

City Of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 2, 2008

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 58: ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE OF ALEXANDRIA

This memorandum explains technical adjustments necessary for the City's budget for the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria (AWLA). Increased costs for FY 2009 should be more than off-set by an increase in General Fund dog license fee revenues.

Due to recent changes in State law, the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria anticipates increased costs for FY 2009 over and above the City contribution provided via AWLA's contract with the City¹, which is \$1,032,405 in the FY 2009 Proposed Budget. As of July 2007, the State required that veterinarians notify jurisdictions of each rabies shot given for dogs. Jurisdictions must then verify that these dogs are licensed, and if not, ensure compliance.

After discussions with the City Manager's Office and the Finance Department, it was decided that AWLA would handle implementation of the new State law, since AWLA already handled dog and cat licensing on behalf of the City. It was anticipated that the increased workload would require additional staff time and additional resources. After several months of experience in implementing the new law, AWLA proposes increasing a part-time position to full time, which would increase FY 2009 expenditures by approximately \$13,000. Additional revenue will be collected from license fees, which will more than off-set the costs of the program. AWLA estimates that approximately 260 new licenses will be issued monthly, generating revenue of approximately \$1,800 per month, or \$21,600 annually. The process followed is described below.

Once veterinarians within the City send notification of pets vaccinated, AWLA must sort out City vs. non-City pets. Notifications are forwarded to other jurisdictions for pets that do not live within the City limits. Likewise, Alexandria receives notifications from other jurisdictions for

¹ The contract between the City and the AWLA provides that the fixed price contract shall be adjusted annually to reflect any increase in the CPI-U for the Metropolitan Region, but may not increase in excess of 3.5% per year without the parties' negotiation.

Alexandria pets vaccinated elsewhere. AWLA estimates they have been receiving an average of 602 notifications per month since the law took effect. Approximately 58% of these, or 351 animals, were found to live within the City. The City requires licensing of cats and dogs, so both are included in the AWLA statistics provided.

Once Alexandria pets are identified, AWLA does a computer licensing search. Unfortunately, AWLA reports that approximately 75% of these animals are not licensed. Letters are generated for non-licensed pets, informing owners of the City's requirement for pet licensing and an application and return envelope are provided. Approximately three weeks later, a second computer check is done (55% remain unlicensed) and a second letter is generated if necessary. The second letter advises owners that pets must be licensed within two weeks to avoid fines. Three weeks later, a final computer search is done. Those still not in compliance may be fined \$50. AWLA will continue to work with the Finance Department and the City Manager's Office to determine the most efficient and cost-effective way to address those who remain non-compliant. Current Animal Control staff cannot absorb increased calls for service to enforce the fines, nor is it cost-effective to send an Animal Control Officer to collect a \$50 fine. The Finance Department, however, has more efficient ways to collect unpaid fees and fines through a collection agency.

Theoretically, the number of unlicensed animals should decrease in the future, as owners become aware of licensing requirements and renew licenses as they become due. However, any decrease is likely to be off-set as new residents move into the City. The AWLA and City staff recommend the program be reviewed in three years (the time frame for rabies re-vaccinations) and costs related to implementation and enforcement can be reevaluated at that time. The use of our contractor (AWLA) to do this work means that our Finance staff is not tied up with pet licensing issues. I recommend that we use this approach to comply with State law.