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March 11, 2016

Honorable City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
200 North Spring Street
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**RE: LOW INCOME SELF IDENTIFICATION FOR FREE SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAM
ELIGIBILITY**

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council:

1. **APPROVE** a change in the low income verification procedure to determine eligibility for the Free Spay/Neuter Certificate Program that allows self-identification of low income status using a signed affidavit;
2. **DIRECT** the Department to work with the City Attorney's Office to develop an appropriate affidavit that allows City of Los Angeles residents to declare their annual income to determine eligibility for the Free Spay/Neuter Certificate Program.

SUMMARY

At its meeting of March 8, 2016, the Board of Animal Services Commissioners unanimously approved a proposal to change the low income verification procedure to determine eligibility for the Free Spay/Neuter Certificate Program. The Free Spay/Neuter Certificate Program assists qualified residents of the City of Los Angeles with sterilization of their companion animals. Qualified residents are entitled to receive up to six (three dog and three cat) certificates that each cover the full cost of a sterilization surgery at a participating veterinary hospital. This program is instrumental in assisting low income residents on complying with the mandatory spay/neuter ordinance in the City of Los Angeles.

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Currently, the total annual income threshold set for low income determination is as follows:

1 PERSON	2 PERSONS	3 PERSONS	4 PERSONS	5 PERSONS	6 PERSONS	7 PERSONS	8 PERSONS
\$29,900	\$34,200	\$38,460	\$42,700	\$46,150	\$49,550	\$52,950	\$56,400

According to the current practice, the following documentation is acceptable proof of income:

- California Resident Income Tax Return Form 540 or;
- W-2 Income Form or;
- DWP Lifeline Bill or;
- Social Security Benefits Statement or;
- Award letter of the amount of SSI benefits, General relief, or Cal Works/AFDC or;
- Southern California Gas CARE Program

The above-mentioned forms of documentation are often unavailable to those members of the community who are homeless, undocumented, or otherwise unaffiliated with federal, state, or local government entities and/or utility programs. Even so these residents are often pet owners and are in need of these vouchers to care for their companion animals and stay in compliance with pet laws.

It is recommended that the Department allow residents to self-identify their low-income status by signing an affidavit declaring their annual income. In doing so residents who are not able to furnish the current documentation requirements will have an opportunity to take part in the free certificate program and have their animals altered in compliance with the law.

It should also be noted that this change is directly connected to an element of the City's Comprehensive Homeless Strategy (CHS). The Department of Animal Services is designated as the lead agency for two strategies one of which calls for programs to assist homeless individuals with pets. Within the strategy, the Department proposed to expand the current spay/neuter services to the homeless pet owner population. Allowing self-identification for low income status will encourage homeless pet owners who do not have access to the current acceptable forms of income verification to participate in the program by using an affidavit to declare annual income.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no direct impact to the City's General Fund. The cost of the Free Spay/Neuter Certificate Program is covered by the Animal Sterilization Fund. It is anticipated that the proposed change in the low income verification procedure will result in an increased usage of the program by those residents who are unable to furnish the documentation currently required for participation.

The Department did prepare a budget request for the CHS strategy mentioned above. In it \$500,00 was requested to service pets of the homeless population. This equates to approximately 4000 surgeries.

Transmittal to City Council
Change in Low-Income Verification Procedure for Free Spay/Neuter Eligibility
March 11, 2016

If you require additional information regarding this transmittal, please contact Assistant General Manager Dana Brown at 213-482-9507 or dana.brown@lacity.org.

Sincerely,



BRENDA F. BARNETTE
General Manager