

Memorandum 16-026

TO: MAYOR WYTHE AND THE HOMER CITY COUNCIL
FROM: MELISSA JACOBSEN, CMC, DEPUTY CITY CLERK
THROUGH: KATIE KOESTER, CITY MANAGER
DATE: FEBRUARY 1, 2016
SUBJECT: FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE
SUSTAINABLE ANIMAL CONTROL REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Sustainable Animal Control Review Committee (SACRC) met at least once monthly from October 2015 through January 2016. There was considerable public interest in this committee and members of the public attended the meeting on a regular basis. The purpose of the committee was to look at ways to operate the shelter more economically.

The SACRC recommended fee changes for the animal shelter to the Homer City Council, which were included and passed in the December 2015 budget process. The fees for the shelter had not been examined in many years and the committee felt these new fees will make the shelter more sustainable.

City liability was another issue the committee examined. The contract the City of Homer has with the contractor needs modification the next time an RFP is issued. The attorney recommends eliminating a specific paragraph in the contract (Page 16 Section V. Item C.) because the city cannot mandate contractor performance. It would be wise to review the content of the whole contract before issuing the RFP next December. Patrick Lawrence contacted AMLJIA and they suggested increasing the value of the insurance policy the contractor holds. The contractor has taken steps to increase the coverage in the new year.

The SACRC understands the city is in the process of changing the city website. While this activity is going on, the SACRC recommends that the city include links to the Animal Shelter contractor and Homer Animal Friends. Also the committee felt there would be more compliance with license purchase if an option to purchase the license were available online and all fees were clearly posted online.

Maintenance of the shelter was discussed. The city maintains the shelter and the contractor operates the shelter. Proper maintenance will sustain the building. The contractor and the Public Works department have discussed improved maintenance visits and communication. The HVAC system maintenance was discussed in detail. The committee recommends cleaning the HVAC system once a year and perhaps twice a year.

Another way the committee felt the shelter could operate more economically was to have local veterinarians become involved. As a result of the SACRC process, the Homer Veterinary Clinic will be providing on-site support monthly to help the shelter contractor and volunteers meet the ASV (Association of Shelter Veterinarians) Standards of Care in Animal Shelters using ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) checklists. This work will be provided pro-bono by staff veterinarians and licensed veterinary technicians.

Safety issues were considered. Limiting the city's liability was a topic of discussion. The committee looked at OSHA compliance and recommended an OSHA consultation in the future. The SACRC felt this voluntary visit by OSHA should be postponed for a few months, until the contractor feels they would benefit the most.

There are numerous grants available to nonprofit animal shelters that would provide considerable assistance to the operation of the shelter. The committee contemplated how the City of Homer could qualify for these grants, given the shelter is run by a contractor and the city does not operate the shelter. At this time, SACRC did not determine a way to qualify the shelter for these grants but the committee would encourage the new city grant writer to further examine possibilities for grants.

The committee examined other ways to save funds such as shelter specific software for financial tracking and records management. Improved tracking of income from the shelter will allow improved oversight of costs in running the shelter.

The SACRC felt that education of the public would also improve shelter operation. The committee understands the city intends to add informational brochures with bills in the future. To that end, a community volunteer from Homer Animal Friends has developed an informational brochure about the shelter and its fees to be included in the bills in the future.

Volunteers assist in smooth operation of the shelter. This topic was addressed in a myriad of ways. Most importantly, a Volunteer Release Form, per attorney advice, was developed to decrease city liability. The contractor reviewed their volunteer manual for both dog and cat care.

The committee looked at Chapter 20 in the city code, which has not been updated since 1988. Time did not allow the committee to thoroughly review this chapter but there were several places in the code that members felt needed refining. For instance, there was nothing addressing safety of animals in open vehicles. The committee strongly encourages the City Council to update Chapter 20. City staff who participated on the committee is willing to assist with this and would solicit input from the contractor to provide recommended updates to the code in the future with Council's direction.

The SACRC did feel that the most efficient operation of the shelter would come from a city employee operating the shelter instead of a contractor.

Every member of the SACRC committee felt that it would be worthwhile for the city to continue an Animal Shelter Review committee. This committee would help the contractor with smooth operation of the shelter and be a go between for the city and the contractor. The SACRC understands the council does not want to create new committees as a cost saving measure. The contractor has determined they will initiate a committee of their choosing to meet quarterly or as needed for shelter support.

As happens with committees, the scope of work seems to grow as members begin their work. There are numerous items that came up that could not be accomplished but we feel the process allowed us to work together raising awareness, soliciting input and establishing goals. Thank you so much for establishing this committee.