

MOTION

The Department of Animal Services operates one of the nation's largest municipal shelter systems, handling approximately 60,000 animals annually and responding to 20,000 emergency calls each year. Currently, the Department's six shelter locations are staffed with a limited number of animal care technicians, at least one veterinarian, and an assisting registered veterinary technician. Field staff includes animal control officers, license canvassers, and a Specialized Mobile Animal Rescue Team (SMART). For several years, the number of animals brought into City shelters has outpaced the number of pets being adopted or placed with rescue partners. Conditions at City operated shelters are described as unsatisfactory due to extreme overcrowding and staffing shortages that have resulted in dogs not being walked for weeks or months and dogs frequently being doubled or tripled in small kennels. These conditions have led to increased stress among animals, likely with negative outcomes reducing their adoptions.

Budget cuts, which began in 2008, have exacerbated this issue prompting a need to re-evaluate the City's services and refocus on care for the animals. The Northeast Valley Animal Care Center (Northeast) is a bond financed facility approved by voters under the Proposition F (Fire and Animal Facilities) Bond Program in 2000. Due to City budget constraints and limited resources, upon its completion in 2008, the Center was not open to the public and functioned only as a limited special operations shelter from 2008 to 2011. On January 10, 2011, the City Administrative Officer (CAO) released a Request for Information (RFI) seeking a contractor to operate one or more animal shelters. On August 16, 2011, Council approved a contract with Best Friends Animal Society, Inc. (BFAS) to operate Northeast. This contract allowed BFAS to administer adoption and spay-neuter services, and provide community outreach and education programs consistent with the Department's mission. This alternative service delivery method allowed for a reduction of City costs, enhanced the range of services provided at Northeast to the benefit of all City residents, and reduced the number of animals euthanized due to time and space constraints. In order to ensure services remain uninterrupted, Paws for Life K9 Rescue (Paws for Life) has continued to operate Northeast following the conclusion of the BFAS contract. In 2024, Paws for Life was awarded a California Nonprofit of the Year award for their innovative canine centered programs that have saved and transformed the lives of animals and people. Given the City's current financial situation, a similar approach should be considered for additional City operated shelters to be transitioned to a contractor in order to augment animal services at these shelters while enabling the reassigning of City staff and resources to remaining City operated shelters; resulting in improved conditions at those shelters.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Department of Animal Services (DAS) with the assistance of the City Administrative Officer (CAO) and Chief Legislative Analyst to report on the feasibility of issuing a Request for Information seeking a contractor of an established animal care and control organization to operate one or more of the shelter facilities currently operated by the City in a manner similar to the Northeast Valley Animal Care Center.

I FURTHER MOVE that the CAO, with assistance of the DAS, be instructed to report on the feasibility and process for reassigning existing staff and resources from certain City operated shelter facilities to other City operated shelter facilities in order to improve conditions at a reduced number of City operated shelter facilities with the other shelter facilities kept operational by a contractor and prevent any loss of jobs.


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