



City Council Agenda Item

City Council Meeting Date: January 17, 2023

TO: Dean Albro, City Manager

FROM: Erin Keller, Senior Administrative Analyst
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SUBJECT: Animal Services Update and Consideration of Alternatives to Contracting with the County

Recommendation:

Staff recommends the City Council:

- 1) Continue to work with the County of Santa Barbara (County) on improved animal services while they remain under contract; and
- 2) Discuss the following alternatives to the County contract and provide further direction to staff for analysis and detailed cost estimates to be provided at a future City Council meeting:
 - a) Formation of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) for animal services between interested cities and the County;
 - b) In-house animal services, including building a new shelter, staffing, training, budget, and establishing non-profit community partnerships and volunteers. A survey would go out to the community to determine the level of interest in this alternative, as it is the most costly, time-consuming, and will require community support;
 - c) Issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to contract out all services to a provider that would allow the City to budget and be responsible for the contract;
 - d) Analyze the cost and commitment associated with partially contracting out animal control services while providing in-house services. This is referred to as the "hybrid model" and is currently utilized by Carpinteria and Santa Barbara;
 - e) ; or

- f) Utilize a consultant to research and present alternatives and provide a professional opinion.

Background:

On June 21, 2022, the City Council approved a 5-year contract with the County to provide animal control and sheltering services. At that time, the City Council also directed staff to provide an update six months later with alternative options for those services.

Since June, staff has performed extensive research concerning animal services. We have talked to architects, local animal non-profit providers, local veterinarians, local pet lodges, and dog behavioral specialists, read through feasibility studies and learned about animal services best practices. On September 15, 2022, staff presented to the Santa Barbara County Animal Services Advisory Council (ASAC), comprised of current Santa Barbara animal non-profit partners, and County staff. We gave a presentation on current service levels, what we learned in our research, contract concerns, communication concerns, and finally, the request by the City Council for a presentation on animal services alternatives (see Attachments 1 and 2).

Discussion:

Public Health

We presented to the ASAC board our concern with animal services being managed under the County's Public Health division. Public health will always take precedence over animal services. We recommended the County consider moving animal services to another division, or under its own separate category. While we understand the methodology, we advised the ASAC board to request that the County investigate alternatives due to the constant staffing and volunteer requirements that animal services requires that Public Health has yet to facilitate due to competing priorities.

Reopening of the Lompoc Animal Shelter

We then mentioned that our number one concern was the closure of the Lompoc Animal Shelter and the impacts on the community. Several staff members, including the City Manager, took a tour of the closed Lompoc Animal Shelter provided by a volunteer with CAPA¹. We found the shelter in good condition with usable office space, storage, cat sheltering, bunny and small animal sheltering, fenced outdoor meet and greet areas, and fenced dog yards. The only obvious problem were the dog kennels, which are deteriorating and do not meet the current standards for dog care. The ASAC board also took a subsequent tour, which City and County staff also attended, and all agreed that the shelter could be reopened with limited services. We are pleased to report a press release was issued by the County on January 3, 2023, outlining the reopening of the

¹ Companion Animal Placement Assistance – a California non-profit serving Lompoc residents.

Lompoc Shelter and expanded operations beginning January 6, 2023 (see Attachments 3 and 4).

Staff will continue to work with the County to increase the service levels being provided under the current contract. County management have been very responsive and hired a new Animal Control Services Director, Sarah Aguilar, who has provided us with data, feedback, and open communication since starting in her role in September 2022. Ms. Aguilar also was the catalyst for the reopening of the Lompoc Animal Shelter (see Attachments 5 and 6).

We have to also give kudos to Ms. Jan Kays with CAPA, who, despite the Lompoc Animal Shelter being closed, has utilized the site to provide pet pantry services to the community and neighboring communities every Tuesday throughout the closure of the shelter.

Animal Services Models

We have learned that animal services are evolving. There are so many different models out there that we have been identifying alternatives in order to narrow down which options to analyze in depth and present for future consideration. To that end, staff recommends the City Council provide direction concerning the following list of alternatives:

1. Staff recommends analyzing the costs and commitment associated with a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) model for animal services within Santa Barbara County. Staff recommends asking the partnering cities and the County if they would be interested in a JPA model for services. Santa Cruz is an excellent example of this model.
2. Analyze the costs and commitment associated with completely taking over animal services in-house, including building a new shelter, staffing, training, budget, and establishing relationships with non-profit community partners and volunteers. A survey would go out to the community to determine the level of interest in this alternative, as it is the most costly, time-consuming, and will require community support. We found that the City of Palmdale is an excellent example, with similar population as Lompoc.
3. Analyze the costs and commitment associated with contracting out all services to a provider but would allow the City to budget and be responsible for the contract and responsibilities. Santa Maria sent out an RFP for animal services last October. Staff met with Santa Maria staff to inquire about the process and methodology behind issuing its RFP for animal services. We need to request an update on the decision that they have made regarding the submittals.
4. Analyze the cost and commitment associated with partially contracting out animal control services while providing in-house services. This is referred to as the "hybrid model" and is currently utilized by Carpinteria and Santa Barbara.

5. Hire a consultant to research and present options.

Fiscal Impact:

None at this time.

Conclusion:

Staff will continue to work closely with the ASAC board and the County on current contract services, including requesting that the kennels be considered for capital improvements, and will continue to present alternative options to consider for animal services.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Keller, Senior Administrative Analyst

APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL TO THE CITY COUNCIL:

Dean Albro, City Manager

- Attachments:
- 1) SBCAS Advisory Board Meeting Agenda
 - 2) SBCAS Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
 - 3) SBCAS Press Release Lompoc Animal Shelter
 - 4) SBCAS Services Public Announcement Graphic
 - 5) SBCAS Overview Document
 - 6) SBCAS Lompoc Multi-year Report