

Proposal to Provide Animal Sheltering Services to other Cities

Need:

Hillcrest Animal Hospital has historically provided sheltering services for animals impounded in Ramsey, Washington and northern Hennepin counties. At the beginning of 2018 Hillcrest decided to terminate their contracts to take their business in other directions. This leaves many small jurisdictions without housing for impounded animals.

In January, 2018, representatives from the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, City of White Bear Police, Maplewood Police, New Brighton Police, Roseville Police, and Oakdale Police reached out to the Saint Paul Animal Control Supervisor to see if Saint Paul would be interested in acquiring their contracts.

Because the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office provides animal control services to several cities, the requesting jurisdictions are: Arden Hills, Falcon Heights, Gem Lake, Little Canada, Maplewood, New Brighton, North Oaks, Roseville, Shoreview, Vadnais Heights, White Bear Lake, and White Bear Township.

Situation at Saint Paul Animal Control:

Like animal control shelters nationwide, Saint Paul Animal Control has experienced steadily declining intake numbers. This is due to a number of factors that include: changing beliefs about pet ownership by the pet-owning public, increased awareness about sterilization of pets, and an increased number tools to reunite pets and owners, such as affordable microchips and social media access.

Between 2012 and 2013, Saint Paul Animal Control's intake of dogs and cats dropped by nearly 1,000 animals. This was due, in large part, to programmatic changes including a reduction in staff and change in policy related to the impoundment of cats. Since 2013, intake has dropped from 1,538 dogs and cats to 1,184 dogs and cats in 2017.

At the same time, Saint Paul Animal Control's live release rate (percentage of animals returned to owners or rehomed) has increased from 60.6% to 95.4%. The increase in release rates is due in part to reduced intake numbers, but more importantly due to the creation of an intentional program designed to market placeable dogs and cats to nonprofit animal rescue and rehoming organizations. Due to this program, the average length of stay of dogs and cat is around ten days.

Expected Impact

Saint Paul Animal Control expects taking over these contracts to impact on several areas of the program:

- **Animal Housing:**
 - Dogs:

Saint Paul Animal Control has 38 dog kennels. Dog space at Saint Paul Animal Control is typically at around 25% capacity. During the peak season the kennels may fill up to 50%-75% capacity, but there has not been a time in the recent years where the kennels have been completely full. Over 80% of dogs impounded in the requesting jurisdictions are reunited with their owners. Typically reunification takes place in the first 72 hours of impoundment. Although the number of animals will increase, we expect the overall effect on housing to be low since most dogs will be quickly reunited with their owners.

- **Cats:**
The cattery at Saint Paul Animal Control contains 22 cat cages. There are 12 overflow cages kept in the unventilated garage. Recently, the cattery has filled to 100% capacity 2-3 times per year during peak season. Typically this comes from large impoundments at a single address. When the cattery is full, there are twelve back-up cages that can be used. Since the 2013 change in cat impoundment policies, the space in the garage has never completely filled. To mitigate the concern about cat space, language will be placed in the contract or Joint Powers Agreement that will limit cats to those that are sick, injured, abandoned, or otherwise subjected to cruelty if not impounded. Requesting agencies would be required to direct residents looking to surrender their cats or residents concerned about healthy adult cats outdoor to the Animal Humane Society or other nongovernmental resources.
- **Other animals:**
Saint Paul Animal Control has adequate space for cage birds, small domestic animals (bunnies, ferrets, etc.), or small farm animals (chickens, goats, miniature pigs), impounded by the requesting jurisdictions. As an urban animal control agency, Saint Paul Animal does not have the resources to house livestock.
- **Staffing:** Saint Paul Animal Control expects the additional animals impounded to bring our total annual animals housed to approximately the 2013 levels. We are currently staffed at the same level as we were in 2013. Additionally, we would expect the revenue generated by the impoundments to be sufficient to hire additional kennel support staff during the peak summer season.
- **Finance:** The costs of impoundment and care of animals from the requested cities would be borne by those cities, or the animal owner, depending on whether or not the animal owner is found. Under the proposed fees, we would expect to generate approximately \$50,000 in annual revenue. The monies would be expected to cover the cost of food, basic veterinary care, and seasonal staff.
- **Live Release Rate:** In 2017, the requesting jurisdictions had a live release rate of 97%, higher than Saint Paul Animal Control's. Hillcrest Animal Hospital's program was similar to Saint Paul Animal Controls, in that they focused on marketing and transferring unclaimed animals to nonprofit organizations rather than running a comprehensive animal adoption program. Many of the organizations already approved to pull animals from Saint Paul Animal Control also pulled animals from Hillcrest. Organizations not previously approved have already begun contacting Saint Paul Animal Control to begin that process. We do not expect the live release rate to drop below the 90% target due to the animals impounded outside Saint Paul.
- **Building Security:** Saint Paul Animal Control has staff at the facility Monday-Friday, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm, Saturday and Sunday, 9:00 am – 5:00 pm, and holidays from 8:30-12:30. The program is lightly staffed on the weekends and holidays, with only one Animal Control Officer handling both animal care at the shelter and field services, so there is no guarantee staff will be in the shelter on the weekends or holidays during normal hours. That will mean that police staff from the requesting jurisdictions will need access to the building for drop-offs when staff are not available.

Currently Saint Paul Police have a key to the exterior door on the Beulah Ln. side of the building and can place one impounded dog in the kennel in our loading bay. With so many police agencies using Saint Paul Animal Control, the building will need to be more accessible. Currently, we use a lockbox so Police Officers can open the door from the loading bay to the building. Instructions will be left so they know where to put animals and what paperwork to leave. Eventually, we would plan to replace the lockbox with a push button lock.

Risk Management has agreed to this plan, so long as we have signage to warn Police Officers of known hazards inside the building. We will also mandate on-site training for Community Service Officers so they are familiar with the building, how it functions, and the basics of animal control.

Summary:

Taking on impounded animals from other jurisdictions will benefit Saint Paul and provide a more uniform experience for residents across much of Ramsey County. Doing so will impact Saint Paul Animal Control; however, we believe the impact to be manageable.

Attachments:

- Proposed fee table
- Statistical analysis for most requesting jurisdictions. Statistics are not available for Falcon Heights or Gem Lake.