



2005 DEC -1 PM 6:40

December 13, 2005

Public Safety Committee
Oakland City Council
Oakland, California

Chairperson Reid and Members of the Committee:

SUBJECT: A Report and Recommendations Regarding Operations at the Oakland Animal Shelter

SUMMARY

This is a follow-up report regarding operations at the Oakland Animal Shelter (OAS). This report: (1) Recommends a new reporting structure within the Oakland Police Department for Oakland Animal Services; (2) Updates City Council on the status of the recruitment efforts for the new shelter positions; (3) Updates City Council on the effects of the new funding established at OAS; and (4) Informs City Council on the changes implemented at the Oakland Animal Shelter since the last report.

FISCAL IMPACT

City Council directed staff to assess the fiscal impact of moving Oakland Animal Services to another City department. Because of the inherent difficulties in administering animal services and coordinating with the Police Department to respond to calls for service for a department outside of their authority, we do not recommend moving OAS to another department. A stand-alone department would require the addition of an Assistant Director position and an additional level of operating funds that do not currently exist in the Adopted Policy Budget. The recommendation made in this report does not require additional funds for Oakland Animal Shelter operations beyond what was approved at the May 17, 2005 meeting.

BACKGROUND

In response to allegations of misconduct and mismanagement at the Oakland Animal Shelter, the Police Department's Internal Affairs Division (IAD) began a formal investigation into the

Item: _____
Public Safety Committee
December 13, 2005

allegations. IAD staff interviewed past and present staff members, representatives from rescue organizations and citizens. The initial investigation is scheduled to conclude by December 30, 2005.

As an interim measure, the Police Department assigned Sergeant David Cronin as acting manager of shelter operations. He was tasked with evaluating Shelter operations, identifying problem areas and instituting those reforms which could be accomplished within the operation's existing budget.

On February 17, 2005 City Council President Ignacio De La Fuente, Vice Mayor Jane Brunner, City Administrator Deborah Edgerly and OPD staff conducted a Town Hall meeting in City Council Chambers to receive input on hiring criteria and community expectations for the next Animal Shelter Director and to hear the public's concerns regarding animal control services. The forum was attended by approximately 200 people.

On May 17, 2005 staff presented a report and recommendations to City Council regarding operations at the Oakland Animal Shelter and provided responses to the issues raised at the February 17, 2005 Town Hall Meeting. Staff recommendations were accepted by City Council and have been implemented. These include the following:

- Increased the salary range and duties of the newly created position – Director of Animal Services;
- Staff the Veterinarian and the Registered Veterinary Technician as full-time positions in order to decrease annual contract costs and increase revenues;
- Mandatory staff training for all Animal Control Officers. The funding authorized by City Council allowed three staff members to participate in a two week Humane Officers Academy in San Diego;
- Significant changes and improvements to the standards of animal care (cleaning procedures, medicating and treatment procedures (including demodectic mange); reprioritized feeding, watering and medical care; the donation of spaying and neutering services);
- Implemented a new euthanasia policy;
- Solved a variety of operations and building maintenance issues;
- Expanded the volunteer program;
- Participated in a variety of community-oriented and educational programs;
- Improved the shelter's website and phone services;
- Expanded relationships with local animal rescue organizations and areas businesses.

At the May 17th meeting, the Council directed staff to review options for moving OAS to another City department and assess the fiscal impacts of such a move.

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

Recommended Reporting Structure of OAS

After discussion and deliberation, we recommend that Oakland Animal Services remain in the Police Department but with a new reporting structure. The new Director of Animal Services will report directly to the Deputy Chief of the Bureau of Field Operations to ensure the Director has direct access to the Deputy Chief and Chief of Police.

When deliberating which reporting structure would be best for the City and the animals, three alternatives were considered:

- Transfer OAS to the Department of Human Services
- Transfer OAS to the Office of Parks and Recreation
- Make OAS a stand-alone department, reporting to the City Administrator.

No synergies existed between the OAS and either the Department of Human Services or the Office of Parks and Recreation to suggest a move to those Departments would be successful. The most important barrier being that these two departments are already operating at full capacity and the addition of OAS would require a significant increase in operating support.

Making OAS a stand-alone department reporting to the City Administrator is also deemed not feasible. There are seven stand-alone departments that report to the City Administrator, each requiring oversight, management and operational support. Moving the Animal Shelter to the City Administrator's Office would also require a significant level of operating support and infrastructure in order to work, and the funding to do so is not available at this time.

Lastly, the issue of responding to calls for service and the critical communications link needed between the Police Department and the OAS dictates that the most effective place for OAS to report is the OPD.

The City is committed to the highest standards of animal care and welfare. The City will continue to improve shelter operations and procedures to ensure all animals receive the highest quality care. However, it is imperative for Oakland Animal Services to remain a part of the Police Department to ensure seamless response to calls for service.

The investigation into existing OAS operations highlighted many changes that could be immediately implemented within the existing budget. The City and Oakland Animal Services is committed to continuing this process of discovery and improvement. We will ensure that the community has a voice in the operation of the shelter and that shelter operations and policies are transparent.

Recruitment Status for New Classifications Adopted in Budget

The selection process for the new, permanent Director of Animal Services is nearing completion. Initial panel interviews were scheduled with the candidates on October 13th and 14th. The City Administrator, Deputy Chief Lowe and Sergeant Cronin conducted final interviews with the top four candidates in late October and early November and narrowed the selection down to two individuals. The City is conducting reference/background checks now and will make a final selection in the near future.

