

BUREAUCRATIC NEGLIGENCE MAKES SACRAMENTO'S MILLION DOLLAR FACILITY FOR HOMELESS CATS AN EXPENSIVE DEATH ROW

Today, community members and shelter volunteers, many who filed the complaints that lead to a Humane Society of the United States audit of the City pound in 2000, are again raising serious questions about mismanagement at this facility before the City Council.

While the City faces a budget shortfall in the 10s of millions, the City Manager found over a million dollars to build a new facility for the homeless cats at the pound.

But the City Manager neglected to find a qualified person to run it. And now it appears that City employment policy has been circumvented to create a sweetheart deal for one person appointed to this job without open recruitment or advertising the position.

Last week, one of the largest outbreaks of a fatal cat disease caused more than 50 shelter cats to be killed and the cattery to be shut down for more than a week. In shelters, panleukopenia is highly contagious and spread as a result of poor cleaning and care practices. The pound vet publicly stated that the first cat found dead over the Thanksgiving holiday had contracted the disease at the pound.

During the panleukopenia outbreak, the Director of the Department of General Services, Reina Schwartz, appointed a former internal affairs policeman, retired annuitant Danny Torres, as the Chief Animal Care Officer, to be responsible for the animal care program both in the field and within the facility. This was done without posting the position or interviewing other candidates. Since Mr. Torres did not have the required five years experience in running an animal care facility, which was the minimum qualification, the job description was changed - tailored to meet his experience.

Mr. Torres is the same person who applied, interviewed, and was rejected earlier in the year as an applicant for the top shelter position – the Division Manager slot, which is currently vacant.

Although this retired policeman failed to make it through the first round of interviews, line authority has now been given to him by his friend, Ms. Schwartz, and he is now the de facto manager of the pound.

As a retired annuitant working at the shelter, Mr. Torres was drawing approximately more than \$120,000 in salary and pension.

Community members object to these sweetheart deals – so far it has cost the cats at the shelter their life. Placing unqualified people in positions to oversee programs that waste taxpayers' dollars should be unacceptable. The City manager, ultimately responsible for the decision-makers that led to the death of these cats, should be held to answer by the Mayor and Council.