

Animal Issues Task Force

Recommendations to Springfield City Council

Animal Issues Task Force

Official Charge from City Council

The Task Force's charge shall be to examine current Health Department animal shelter facilities, policies and procedures and recommend any changes that would improve the level and quality of services from the standpoint of public safety and animal welfare. The review would include a determination of possible alternatives to the current shelter and recommendations as to whether the City should continue to maintain the present shelter or proceed with one or more of the alternatives. The task force should consider funding options and recommendations for funding any proposed actions(s).

Task Force Members

Mary Collette, Chairwoman

Carl Woodland, CARE Board Member

Janet Martin, SAAF Board Member

Gwen Evans, Citizen Representative

Karenanne Fitzsimmons, Board President, Humane Society of Southwest Missouri

Dr. Alicia Mathis, Professor of Biology, Missouri State University

Kathleen Cowens, Citizen Representative

Dr. Rita Wittu, Veterinarian

Carrie Galvan, Certified Professional Dog Trainer

Dr. Dave Weddle, City Animal Shelter Veterinarian

All materials and meeting minutes can be found online at:

<http://health.springfieldmo.gov/animaltaskforce>

To: Springfield City Council

Date: Sept. 10, 2013

Re: Animal Issues Task Force Final Recommendations

Council members,

Attached you will find the final recommendations of the Animal Issues Task Force. The group was commissioned by City Council last year to examine the current landscape of the City's Animal Control services and related animal issues, and recommend any changes that would "improve the level and quality of services from the standpoint of public safety and animal welfare."

As you can see in the following pages, we found many areas where improvements could be made. We focused our recommendations into three categories: Facilities, Programs, and Policies & Legislation. Taken as a whole, we believe these changes would result in a dramatically improved landscape for cats and dogs, for their owners, and for the citizens of Springfield.

On behalf of all of the members of the Task Force, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to tackle this issue, which is far more complex than many people realize. Asking for and acting upon citizen input is commendable.

I also thank the members of our Task Force. Our group met in full or in subcommittees more than 20 times over the course of 18 months. We closely examined the current state of animal issues, the past history of animal policies in Springfield, and the best practices of communities around the world in order to reach the conclusions found in these recommendations.

It has not been easy; animal welfare advocates are not known for their passivity. While this group did not agree on everything, as a group, we are proud of and excited about our recommendations, which we present as a road map towards a new direction for our community.

You as policy makers should feel free to seek out any member of the group for further input and opinions about particular issues. We do not consider this report to be the end of our service to Council or to the citizens of Springfield.

Mary Collette

Chair, Animal Issues Task Force

City of Springfield
Partnership to Promote Responsible Pet Ownership
Animal Issues Task Force
Recommendation # 1
Animal Shelter Facilities

Goal: To provide the community with a larger facility that provides a wider array of programs and services than currently available in the existing facility.

Purpose: The Animal Issues Task Force recommends that strategies be put in place to replace the existing city owned and operated Animal Control facility. Replacement of this facility should be completed as soon as possible.

Rationale: The existing facility is inadequate to meet the needs of this community. Animal Control and Welfare activities are considered a core public safety activity and are typically the responsibility of local government. We have the dual responsibility of protecting people from animals as well as protecting animals from people. Our current facility severely limits our ability to provide the appropriate level of care that our animals deserve and that our community expects. The current facility is no longer adequate for the following reasons:

- **The facility is undersized** - The current facility has been cobbled together over the course of many years. We are not able to quarantine incoming animals to prevent the spread of zoonotic illness. We do not have enough space to house animals in separate kennels or cages. The property does not allow for expansion of the facility.
- **The facility is difficult to find** - The current facility is located adjacent to Fulbright Springs and the Police Department firing range. Most citizens do not know where our facility is located and often confuse our facility with that of the Humane Society of Southwest Missouri.
- **The facility is located in the flood plain** - The facility has flooded on several occasions and staff has been trapped on both sides of the bridge leading to the location. Fortunately, no animals have been harmed during these flood events.
- **The current facility does not allow for adoption to occur from the shelter** - Because of the size and design of the current facility, we are unable to facilitate adoptions to the public. Shelter staff has found workarounds by partnering with rescue agencies to place animals in forever homes, but providing adoptions from our facility could provide another piece to the rescue puzzle.

