



City of Arts & Innovation

Safety, Wellness, and Youth Committee

TO: SAFETY, WELLNESS, AND YOUTH COMMITTEE MEMBERS **DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2020**

FROM: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT **WARDS: ALL**

SUBJECT: DOG LICENSE CANVASSING PROGRAM UPDATE

ISSUE:

Receive an update and provide direction on the Dog License Canvassing Program.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Safety, Wellness, and Youth Committee:

1. Receive an update on the Dog License Canvassing Program; and
2. Direct staff to enter into discussions with the County of Riverside to allow the Department of Animal Services to continue the Dog License Canvassing Program on the City's behalf.

BACKGROUND:

Since 1995, the County of Riverside, Department of Animal Services (DAS) has provided city-wide canvassing to increase compliance with state-mandated dog licensing laws. The Dog License Canvassing Program (Program) also proved to be an effective method of community outreach and education, by allowing officers to provide information on additional services available.

The Program has two full-time officers employed by the County that are dedicated to canvassing the City and verifying license registrations where they see or hear evidence of dogs. If there is no record of an active license, a citation is issued. This citation is a 'fix-it' ticket meaning that any violations that are corrected within 30 days of the citation being issued will be dismissed so the resident only pays the \$21 processing fee.

Over the past five years (FY 2016-20), this Program has generated an average of \$390,601 in annual revenues realized by the City and resulted in more than 74,000 dogs becoming licensed, rabies vaccinated, microchipped and altered. As shown in Table 1 below, 95 percent of Program revenues are generated from the licenses sold, and 56 percent of these licenses are attributed to the Program. Citation fines or fees account for just 5 percent of revenues.

Table 1. Revenue Data for the Dog License Canvassing Program

	FY 15-16	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY 18-19	FY 19-20*	Total	Average	Percent
License	\$ 368,369	\$ 350,288	\$ 426,310	\$ 382,416	\$ 323,293	\$1,850,676	\$ 370,135	95%
Citation	\$ 24,621	\$ 18,500	\$ 20,400	\$ 30,000	\$ 8,808	\$ 102,329	\$ 20,466	5%
Total	\$ 392,990	\$ 368,788	\$ 446,710	\$ 412,416	\$ 332,101	\$1,953,005	\$ 390,601	100%

*Due to COVID-19, canvassing did not occur in the 4th quarter of FY 19-20.

DISCUSSION:

Due to recent budget cuts, the DAS has decided to cancel this Program. The City paid \$180,000 annually to the County for the Program, which covered salary and benefits for two licensing officers, and miscellaneous supplies such as citation books and postage. These costs are currently budgeted through the Non-departmental Animal Services account (724100-421000) used for the Field Services Agreement held between the City of Riverside and DAS, which is set to expire on December 31, 2020.

Below is a list of possible options should the City be interested in continuing the Program.

1. Ask the County to allow us to continue funding the Program for the City of Riverside. Initial conversations with DAS indicate a willingness to explore this option; however, the final decision would likely need to be made by the County Board of Supervisors. Costs are expected to increase as the County would likely want the City to cover all Program costs, including a vehicle, uniforms and cellphones.
2. Run the Program in-house. Licensing Officers are comparable to the pay scale of Code Enforcement Officers. Most of the Program expenses are already funded through non-personnel accounts, with two exceptions: 1) a vehicle would need to be purchased, or repurposed; and 2) hiring two new employees would have PERS implications. Excluding the acquisition of a vehicle, the Program costs are projected to be \$200,000 annually. This would include salary and benefits for two licensing officers, vehicle maintenance and upkeep, uniforms, cell phones, and miscellaneous supplies such as citation books and postage.
3. Cancel the program. An estimated 90 percent of all dogs cited by this program do not have current rabies vaccinations or microchips. Over the past five years, that equates to more than 66,600 dogs that may not have received rabies vaccinations or microchipping without this program. Potential impacts of canceling the program are as follows:
 - a. Rabies vaccinations protect your pets. The California Department of Public Health issues an annual Declaration of Rabies Areas where the disease is known to exist. Riverside County is one of those areas. Although the disease is primarily found in wild animals (bats, skunks, foxes, and raccoons) transmission can occur if bitten by a rabid animal. Additionally, in cases of dog attacks against people, having documentation showing the dog has a current rabies vaccination prevents the victim from having to undergo a series of painful injections.
 - b. Not having a microchip makes it much more difficult to reunite stolen, lost, or stray dogs with their owners. This not only places a heavier burden on shelter resources due to extended stays, but also puts additional stress on the dog waiting for an owner to find them.
 - c. Should the program be canceled, there are a number of outreach initiatives that could be tried including amnesty programs, marketing campaigns, developing partnerships with local veterinarians, and enhancing our website.

Staff recommends pursuing Option 1, but is seeking direction from the Safety, Wellness and Youth Committee on which option they would like the City to pursue for the Dog License Canvassing

Program.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The projected fiscal impact for either Option 1 or 2, as listed above, is \$200,000 in annual expenditures. Funds are available in the FY 2020/21 Public Works' N/D Animal Services, Riv County Animal Control account number 7241000-450319. Gross revenues from either option are projected at \$390,000.

The projected fiscal impact for Option 3 is a net loss of revenues totaling \$190,000; however, revenue losses would be offset by a decrease in Program expenditures in the amount of \$200,000.

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availability of funds: Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/City Treasurer
Approved by: Rafael Guzman, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form: Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

Attachment: Presentation