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October 9, 2013

The Honorable Harvey Hall
Members, Bakersfield City Council
1501 Truxtun Avenue
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Mayor Hall and City Council Members:

I am writing to request that the Mayor and City Council of Bakersfield set aside time at the City Council's October 16, 2013 meeting to discuss animal services operations and procedures.

As you know, City and County staff have met and exchanged correspondence regarding how best to coordinate operations and procedures in order to minimize the time, effort, and cost expended by the public in surrendering and adopting animals. On October 8, 2013, the Board of Supervisors discussed several issues related to the intake and operations of the County shelter that we believe cannot be properly addressed without the full participation and cooperation of the City of Bakersfield.

At the October 8 meeting, Kern County Animal Services director Shyanne Schull identified several areas of concern regarding procedures being instituted at the City's new Animal Care Center. Although we now maintain separate shelters, we sincerely believe that coordinating City and County operations is still the best policy for both animals and residents. It is therefore our hope that you will discuss and consider these items at your next meeting.

24-hour Exchange Policy

The County has proposed to City staff a "24-hour exchange" procedure, which in our view will greatly diminish the frustration experienced by residents as a result of the split. Currently, City staff has indicated that they will only accept animals from City residents, and will require proof of identification to establish residency. The County is concerned that such a policy will contribute to frustration among members of the public who bring an animal to the incorrect facility and are told to take the animal to the other shelter. This increases the likelihood that a resident will simply release the animal onto the street; indeed, County Animal Services staff witnessed precisely such an abandonment in the first week of the new County shelter's operation.

To minimize confusion and animal abandonments, the County proposes that both the City and County agree to accept all animals, regardless of jurisdiction. All animals would be logged and tracked as being under City or County jurisdiction. At the end of each day, a report would be sent to the other facility notifying it of animals currently belonging to their jurisdiction. Both the City and County would then retrieve those animals to the proper facility within 24 hours of notification. This procedure would allow residents to bring an animal to the most convenient facility. It would also give City residents an extra day per week to bring an animal to a shelter (the County facility is open six days per week versus the City's five days of opening per week).

Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Cats

Both the County and members of the public have dedicated time and resources to establish an effective Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program for feral cats. This type of program has proven effective in decreasing feral cat populations over time. Under TNR, feral cats entering the shelter undergo spay/neuter surgery and are returned to the place where they were captured. The County recently completed a 2-year partnership in which PetSmart

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Charities spent more than \$100,000 to TNR more than 2,500 cats in the 93306 ZIP code. Additionally, the County is continuing its own TNR program on feral cats brought to the County facility.

City staff indicated they believe in the benefits of a TNR program but will be unable to implement TNR immediately. Unfortunately, City staff stated they will be euthanizing all feral cats brought to the City shelter by City residents, and they will not differentiate between TNR cats and other feral cats.

Since the City believes in the overall goal of a TNR program, we hope that your Council will be willing to reconsider euthanizing TNR cats. We hope you will recognize that euthanizing a TNR cat surrendered by a City resident instead of returning it to its original habitat would be counterproductive to the goals that a mutual City-County TNR program could achieve.

Animal Jurisdiction Determination

Discussions with City staff made it clear to County staff that the City was determined to alter the method of determining animal jurisdiction by basing it on the residence of the person bringing in an animal, as opposed to where the animal is found. County staff recognized the necessity to have consistent methods of determining animal jurisdiction in order to prevent gaps in service to the public. Therefore, in the spirit of cooperation, the County has changed its intake procedures to determine jurisdiction by residence as the City does.

However, this is contrary to the practices of cities and counties surveyed by County staff whose operations are similar in size and which currently have separate City and County animal shelters. Discussions with these shelters revealed that every facility (including both the City and County of Sacramento) bases jurisdiction on where an animal is found, not the residence of the person. That is in keeping with best practices recommended by national animal welfare organizations including the ASPCA, and we invite the City to join the County in implementing this best practice as well as other nationally recommended procedures for animal services that have proven to be effective.

Our Board sincerely hopes that at your direction, City staff will be willing to continue discussing these issues with the County. We hope you will agree that the more the City and County can work together to achieve consistent procedures that adhere to best practices, the better the services we will be able to provide, both to the public and to the animals within our jurisdictions.

As a first step, we respectfully request that a Council member or the City Manager place an item regarding animal service operations and procedures on the City Council meeting agenda of October 16, 2013. We believe that an open and thorough discussion of procedures and best practices will yield an agreement that best serves both residents and animals in our community.

Sincerely,



Mike Maggard, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

CN:MM\Animal Services Mayor City Council chrman 10-09-13
CF 500.50

cc: Bakersfield City Manager
Animal Services
County Counsel