- **The facility is difficult to clean and maintain** - Technology has progressed significantly on facilities over the course of the last several decades. Better air handling equipment would help with smell issues and disease transmission and appropriate flooring would be easier to clean and maintain.
- **The facility does not provide outdoor exercise space for animals** - One significant challenge at the current facility is the lack of exercise space. On occasion, we will hold a dog under court order for an extended period of time. We have no exercise space for such animals and do not have appropriate space to construct one.

Solution: The Animal Issues Task Force would like to recommend that a new facility be built and that the following components be strongly considered:

- **We should explore the feasibility of a regional shelter** - Animal shelters are expensive and complex facilities to run. Smaller governmental entities struggle with the proper operation of such a facility. Partnerships with other regional governments should be sought out to take advantage of the economies of scale available with such a facility.
- **The new facility should be city owned and operated** - The Task Force considered but rejected a partnership with the Humane Society of Southwest Missouri. This conclusion was based on concerns regarding capacity such as holding and quarantine facilities.

	AC	HS	AC	HS	AC	HS
Year	Incoming - dogs	Incoming - dogs	Incoming-cats	Incoming - cats	Incoming-total	Incoming - total
2001	1901	10175	762	7267	2663	17442
2002	2027	9978	727	7001	2754	16979
2003	2377	8707	850	6468	3227	15175
2010*	2251**	n/a	981**	n/a	3232	4975
2011	2123	2249	546	2404	2669	4653
2012	1916	2269	1051	2292	2967	4561

*only total numbers are available for this year and may contain a few other animals than dogs and cats

** Animal Control started charging an owner turn-in fee of \$20 and made owners bring animal to the shelter

NOTE: 2010 - 2012 years had drop-off fee at the Humane Society of Southwest Missouri.

- **The new facility should be located on land already owned by the City of Springfield** - This will help hold the total project costs down. The Task Force recommends either a central-city location or a location adjacent to the Southwest Waste Water Treatment Plant. Located adjacent to four-lane highway, with

existing public infrastructure, the property provides expansion opportunities and better accessibility.

- **The new facility should provide state-of-the-art space for: veterinary treatment, adoption rooms, educational programs, quarantine, meeting rooms, laundry facilities, storage, isolation ward, exercise runs, etc.**
- **Cremation facility or contract with commercial entity** - Currently, animals that are euthanized are placed in the City's landfill. We would like to explore a city-owned cremation facility or a partnership with an existing facility for such a service. This could potentially serve as a profit center for the facility.

Budget: At this point it is difficult to determine a total budget for such a facility. Much will depend on the number of regional entities that show interest in partnering with the City on such a project. This project has been placed in the City's Capital Improvement Plan at a total budget of \$2.5 million. The next logical step is to hire a consultant to determine size requirements and budgetary parameters.

Funding source: The appropriate funding source for such a project would be either municipal bonds or revenues through the level property tax.

City of Springfield
Partnership to Promote Responsible Pet Ownership
Animal Issues Task Force
Recommendation # 2
Programs

Goal: To implement additional programs that will prove beneficial to our community.

Purpose: The programs outlined below will reduce intake at the pound, lower Animal Control costs, and increase donations and public support.

Rationale: There are numerous programs that are being utilized across the country that, if implemented, would benefit our community. To effectively address responsible pet ownership, a strong mix of legislation, advocacy and education is needed. The programs outlined below can be an important addition to addressing needs in the community.

- **Establish Mandatory Dog Licensure/Voluntary Cat Licensure** - A licensure program could be administered by an external company such as PetData, which requires no City staff. A licensure program could yield a number of valuable benefits to pets, their owners and the City. The purpose of licensing is to decrease intake, increase return-to-owner rates, increase rabies vaccination compliance, and incentivize owners to spay and neuter their pets. Licensing fees would be differential – that is, pet owners whose pets are not spayed or neutered would pay a considerably higher fee. Benefits of licensing could include:
 - Free Ride Home program-Animal Control would attempt to provide a free ride home to currently licensed animals
 - Discounts on spay/neuter procedures, veterinary services, and/or local retailers
 - Memberships to Cruse Dog Park
- **Create a Friends-of-the-Pound Group for Fundraising and Advocacy** - Animal Control should develop a Friends-of-the-Pound group modeled after Friends-of-the-Zoo. This group currently raises one-third of the annual budget for Dickerson Park Zoo. A director’s position should be initially funded by the City, with the understanding that the funding would be reduced yearly for the next three years, at which point the position would be self-funded. A strong, well-trained volunteer presence could partially run the following programs:

