

Public Comment - Late Distribute - D4

From: [Philip Seymour](#)
To: [sbcob](#)
Subject: submission for April 19, 2022 Board Meeting
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Attachments: [BUNS Letter to SBC Board of Supervisors 4.15.2022.pdf](#)

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Dear Clerk of the Board. Please accept for filing and distribution the attached comment letter relating to Agenda Item # 4 on the April 19, 2022 Board of Supervisors Agenda.

Philip Seymour
Bunnies Urgently Needing Shelter



Bunnies Urgently Needing Shelter

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April 15, 2022

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Re: Hearing on Animal Services Contract Rates for Cities
Agenda Item # 4, April 19, 2022

Dear Supervisors:

Our non-profit volunteer organization Bunnies Urgently Needing Shelter (BUNS) has operated at the Santa Barbara County Animal Services (SBCAS) shelter in Goleta for 30 years. We have been with SBCAS through many financial and management challenges.

We support long term efforts to ensure that city governments contribute their fair share to the costs of operating SBCAS. However, a much more important goal is to maintain SBCAS as the central organization and hub for helping homeless animals and pet owners in need in our County. It would make no sense to disperse kenneling and field service functions among smaller local city-run or contracted private agencies, nor would this likely result in any real long-term savings to the cities. Instead, we fear that this would only result in a drastic decline in service to both animals in need and the general public.

To avoid the foregoing possibility, we suggest that cost increases to the cities be phased in gradually, beginning with a minimal first year adjustment. At the same time, we feel that SBCAS must renew its past commitment to providing the highest level of care possible to animals in its system and to members of the public. Such services include, to name a few, providing adoptable pets, returning lost or strayed animals, or helping owners find new homes for beloved pets they can no longer keep due to unfortunate circumstances. Maintaining high levels of service is an obvious pre-requisite for justifying increased contributions by the cities. Measures to sustain high levels of service should include:

- Restore and expand the volunteer program now that Covid-19 pandemic restrictions have been relaxed. Delegate animal welfare functions to responsible volunteers and non-profit organizations whenever possible
- Restore full services at the Lompoc shelter
- Include a council of responsible non-profit partners and representatives of shelter volunteers in SBCAS planning and policy-making decisions
- Initiate a program for improving and enhancing SBCAS shelter facilities utilizing non-profit funds

BUNS is a non-profit, all volunteer organization providing shelter and adoption services for rabbits and guinea pigs.

BUNS is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt corporation, EIN 45-3647785

We understand that city fiscal managers may not be sensitive to, or even aware of, all the functions that SBCAS serves for the public, including city residents. In our experience, providing service to the public is as important a goal as providing good care to animals in shelter custody. Few citizens are concerned with jurisdictional boundaries when dealing with animal services functions. They simply want a reasonably accessible location where they can go for friendly service, whether it is to adopt a pet animal, volunteer, turn in a lost animal or retrieve a lost pet, or get a dog license. [This is one of the reasons that SBCAS must find a way to restore services at the Lompoc shelter.]

It should also be remembered that not all members of the public are dog or cat owners. It is important that services be available for all pet species. For example, at the Goleta shelter, the number of rabbits and guinea pigs under daily care has outnumbered dogs for most of the last five years. Regional, county-administered shelters are far more likely to attract the volunteer base and non-profit support that make it possible to provide full-spectrum services, services which vastly exceed in value the financial investment of the county and city governments. For instance, over 90% of the costs and 100% of the staffing for the care of rabbits and guinea pigs at the Goleta shelter are provided by BUNS at no cost to SBCAS. Similarly, the great majority of costs and staffing for cats at the Goleta shelter is provided by the cat volunteer organization ASAP. Historically, huge financial and volunteer staffing contributions have also been made in north county by such groups as CAPA in Lompoc and volunteers at the Santa Maria shelter. These examples demonstrate what is possible through a well managed county wide animal services system that draws on a full range of available public and private resources, and is not hindered by jurisdictional line drawing or some sort of balkanization of the shelter system.

In closing, we again urge a gradual approach to increasing the cities' fair-share costs, both for the sake of animals in the County and the public at large. We also support and would be happy to participate in efforts to fully educate our city counterparts on the value provided by maintaining a county-wide animal services system. And most of all, we support renewed efforts by SBCAS to provide the kind of services which have made Santa Barbara County a leader in the field of animal welfare in the past.

Philip Seymour

For BUNNIES URGENTLY NEEDING SHELTER (BUNS)