



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Public Health
Department No.: 041
For Agenda Of: June 2, 2015 D agenda item
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 1 hour 30 minutes
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Director(s) Takashi M. Wada, MD, MPH, Public Health Director, 681-5105
Contact Info: Susan Klein-Rothschild, MSW
681-5435

SUBJECT: The County of Santa Barbara Animal Services Program Assessment performed by the American Humane Association-Findings and Recommendations

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence: N/A

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors consider recommendations regarding the County of Santa Barbara Animal Services Program Assessment performed by the American Humane Association-Findings and Recommendations as follows:

- a) Receive and file a report from the American Humane Association (AHA) regarding the program assessment of the County Animal Services program (Time estimate: 1 hour 30 minutes); and
- b) Direct staff to return to the Board within three months with recommendations regarding an approach to address findings of the report; and
- c) Determine that the above actions are organizational and administrative activities of government that are not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines.

Summary Text:

Due to numerous concerns expressed over time to the CEO's Office as well as the Director of Public Health, the Public Health Department contracted with the American Humane Association to perform an independent and comprehensive program assessment of County Animal

Services. The goal of the assessment is to gain perspective on current Animal Services operations and determine how to continue to gain perspective on current Animal Services operations.

Background:

Assistant CEO Terri Maus-Nisich and Department Director Dr. Takashi Wada initiated a comprehensive assessment based on concerns expressed at various levels of the organization and following interviews with approximately 40 stakeholders. They selected an organization with expertise in the field of animal welfare as the best approach to build on system strengths and identify areas for improvement. The American Humane Association was selected to perform the comprehensive assessment.

The American Humane Association was founded in 1877 and it has grown to be the only national non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the welfare of both children and animals. The mission of the American Humane Association, as a network of individuals and organizations, is to prevent cruelty, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and animals and to assure that their interests and well-being are fully, effectively, and humanely guaranteed by an aware and caring society.

When seeking an organization to perform a comprehensive assessment of the Santa Barbara County Animal Services program, a number of organizations were contacted. The American Humane Association provided an understanding of the comprehensive assessment desired and a history of providing similar assessments across the country. An assessment of the Washoe County Nevada Regional Animal Services program conducted by AHA was an example of the quality work.

The contract with the American Humane Association to provide a comprehensive assessment of our Animal Services program was initiated in the fall of 2014. The assessment included a review of the policies, practices, procedures and facilities of the County's Animal Services program. The AHA team observed aspects of shelter operations and field services at our three locations, taking photographs of the internal and external facilities, examining records, and interviewing staff, management and stakeholders. The AHA Team was on-site for four days in January of 2015. A second visit was completed April 22, through April 27, 2015. The process was designed to provide a comprehensive picture of Animal Services and provide recommendations regarding best-practices and recommended standards of care. The areas addressed in the assessment include:

- Shelter Facilities and Maintenance
- Shelter Operations
- Animal Care & Capacity
- Shelter Medicine and Veterinary Services
- Euthanasia Policy and Procedure Disease Control and Sanitation
- OSHA Compliance and Safety
- Field Services and Animal Control
- Information Technology
- Marketing and Public Relations
- Community Relations
- Client Relations
- General Record Keeping/Statistics
- Governance, Management, Leadership

- Human Resources
- Behavior and Enrichment

The comprehensive assessment is detailed and extensive. A number of County Animal Services current practices are noted as commendable. Compassionate care of animals was seen across the board. The assessment includes many recommendations related to policies and practices. Along with these recommendations, AHA has also provided various resources, guides and specialized manuals to assist Santa Barbara County in the development and implementation of recommended policies and practices.

There are a number of substantive findings and recommendations. Some of the significant findings and recommendations identified in the Executive Summary of the AHA Assessment Report are summarized below.

Key Finding - The present model of governance may not be the best business model to operate animal services.

Recommendation: Investigate financial implications of: Privatization and Joint Powers of Authority versus County oversight of animal services.

Key Finding – Fractured culture. Key stakeholders overall dissatisfaction with the management of animal services from oversight of the Public Health Department to the leadership of the Animal Services Director, as well as their ability to provide the services needed for quality animal care. And, Animal Services Leadership and employees feel that decision making and policy is being driven by outside influencers and some volunteers that undermine their ability to do their job.

Recommendation - With the assistance of a third party facilitator, adopt a community-wide strategic plan that rebuilds relationships and re-unites all invested parties toward a common goal. Re-commit to working together, create objectives and assign accountability.

Key Finding – No organization-wide standard operating procedures creating confusion between employees and volunteers. Internal partners and SBCAS need to be operating under the same guiding principles for animal care, volunteer management, hours of operation.

Recommendation – Form a committee to establish best practices for animal care, volunteer management and adopt them organization wide, including internal partners.

Key Finding – No strategic plan for organization and no data collection and benchmark analysis.

Recommendation - A Strategic Plan must be drafted and adopted that includes key performance metrics the organization agrees upon to measure success.

Key Finding – External community members exerting undue influence on Supervisors and County Government, which often undermine the ability of any Director to do their job. (The report states, “Various staff expressed apprehension with respect to job security due to the perceived influence that certain volunteers and groups attempt to exert on members of County Government.”)