- **On-Site Adoption** - With a new facility in place providing adequate space, the Health Department should establish a program to provide direct adoption of dogs and cats to private individuals on-site at the shelter, as well as mobile locations. This program has the potential to be run by one of our current rescue partners with the expertise of preparing animals for adoptive homes.
- **Community Education** - We encourage the establishment of an ongoing community education program. A public awareness campaign is badly needed to address those issues most likely to result in homeless animals. For example, most people are not aware of the young age at which a puppy or kitten can be safely spayed or neutered, resulting in a large number of accidental litters and increasing shelter intake.
 - **Community Cat Education** - Unowned, outdoor cats are such a persistent problem in Springfield that a special education program for this issue should be developed.
- **Volunteer Public-Relations Committee** - A public relations committee could focus on education efforts, outreach, adoptable pets, needs of the shelter, or any other issue deemed important. This function could be part of the mission of the proposed ongoing Animal Issues Input Group.
- **Pet Foster Home Placement Program** - Animal Control should develop and support a pet foster home placement program to ensure that all adoptable animals are rescued from the shelter.
- **Pet-Friendly Rental Housing List** - A pet-friendly rental housing list should be compiled and posted on the Health Department website. Since many people surrender pets because of housing restrictions, this service would help them to find housing that accepts pets, keeping more animals out of the shelter system.
- **Help Desk program** - A Help Desk could resolve many of the situations causing people to bring their pets to shelters, preventing animals from entering the shelter system and saving the City money in the process. Services could include information and moral support. Referrals would be made for behavior modification, training, spay/neuter services, Trap Neuter Return, veterinary care, or pet food.
- **Barn Cat Adoption Program** - A Barn Cat Adoption Program could offer a new chance at life for feral cats that cannot be returned to their original home.
- **Continue Partnership with Rescues** - Animal Control should continue to partner with more than fifty existing rescue groups such as C.A.R.E. and Halfway Home. Existing licensed and approved rescue agency partners in good standing should be listed on the Springfield-Greene County Health Department's website.

- **Continue Partnership with SAAFhouse** - The partnership between Animal Control and SAAFhouse is critical to the local pet population puzzle. The provision of low-cost spay/neuter surgeries provides a positive impact on the local pet population by preventing unintentional litters of puppies and kittens.
- **Strengthen Partnership with Humane Society of Southwest Missouri** - Animal Control should seek more collaboration with the Humane Society of Southwest Missouri.
- **Continue to Facilitate Lost -and-Found Programs** - Animal Control should continue to take part in, promote and/or help facilitate existing lost-and-found animal programs in the community.
- **Establish Community Advisory Meetings** - Periodic meetings could be held in which volunteers, rescuers, and concerned citizens come together to give feedback, ask questions, discuss topics of interest, and make recommendations. These meetings would give insight into the needs of the community, provide creative suggestions, and gain public support. This function could be part of the mission of the proposed ongoing Animal Issues Input Group.

City of Springfield
Partnership to Promote Responsible Pet Ownership
Animal Issues Task Force
Recommendation # 3
Policies and Legislation

Goal: To develop a long-range plan of action to make Animal Control self-supporting by dedicating revenue generated by programs directly to Animal Control instead of general revenue. A combination of differential dog licensing and revenue generating programs including a “Friends of the Pound” not-for-profit organization would have the potential over time to fund the program.

Purpose: The Animal Issues Task Force recommends that City Council consider modifying current legislation and program policies to be based on the following:

- Partner with Springfield pet owners to provide a pathway to responsible pet ownership using a combination of incentives, education, and programs.
- Require license and permanent ID for dogs; provide the same for cats on a voluntary basis.
- Provide low cost spay/neuter to those who are financially eligible.
- Provide programs for training/physical care/socialization and medical care to animals.
- Prevent pets from becoming a threat to the community.

