and programs. Selected by long-time Director and agency founder Carl Friedman to replace him upon retirement, Ms. Katz maintained and built upon community and business relationships. Her leadership and ongoing commitment to community partnerships resulted in the department's first satellite adoption center, increased outreach, donation of all of the food needed for the shelter's animals, the first-ever animal adoption event at the State Building and the nationally acclaimed “Operation Chihuahua,” which resulted in quickly and happily rehousing dozens of Chihuahuas in the greater New York area.

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In 2012, in collaboration with the City of San Francisco’s homelessness official, she helped create the pilot project WOOF, Wonderful Opportunities for Occupants and Fidos. Forming an approach unlike any other, San Francisco paired residents in supportive housing with dogs considered unadoptable because of behavioral problems. The foster-care animal guardians were taught how to socialize the dogs and given a stipend for their work in preparing the canines for permanent adoption. All of the dogs found homes and the human participants benefitted as well – therapeutically, physically, and vocationally.

Prior to taking the helm at SF/ACC, Ms. Katz was a Deputy City Attorney for the City and County of San Francisco, where she drafted legislation mandating sterilization of Pit Bulls, which has since become model legislation for many communities in California and has been replicated across the United States as it has enhanced public safety and welfare for both animals and humans.

Ms. Katz was selected following a rigorous recruitment process. With the assistance of an executive recruiter, the City sought feedback from internal and external stakeholders through anonymous online surveys and in-person interviews. Finalists for the position were interviewed by two panels consisting of well-regarded animal sheltering and welfare experts, animal rescue organizations, City executive managers and Oakland Police Department command staff.

“I want to express my deep appreciation for the hardworking staff and volunteers at the Oakland Animal Shelter,” said Mayor Quan. “The task of caring for the thousands of animals which enter the doors of the shelter each year--many of which are injured, sick, abused or suffering--takes an enormous amount of heart, and I recognize the toll it can take on staff and volunteers alike. I am also grateful to the Oakland Police Department for their ongoing support to ensure that the transition to a new standalone department is as smooth as possible.”

Ms. Katz will begin as Director of Oakland Animal Services on Monday, November 17.

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