Staff is working with OPD to finalize the employment descriptions for the three (3) new animal shelter classifications (proposed titles: Shelter Veterinarian, Veterinary Technician and Animal Care Coordinator). Staff anticipates completing this task on or about December 20, 2005. The proposed classifications will be presented to the Civil Service Board (CSB) at its meeting on January 19, 2006. Assuming the CSB approves the proposals, it's anticipated that an agenda report to amend the Salary Ordinance, to add the new proposed classifications, will be scheduled for the City Council's February 21, 2006 meeting. In the interim, an Animal Care Coordinator has been hired on a contract basis and a Veterinary Technician will be hired within the next two weeks, also on a contract basis. These two contract employees will remain in place until the selection process for permanent employees is complete. The Shelter Veterinarian position has not been filled and the shelter continues to use a contract veterinarian.

To save time, the Recruitment and Classification Unit plans to begin recruiting for permanent employees while the proposals are moving through the legislative process. Once the CSB approves the creation of the classes, recruiting notices on the job announcements will note that the salaries are "being considered" or "under review" by the City Council. The recruitment will commence in late January (after CSB approval) and should be complete by the time the Salary Ordinance is fully amended (1st and 2nd reading of the ordinance) by late March 2006.

New Programs & Services Implemented Since May 2005

Staff would like to take this opportunity to update the Council on other programs and services that are in development or have been implemented since the May 2005 report:

- ***Design and construction of outside dog runs*** – Staff identified private funding for this project. The design is complete and construction is anticipated to be completed by the end of the year.
- ***Outdoor puppy area, where puppies can play and socialize*** – A large, portable kennel was donated for this use and is being set up at the shelter at the time of writing this report.
- ***Creation of outside rabbit run*** – This has been established at the shelter and is used every day.

- ***Development of a teen/children component of the volunteer program*** – Shelter staff is currently working on the development of this component and is specifically working on liability and related issues, and determining the appropriate level of supervision required. Teens that currently come to the shelter on weekends are assigned to individual adult volunteers to fulfill their four hour public service requirement.
- ***Redeployment of staff to open the Shelter for four hours on Sunday (anticipated implementation was in mid-July 2005)*** – One third of shelter staff members have been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of internal affairs investigations of misconduct at shelter. There are not currently enough staff members in place to keep the shelter open on Sundays.
- ***Emergency Response Plan/Mutual Aid*** – Shelter staff started working on an emergency response and mutual aid plan with Pet Food Express, the SPCA, the Alameda Shelter and the Fire Department. This has been put on hold until the new Director of Animal Services is hired.
- ***Creation of a not for profit shelter foundation*** – This is in progress and a pro bono attorney is assisting with the process.
- ***Development of an enhanced Spay/Neuter program*** – Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) is available to clients who require financial assistance to get their pet spayed or neutered. Shelter staff is meeting with clients and utilizing these funds on a case-by-case basis.
- ***Development of a microchip implant program for all animals adopted from the Shelter*** – Shelter staff have developed and implemented this program. Currently every adopted dog is implanted with a microchip prior to leaving the shelter. Staff will microchip all animals brought in for licensing and license renewal during the 2006 calendar year.

Additionally, funds were donated by a nonprofit to implement a microchip implant program for all cats adopted at the shelter. It was brought to the shelter's attention that not every adopted cat had been implanted with a microchip. The shelter recognized this failing and is now in compliance. The shelter adopted a new policy stating that every adopted cat will be implanted with a microchip prior to leaving the shelter. The microchips will be implanted at the time the cats are spayed or neutered. Staff will also offer micro chipping to citizens who redeem a cat at the shelter, although this is a rare occurrence. The citizen does have the right to refuse, because micro chipping cats is not required by ordinance or law. Without additional funding, the shelter will not be able to continue the cat microchip program after the original donation is exhausted. Staff will encourage microchip implants for all animals.

- ***Management of licensing program*** – Shelter staff are in discussions with a company regarding the management of most aspects of the licensing program. There are no upfront costs and the company will take a percentage of the fees they collect (\$3.80 per

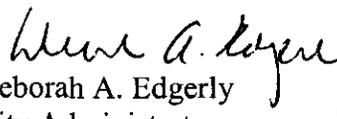
license issued). In Dallas, Jacksonville, Kansas City, Solano County and many other jurisdictions, this company has increased licensing by 5 to 40%. If they increase licensing by 5%, the City would not see any loss in revenue. If they increase licensing by 10%, the revenue increase would be approximately \$16,000 per year.

The cost to the City to issue a license is approximately \$3.50 per license. This includes the cost of mailings, staff costs and the actual cost of the tag. Currently, the shelter has two staff members (Police Records Specialists) that spend a total of 50 hours per week handling licensing. An outside licensing company would permit these staff members to be redeployed to work the front counter, handle incoming phone calls or perform other administrative duties within the Police Department. This outside firm may also free up Animal Control Officers for field service.

- ***Improvement of shelter software program*** – Shelter staff has selected and is meeting with a new software provider to replace the Shelter's outdated and inadequate operating system. The new system is considered highly reliable, can be designed to meet changing needs, and will cost \$4,000 less per year than the current system. Implementation of the new system will not take place until the new Director of Animal Services is hired.
- ***Participation in community meetings and fairs*** – Shelter staff have begun to attend Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council meetings citywide to answer questions and provide information to various neighborhood associations. Shelter staff has participated in six (6) NCPC meetings in the past two months and two vaccination and licensing fairs.

We recommend that Council accept this report. Staff will return in February 2006 with a Salary Ordinance amendment for the new shelter positions.

Respectfully submitted,


Deborah A. Edgerly
City Administrator