

Haddon, Stacey

To: Lee Heller
Subject: RE: public comment on Animal Control Services item

From: Lee Heller <k9krma@gmail.com>
Subject: public comment on Animal Control Services item

Dear Madame Mayor and Honorable Councilmembers,

I am hoping to call in to your meeting this evening, but knowing the technical challenges of remote public comment, I also wanted to send you a brief email on this agenda item.

I understand the City's frustration, as you are faced with significant fee increases from the County for its animal control and sheltering contract. This has only gotten more frustrating with the closure of the Lompoc shelter.

When I spoke to your Council in 2017 about other options for the City, I warned against assuming that you could simply follow Carpinteria's model and go your own way. Your two cities are so very different -- Carp is small (about 14,000 residents), has a stable rather than transient population, and is heavily middle class: they impound very few animals each year (probably fewer than 50), and have a long-term code compliance officer to enforce the laws.

In 2017 Lompoc was responsible for about 1000 animals impounded each year, and had a wide variety of service calls, many involving dog bites or other matters requiring expert response. The numbers don't have appeared to change much as of the 2019-20 fiscal year (the most recent figures I have); they show 960 animals impounded, and 2327 field service calls, a reduction from 2017 but still a significant number (see attached). I do not see how you could try to emulate Carp, which contracts for sheltering and vet care with a local veterinarian, and uses a minimally trained code compliance officer. Given how busy veterinarians have become, I suspect you would have a very hard time finding one who wanted to do it in any case!

I think it is essential to gather your data and study your options, to see if there is an alternative that is truly more cost effective in meeting the City's needs. But you will need to take the time, and invest the money, to truly look at your data and explore your options. I would encourage you to work with Jill Anderson and Cody Rackley of Shadow's Fund, who are Lompoc based but very familiar with the various regional options for animal control; I would also encourage you to either hire a consultant or direct staff to do a deeper dive into various options to see if you can find a better one. It might *seem* like a cheaper option to buy the shelter from the County (if that is even feasible) and run your own shelter and services, but you would want to look at the cost of facilities repair and maintenance as well as the costs and challenges of staffing a shelter. The reason that the County has mostly closed La Paws is that the dog runs are too dilapidated, and staffing a third shelter was becoming more and more difficult to do.

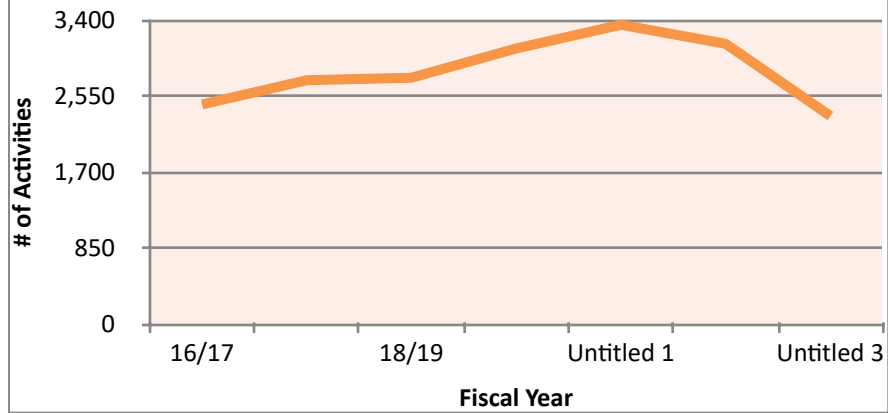
I feel your pain on this, and want to support the City in making the best possible decision for its animals and people!

Best wishes,

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SBCAS Activities in the City of Lompoc



Impounded Animals in the City of Lompoc

