



REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Grant Yates, City Manager

Prepared by: Nicole Dailey, Assistant to the City Manager

Date: October 13, 2020

Subject: Amendment No. 2 – Animal Control Field Services Agreement with Animal Friends of the Valleys

Recommendation

Authorize the City Manager to execute Amendment No. 2 to the Animal Control Field Services Agreement with Animal Friends of the Valleys (AFV) to provide animal control services through June 30, 2021.

Background

The City of Lake Elsinore has contracted with AFV to provide a full range of animal control services to safeguard the health and safety of its citizens and domestic animals for nearly 30 years. These services include field services, after-hours emergency response, humane treatment of animals, public education, and enforcement of animal control municipal codes.

The City has historically contracted with AFV for animal control sheltering and field services, which are governed by separate agreements. The City's animal sheltering services are covered by an agreement with the Southwest Communities Financing Authority (SCFA) administered by Riverside County on behalf of the City and our neighboring cities. Cost for animal control field services are based on the number of animal control officers committed to the City plus back-up when necessary, cost for vehicle mileage, other infrastructure costs, after hour calls and vet expenses.

In 2017, the City Council approved Amendment No. 1 to the City's existing Animal Control Field Services Agreement and implemented a new billing structure. Under this new structure AFV keeps all revenues from animal license fees, late charges, and citation fees, which were previously remitted to the city, and the City paid a fixed monthly rate of \$7,500. At this time, the City maintained the same level of service with one officer working eight hours a day. This amendment extended our agreement for three years through June 30, 2020. AFV is currently operating on a month-to-month basis.

In August 2018, the City began implementation of the amendments to Chapter 6.04 and Chapter 6.06 of the municipal code regarding Animals and Animal Control Officers and Mandatory Spaying, Neutering and Microchipping, respectively. These amendments, approved by the City Council in March 2018, require residents to spay/neuter and microchip their pets when licensing their pets, exceptions are allowed. In addition, the City Council eliminated requirements for pet

licensing. These changes are expected to have an impact on our overall cost for animal control services. However, currently, the impact is still unknown.

Currently, AFV is completing an organization-wide fee study to evaluate all fees and fines associated with animal control and sheltering. The results of this study are expected by early 2021. Each City adopts their own fee schedule and will be able to decide which fee changes to adopt.

Discussion

This year, as part of the City's contract renewal, AFV presented two recommended service levels for consideration. The first, and AFV's preferred option, was the addition of one full-time animal control officer, resulting in two full-time animal control officers at a cost of \$21,000 per month or \$252,000 per year. The alternative option presented, was the addition of one half (½) of an officer, at a cost of \$14,500 per month or \$174,000 per year.

Due to existing budget considerations and the upcoming fee study underway at AFV, the City is recommending a short-term, one-year extension for this fiscal year. Staff worked closely with AFV to develop a mutually beneficial scope of services that would allow the City to expand its service levels at a reduced overall cost.

As noted in Amendment No. 2, staff is recommending increasing the City's proposed service level to one and a half officers through a proposed cost sharing method with AFV. This option has been approved by AFV. Under this cost sharing method, rather than pay \$14,500 per month/\$174,000 per year for this increased service level, the City will pay \$11,000/month, or \$132,000 per year, and will work with AFV to recoup the remaining \$3,500 per month, or \$42,000 per year, using proposed cost recovery strategies. If there is any remaining amount not recouped through these strategies, the City would pay the balance owed to AFV at the end of the fiscal year at an amount not to exceed \$42,000.