Rationale: There are a number of additions, modifications and deletions that should be made to City ordinances. These changes will help improve conditions for animals in Springfield. Additional changes can also be made to existing shelter policies that will assist staff and volunteers in finding forever homes for unclaimed and abandoned animals.

Legislation: We recommend the following changes to City ordinances:

- **Implement a comprehensive pet licensure program for dogs and a voluntary licensing for cats** - To promote the philosophy of responsible pet ownership we recommend an approach to be modeled after ordinances in many cities, including Salt Lake City, Omaha, and Calgary. Responsible pet ownership revolves around the proper care and identification of an animal and preventing pets from becoming a hazard or nuisance to the community.

- We recommend removing the limit on the number of pets one can own. The focus will be responsible pet ownership. If the owner of any animal cannot demonstrate the ability to abide by ordinances that are associated with the care and upkeep of animals, they will no longer be permitted to harbor pets under the reckless owner provision.
- We recommend a differential licensure approach where the licensing fees are significantly less for animals that have been spayed/neutered.
- **Define Potentially Dangerous/Vicious Animals/Reckless Owner** - This approach would be modeled after an ordinance from Omaha, Nebraska and would eventually replace the existing breed specific legislation. This would identify potentially dangerous dogs of all breeds before they seriously injure humans.
 - Enforcement should be complaint driven. Officers will investigate whether or not the dog's behavior fits into the definition. They will talk to witnesses, victims, and the dog's owner as well as observe the dog itself to make a determination.
 - Severity will be determined by a numerical behavioral assessment scale (example attached as appendix A).
 - This legislative change would utilize a tiered system to manage animals that are a threat to the safety and welfare of citizens of Springfield.
 1. Tier I - Potentially dangerous dog:
 - a) Definition
 - Any dog which, when unprovoked on two separate occasions within the prior 36-month period, engages in any behavior that requires a defensive action by any person to prevent bodily injury to a human when the person and the dog are off the property of the owner or keeper of the dog, or
 - Any dog which, when unprovoked, bites a person causing a less severe injury than as defined under the vicious dog provisions below, or
 - Any dog which, when unprovoked, on two separate occasions within the prior 36-month period, has killed, seriously bitten, inflicted injury, or otherwise caused injury by attacking a domestic animal off the property of the owner or keeper of the dog.
 - b) Owners of potentially dangerous dogs will be subject to the following provisions:

- Never allow the dog to be off the property unless on a 6-foot leash and under control of a person at least 18 years of age.
 - Spay or neuter the dog within 30 days of the declaration.
 - Micro-chip the dog within 30 days of the declaration
 - Obtain a potentially dangerous dog license (price to be determined). The license must be on the dog at all times and will be color differentiated from regular license tags.
- c) In addition, these provisions may be added depending on the situation:
- Muzzle the dog whenever outside the home or securely fenced yard.
 - Attend a responsible pet owner class approved by Animal Control staff within 90 days of the declaration.
 - Attend, with dog, a dog behavior class approved by Animal Control staff within 90 days of the declaration.
 - Carry \$100,000 liability insurance.
- d) After 12 months of appropriate behavior, the PDD declaration drops off. As a transition to expanding the Potentially Dangerous Dog/Vicious Dog legislation to all breeds, the task force recommends all dogs currently registered in BSL to follow the requirements of PDD on the effective date of this ordinance. Those dogs that comply with the requirements of PDD and have no violations with Animal Control will have the PDD requirements drop off after one year.
- e) Owners who are convicted of one or more violations of the ordinance on three separate occasions in a 24 month period, or who fail to follow the requirements of owning a Potentially Dangerous Dog/Vicious Dog can be declared a reckless owner.
2. Tier II - Vicious Dog
- a) Definition
- Any dog which, when unprovoked, in an aggressive manner, inflicts severe injury on or kills a human being, or
 - Any dog previously determined to be and currently listed as a potentially dangerous dog which, after its owner or keeper has been notified of this determination, continues the behavior described in the potentially dangerous dog definition or is maintained in violation of not following the provisions for maintaining a potentially dangerous dog.

