

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL



DATE: December 2, 2014

TITLE: Addendum to Riverside County Department of Animal Control Services Agreement to Include 60 Day Amnesty Program Regarding Animal Field and Licensing Services Program

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Approve an addendum to the Riverside County Department of Animal Control Services Agreement regarding Animal Field and Licensing Services Program to include a 60 day Amnesty Program.

BACKGROUND

The City entered into an agreement ("contract") with Riverside County Department of Animal Control Services ("County") to provide various animal field and licensing services with a performance period from July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2015.

The services include the following:

- Responding to calls for field service assistance;
- Impounding at-large (stray/abandoned) animals and collecting impound fees;
- Providing care and treatment to stray and abandoned animals;
- Investigating reported animal bites;
- Quarantining all suspected any rabid animal that has bitten a person;
- Responding to stray and barking animal complaints;
- Picking up dead animals;
- Returning lost/stray animals to owners subject to payment of impound fees;
- Issuing dog licenses and collecting licensing fees;
- Inspecting and issuing licenses to operate dog kennels and catteries; and
- Issuing warnings and citations for violations of the County's animal control regulations.

The total cost of the contract for all of the above services is \$539,100, which is to be offset by \$100,000 through the collection of licensing fees during the two year period of the contract.

The contract also included a field operations program that involves County (Dog) License Inspectors canvassing neighborhoods "door knocking" throughout the City to observe and/or listen for barking dogs at each residence and then accessing the County's data base to determine if licensed dogs reside at the respective address. The purpose of the "door-to-door" canvassing program is to determine whether the dogs observed or heard at a particular residence is un-licensed, un-vaccinated for rabies, un-micro chipped and/or un-spayed/un-neutered.

Another objective of the field operations program (according to the contract) is to raise revenue through increased "canine licensing." However, on August 14, 2014, the City Attorney (at the direction of the City Council) dispatched an email (see attached) to the County ordering that the field operations program be immediately suspended for a period of ninety (90) days. This was due to numerous complaints from residents alleging harassment, privacy invasion, emotional distress due to threats of excessive fines, incorrect information contained in notices, etc.. The County was also notified that some residents, who cannot pay the fines, have chosen instead to

abandon their dogs (or worse, kill them), which has become an unintended consequence of the field operations program that has created several other problems, which has possibly created additional health and safety risks to the community. The “moratorium” period was intended to provide the City with time to assess the success of the program and to reassess its objectives in light of the concerns expressed by many residents in the community. It was pointed out in the email to the County that the moratorium period was not intended to halt any inspection activities associated with responding to citizen requests for service or responding to citizen complaints about animal behavior.

The moratorium period expired on November 14, 2014, but at a joint meeting of the City Council and Public Safety Commission held on November 13, 2014, the County agreed to a 60 day Amnesty Program, during which the County would not issue fines to owners of dogs that are unlicensed, un-vaccinated for rabies, un-micro chipped and/or un-spayed/un-neutered. However, during the duration of the Amnesty Program, dog owners will be allowed to license their dogs without being subject to not only fines, but also past due fees or penalties for late payments. For example, under the normal licensing program, if a dog owner has not had his/her dog licensed for the past four years, the owner would be required to pay late fees for the last past years. However, under the Amnesty Program, the same owner will be permitted to get the dog vaccinated and licensed at just the normal one year cost with no late fees, no penalties and no fines.

During the Amnesty Program, the County will conduct a “friendly” outreach program to inform dog owners in the City of the importance of licensing, vaccinating, micro-chipping and spaying and neutering their dogs. The County will promote the benefits of the Amnesty Program in both English and Spanish to the City’s residents via media releases and direct mailers. The goal of the Amnesty Program is to get as many dogs licensed during the Amnesty Program as possible before the County proceeds again with its “door-knocking” canvassing program.

It is important to note that during the Amnesty Program, the County will continue to provide the other services set forth in the contract such as, but not limited to: (a) responding to calls for field service assistance; (b) impounding at-large (stray/abandoned) animals; (c) providing care and treatment to stray and abandoned animals; (d) investigating reported animal bites; (e) quarantining all suspected any rabid animal that has bitten a person; (f) responding to stray and barking animal complaints; and (g) picking up dead animals.

Since the Amnesty Program amounts to a variation of the scope of services described in the contract, it is recommended that the City Council formally approve an addendum to the contract to memorialize the Amnesty Program. Pursuant to Section 9 “Alterations” of the contract, any alternation or variation of the terms of the contract must be in writing and signed by the parties and authorized by the parties’ respect governing bodies in order to be effective and valid.

FISCAL IMPACT

Unknown at this time if the Amnesty Program is implemented. However, revenues will be the same as those specified in Section 6.08.020 (Mandatory Dog Licensing and Vaccination) under Riverside County Title 6 – Animals.

EXHIBITS:

- 1) Animal Control Services Agreement
- 2) Moratorium Email
- 3) Addendum