



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.: 012
For Agenda Of: May 19, 2015 – Admin
Agenda
June 2, 2015 D agenda
item
Placement: Set Hearing
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Takashi M. Wada, MD, MPH, Public Health Director, 681-5105
Director(s)
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 – Set Hearing

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 (Set a hearing for June 2, 2015. Time estimate: 1 hour 30 minutes):

- a) Receive and file a report from the American Humane Association (AHA) regarding the program assessment of the County Animal Services program; and
- b) Direct staff to return to the Board within three months with recommendations regarding an approach to address findings of the report including but not limited to creation of an Implementation Oversight Team with internal and external stakeholders and a facilitator from outside the system whose primary task is to prioritize report recommendations and oversee the implementation of recommendations within the report for positive systems change, 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 regarding current Animal Services operations and make enhancements as appropriate.

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 Board of Supervisors was not interviewed as a part of the engagement. 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 are summarized below.

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

Key Finding – Fractured culture. Key stakeholders overall dissatisfaction with the management of Animal Services.

Key Finding – No organization-wide standard operating procedures.

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

Key Finding – Perceived external community members exerting undue influence on County leadership.

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

Key Finding – Passive population management.

Key Finding - Lack of sufficient medical oversight.

Key Finding - Lack of behavioral enrichment and a training program

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

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

Key Finding – Insufficient depth of staffing roster, or inefficient systems in place

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

Key Finding - OSHA compliance is not consistent.

Key Finding - Limited use of Chameleon software prohibits employee efficiency

Staff has reviewed portions of the report and is taking immediate steps to address potential state and federal compliance issues.

Sections of the American Humane Association report have been redacted to maintain security of facilities as these sections detail security in place at SBCAS facilities and security protocols for controlled substances.

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.

The assessment provides a foundation for strengthening our Animal Services program. To successfully implement the recommendations, the County proposes to return to the Board with an implementation strategy to include but not limited to an Implementation Oversight Team. The Implementation Oversight Team will have members who work for the County including Dr. Takashi Wada, Susan Klein-Rothschild, and Jan Glick. Community stakeholders who are not County employees may also be added to the Implementation 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.

Key Contract Risks:

N/A

Fiscal Analysis:

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

Special Instructions:

Please email the Minute Order to phdcu@sbcphd.org.

Attachments:

Animal Services Program Assessment Report

Authored by:

Susan Klein-Rothschild, MSW