Recommendations - Establish clear chain of command. Implement it, hold people accountable.

Key Finding - Housing of animals in the Pillsbury building is inappropriate.

Recommendation - Demolition of the Pillsbury building is recommended to provide room for other more needed structures.

Key Finding – Passive population management. Animals are not being actively moved in the system toward an outcome. There are several dogs in Santa Barbara that have been sheltered for 2-3 years and are exhibiting signs of severe emotional distress. Feral cats should not be sheltered.

Recommendations - Establish a fast-track and slow track population management system and operate within the humane capacity for care. Create an Animal Welfare Panel to assess all long term dogs and actively find solutions. Implement a community cat program to reduce feral cat intake.

Key Finding - Lack of sufficient medical oversight.

Recommendation - Hire Veterinary Medical Director and Registered Veterinary Technician and build small veterinary clinic space in Santa Barbara.

Key Finding - Lack of behavioral enrichment and a training program aimed at enhancing the mental health and well-being of the animals.

Recommendation - Hire a Behavior and Training Coordinator, implement enrichment plans.

Key Finding - Lack of Central Dispatch to ensure officer safety in the field.

Recommendation – Hire Central Dispatcher.

Key Finding - Span of control of the Director is too large to be effective.

Recommendation - Re-organize by business lines and consider hiring a Manager of Shelter Operations.

Key Finding – Insufficient depth of staffing roster, or inefficient systems in place which effects employee productivity. It is probably a combination of both.

Recommendation - Staffing roster does not sufficiently cover 7 day a week animal care or animal control. Review roster, scheduling, use of volunteers to ensure adequate coverage of all departments.

Key Finding - Lack of standardized ongoing training program for staff (and volunteers)

Recommendation – Implement a robust training program, quarterly training seminars in house, invest in improving employee job knowledge.

Key Finding - OSHA compliance is not consistent.

Recommendation - Hire OSHA compliance consultant, establish on-site safety committee.

Key Finding - Limited use of Chameleon software prohibits employee efficiency.

Recommendation - Chameleon should be utilized for everything, from medical record keeping to task list generation.

Robin Brennen, DVM and Katherine Shenar, members of the American Humane Association assessment team, will personally present highlights of the report at the June 2, 2015 Board of Supervisors meeting.

Department Actions

Although the report was received only recently, the Public Health Department has already initiated actions to address areas in the report related compliance with federal and state law and safety concerns. Many of these issues are in the area of facilities. The American Humane Association report has been redacted in limited areas to maintain security of facilities as these sections detail security in place at SBCAS facilities and security protocols for controlled substances. These areas are priorities for attention.

The Public Health Department has integrated AHA report recommendations into budget planning. At the April 2015 budget workshops, the department made a request for \$300,000 in ongoing funding to be used to meet some of the needs identified in the then not yet completed AHA Assessment. Now that the Assessment is complete and priorities for funding have been identified in the report, the department has prioritized the following for funding:

- Director of Shelter Medicine (part-time veterinarian on contract) – Estimated cost \$90,000
- Communications Dispatcher Full-time – Estimated cost \$90,000
- Registered Veterinary Technician Full-time – Estimated cost \$80,000
- Behavior Consultant (on contract) – Estimated cost \$40,000

In addition to the funding and positions, the department will request that the Board allocate one-time Senate Bill 90 funding for a facilitator to work with the Animal Services staff and the numerous stakeholders to adopt a community-wide strategic plan that rebuilds relationships and re-unites all invested parties toward a common goal. Together we can re-commit to working together, create objectives and assign accountability.

The assessment provides a foundation for strengthening our Animal Services program. To successfully implement the recommendations, the Public Health Department will create an Implementation Oversight Team, which will return to the Board with an implementation strategy. The Implementation Oversight Team will have members who work for the County including Dr. Takashi Wada, Susan Klein-Rothschild, and Jan Glick. Key partner agencies including ASAP, BUNS, CAPA, the Animal Care Foundation, DAWG, and the Santa Maria Valley Humane Society, will each be asked to select one representative to sit on the Oversight Team. This team will be charged with the following tasks:

- Prioritize the recommendations within the context of the resources and community partners

- Create action plans for implementation of priority recommendations including objectives, strategies, time frames, measureable results and lead persons responsible for each recommendation
- Track the implementation and make recommendations for modifications as needed.
- Prepare a brief summary of implementation progress annually for the Board of Supervisors and all stakeholders.

The staff and Oversight Team will return to the Board of Supervisors within 3 months to present an action plan for the implementation of the AHA recommendations.

Key Contract Risks:

N/A

Fiscal Analysis:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the acceptance of this report.

Special Instructions:

1. Request the Planning and Development Department to post the Notice of Exemption (Attachment 1) for the ordinance in the County Planning and Development Department at least six (6) days prior to consideration of the activity by the Board of Supervisors to comply with the County CEQA guidelines.
2. Please email the Minute Order to phdcu@sbcphd.org.

Attachments:

1. CEQA Notice of Exemption

Authored by:

Susan Klein-Rothschild, MSW