The proposed cost recovery strategies agreed to with AFV include:

- **New Citation Collection Program:** For several years AFV has struggled to collect outstanding citations, currently there is more than \$400,000 in outstanding citations for the City of Lake Elsinore. This directly affects our cost for service as these citations and outstanding fees help cover the City's cost for services. As such the City will work with AFV to implement Data Ticket, or a similar system, to increase overall collections and ensure residents are held responsible for following the City's municipal codes.
- **90-Day Amnesty Program:** A one-time, unprecedented amnesty program that will allow residents to eliminate lingering outstanding citations by paying late fees and licensing their pets. This will provide a one-time opportunity for residents to reduce their financial burdens during the COVID-19 pandemic and encourage residents to get back into compliance by licensing their pets. An increased percentage of licensed and spayed pets would reduce the City's shelter and animal control costs. Residents with outstanding citations will be notified by letter and will be able to waive up to 90% of their outstanding citations. To qualify, they must pay the nominal late fee and license their pets.

- **First Response Letters for Barking:** AFV will change how Animal Control Officers are utilized in the event of a barking complaint. Currently, when a resident report a barking dog complaint an officer is required to visit the house to verify and notify the owner that a complaint has been filed. By substituting Officer visits with a Warning Letter/Notice, for the first complaint, the City would reduce 30 to 40 calls each month. Additionally, the City will work with AFV to integrate the submittal of some complaints into the City's Alert LE mobile app.
- **Veterinarian Outreach:** AFV is currently working on an outreach effort for local veterinarians. The City will assist AFV in creating and implementing an outreach program for local veterinarians to educate them on the latest animal control regulations and to urge them to support responsible pet ownership in Southwest Riverside County. By creating a stronger level of communication between AFV and veterinarians, we can improve overall communication and increase transparency to better identify areas of improvement.
- **Canvassing Options:** The City plans to implement creative ways of canvassing. Examples of canvassing options include: an officer canvassing high profile problem areas, creating a regional effort with a shared cost, and fostering community service engagement using volunteers or other City staff. With the addition of benchmarks on specific goals, canvassing can provide an increase in resident knowledge of AFV services which will increase overall compliance.
- **Additional Reporting:** To help track the success on various efforts, the City requests additional information, or data, shared each month regarding the number of calls, types of call, locations of calls, citations, and licensing opportunities. By gaining this new information, the City can evaluate these efforts and adjust, as needed, to maximize the effectiveness of these cost recovery strategies.
- **Social Media & Community Outreach:** The City will assist AFV with marketing efforts using social media and billboards promoting online licensing, microchipping and spay/neutering, and low-cost clinics. In addition, the City will work with AFV to expand outreach to HOAs and Multifamily Housing Complexes to provide information. The City also plans to develop a "Welcome to the Neighborhood" packet, containing information about AFV services, to distribute to residents.

Overall, these cost recovery strategies are expected to reduce the City's overall cost for service. But, more importantly, they encourage the community to reengage and effectively, come into compliance with existing municipal codes and licensing mandates. The City aims to increase compliance and reduce costs long-term by encouraging responsible pet ownership. A positive externality of resident compliance would be the reduced population of stray pets resulting from unneutered pets. A decrease in stray pets would allow the City to positively impact pet overpopulation and save more animal lives.

Staff is recommending approval of Amendment No. 2 for a one-year extension through June 30, 2021 increasing service levels to one and a half animal control officers per day with the implementation of the outlined cost recovery strategies, which are also included in Exhibit C. This would allow the City to await the findings of the fee study currently underway and evaluate the impact of the increased service level to and determine whether the future increased services and costs of AFV are fiscally responsible for the City to undertake. Additionally, the extension would

allow the City to determine whether one and a half officers is enough or if an additional officer might be necessary. Overall, this one-year extension, at a reduced cost, will allow the City to make strides in reducing outstanding citations, reducing the population of unaltered and unlicensed pets, and providing residents in need with financial relief during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Fiscal Impact

Approval of this agreement will cost the City up to \$153,000 through June 30, 2021 and is included in the Fiscal Year 2020/2021 Operating Budget.

Exhibits

- A – Amendment No. 2
- B – Amendment No. 1
- C – Original Agreement
- D – Scope of Services
- E – Fee Schedule