

# After a stormy tenure, Miami-Dade's Animal Services director is officially forced out

BY DOUGLAS HANKS

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The rocky time of Bronwyn Stanford as Animal Services director in Miami-Dade County came to an end Tuesday with a resignation letter that she said Mayor Daniella Levine Cava requested nine weeks after suspending the administrator with pay.

A lawyer and former child-welfare official for Florida, Stanford was hired by Levine Cava to oversee the county's overwhelmed pet shelter in Doral in 2021 at a time of surging dog surrenders



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and stray canines in Miami-Dade and across the country.

She quickly clashed with senior staff — whom

she later accused of colluding against her — and with a wealthy benefactor of the department, Yolanda Berkowitz, who later accused Stanford of slander and sued her.

In the Tuesday letter released by Levine Cava's office, Stanford denied doing anything wrong.

"You have requested my resignation effective immediately," Stanford wrote in the three-paragraph letter. "You have indicated to me that your request is not based on any fault on my part or my work performance. I categorically deny any

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improper conduct.

“Nonetheless, I will honor your request as I always have throughout my tenure,” she continued. “I wish you the very best in your reelection and will always support you and Miami-Dade Animal Services.”

Rachel Johnson, Levine Cava’s deputy chief of staff, said the request for the resignation came during a recent conversation but did not provide details. Stanford’s lawyer, Benjamin Brodsky, declined to comment on the resignation request.

Levine Cava placed Stanford on administrative leave on July 14. That was the date of a letter from the Inspector General’s Office delivering a report to Levine Cava’s office concluding Stanford once received free X-rays for her cat at the shelter, a violation of county policy.

It was also a day after Berkowitz’s slander suit became public, accusing Stanford of falsely telling Animal Services employees that Berkowitz was a paid escort and sex worker in her younger days.

The suit portrayed the

false statements as part of an effort to undermine Berkowitz and her philanthropic support of adoption events and dog transports in support of Animal Services.

Stanford denied the allegations in the suit. She’s counter-suing and accusing Berkowitz of waging a campaign to oust her after finding Levine Cava’s pick for Animal Services wasn’t yielding to Berkowitz’s demands. Stanford also accused Berkowitz of working with disgruntled Animal Services employees to spark the investigation.

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