- b) Any dog declared vicious by the hearing examiner may be ordered euthanized upon the expiration of the appeal period.
- c) Owners of dogs deemed to be vicious will be subject to the following provisions. Once a dog is declared vicious, they retain that classification for life. Such provisions are a requirement for the life of the animal:
 - Never allow the dog to be off their property unless on a 6 ft. leash, under the control of a person at least 18 years of age.
 - Spay or neuter the dog within 30 days of the declaration.
 - Micro-chip the dog within 30 days of the declaration.
 - Obtain a vicious dog license (price to be determined). The license must be on the dog at all times and will be color differentiated from regular license tags.
 - Muzzle the dog whenever outside the home or outside a securely fenced yard.
 - Attend a responsible pet owner class approved by Animal Control staff within 90 days of the declaration.
 - Attend, with dog, a dog behavior class approved by Animal Control staff within 90 days of the declaration.
- d) In addition, depending on the situation, the owner would be required to hold a \$100,000 liability insurance policy.
- e) Owners who are convicted of one or more violations of the ordinance on three separate occasions in a 24-month period, or who fails to follow the requirements of owning a PDD/vicious dog can be declared a reckless owner.

3. Tier III - Reckless Owner

- a) Definition
 - Reckless owner designation is applied to repeat offenders of animal control ordinances such as a dog repeatedly running at large, not adhering to the requirement of maintaining a dangerous dog, or not providing adequate food/water/shelter for an animal.
- b) Owners deemed to be “reckless” may be required to forfeit their privilege to have a pet for up to 4 years.
- c) The designation is applied to the address where the owner resides to prevent transfer of animals to family members.

- **Create an Animal Transfer License** - This approach would be utilized to reduce pet sales in parking lots. This, in turn, will reduce impulse pet ownership,

preventing these animals from later ending up at Animal Control after the puppy cuteness wears off.

Individuals who transfer ownership of animals in parking lots or other public settings would be required to apply for a city license, whether a fee is charged for the animal or not. The license would be valid for 30 days. Individuals who do not obtain the necessary licensure would be ticketed and subject to a significant fine. Not required for licensed rescue transport.

- **Create a legal definition of “owned cat”** - A cat that spends time in a climate controlled dwelling and/or has identification on their body to link them back to an owner, such as an identification tag on break away collar or microchip.
- **Institute a Limited-Tethering Ordinance** - Research shows that the act of tethering an animal for extended periods of time increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior in the animal. The group proposes placing time limits on how long an animal can be tethered. An alternative to tethering is a dog trolley system which provides more range of motion and reduces the risk that the dog will become entangled with another object. Review the current ordinance dealing with Food, Water and Shelter; giving consideration to the size of enclosure required for dogs spending the majority of their time in outdoor pens.
- **Remove the provision found in Chapter 18; Section 55 which allows the Health Department to release animals to accredited public schools for research purposes** - This practice does not occur, but it is best if the language is removed from the City Code Book.
- **Create an on- going Animal Issues Input Group** - This group would serve as an advisory committee to City Council with regard to animal issues.

Appendix A

Factors used to determine the severity of the dog's behavior

Three different factors will be used to determine the severity of the dog's behavior. These three factors: location, situation relevance/severity, and aggression severity/danger, will each contain a scale. The rankings on the three scales will be added together to provide a composite score. The dog being evaluated is determined to be less dangerous when the score is a low number; more dangerous when the score is high.

1) LOCATION

1. Uninvited on property
2. Invited on property
3. Off property, on leash
4. Off property, off leash - owner present
5. Off property, off leash - owner absent

2) SITUATION RELEVANCE/SEVERITY

1. Chasing, harassing or worrying waterfowl/small animals
2. Chasing, harassing or worrying livestock
3. Attacking waterfowl/small animals
4. Attacking livestock
5. Attacking dogs/cats
6. Threatening human adults
7. Threatening human children
8. Attacking human adults
9. Attacking human children

3) AGGRESSION SEVERITY/DANGER

1. Unfriendly bark
2. Growl
3. Snap/lunge - no contact
4. Bite and release leaving no marks
5. Bite and release leaving marks with no broken skin
6. Bite and release leaving a scratch
7. Bite and release leaving 1 to 4 punctures
8. Bite and release leaving 1 to 4 punctures, plus lacerations
9. Multiple bite attack
10. Bite without releasing, with punctures/lacerations
11. Severe mauling
12. Fatality