



Animal Care and Control paper presented to the Basic City Services Working Group

INTRODUCTION

Members of the Basic City Services Working Group were interested in the issues of animal care and control and chose to form a subgroup. Below are their recommendations for the restructuring of the existing Boston Animal Control Department.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

FOCUS 1: CHANGE NAME OF THE EXISTING DEPARTMENT TO ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL

As stated in the mayor's campaign policy papers, the department

Photo: Kit Pyne



should be renamed to reflect that 21st century “animal control” is not just about control, but ensuring quality care to animals. Animal Care and Control is a more inclusive name. This change can occur without any immediate change in services but will signal the changes ahead.

We recommend that the department be transferred to report to the Public Health Commission. This will link animal health and safety with public health. This change is in keeping with the “One Health” movement that acknowledges the interdependence of human,

animal, and environmental health. ¹

Many Massachusetts city and town animal control departments report to their local boards of health. This is also the case in larger cities. For example, the Thomas J. O’Connor Animal Care and Adoption Center in Springfield, Mass. (<http://www.tjoconnoradoptioncenter.com/tjo/>) reports to the Health and Human Services Department. Nationally, animal care and control in Washington D.C. reports to the Department of Health (<http://doh.dc.gov/service/animal-services>), New York City animal care and control is under contract with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) (<http://www.nycacc.org>), Baltimore animal control reports to the City of Baltimore Health Department (<http://www.baltimorehealth.org/animalcontrol.html>), and Columbus, Ohio animal control reports to the Public Health Department (<http://publichealth.columbus.gov/animal-insectcontrol.aspx>).

FOCUS 2: APPOINT OR HIRE A DIRECTOR

The mayor’s policy goals will not be met without a significant overhaul of the Department of Animal Care & Control. That must start with new leadership.

The department has been without a permanent leader for years. In the short term, the mayor may choose to appoint an interim director with animal control experience to oversee an audit of services, staff performance, and capacity. The search for a

¹ https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Reports/Documents/onehealth_final.pdf

new director should start immediately.

FOCUS 3: TEMPORARILY SUSPEND REHABILITATION OF THE BUILDING AT 26 MAHLER ROAD IN ROSLINDALE

Stray and surrendered animals are housed at the City of Boston animal control shelter facility in Roslindale. There are currently plans to renovate portions of this facility. We recommend any implementation of such plans be put on hold until a new director is hired and the evaluation (below) is completed.

FOCUS 4: CONDUCT A DETAILED AUDIT PROCESS

Conduct an audit, supported by a task force of animal welfare practitioners with expertise in animal control enforcement, shelter management, and veterinary medicine.²

² There are organizations that perform such services (see, for example, The Koret Shelter Medicine Program (<http://www.sheltermedicine.com/node/6>), Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program (<http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/shelterservices/shelter-health-assessment/>), and The Humane Society of the United States Shelter Services (http://www.animalsheltering.org/how-we-help/strengthen-your-shelter/shelter_services_1.html)).

This audit should produce a comprehensive report with recommendations for:

- 1) Restructuring the department, developing positions to reflect the goals of the department and creating job descriptions for these positions
- 2) Determining the comprehensive needs for animal care and control services in the City of Boston
- 3) Evaluating employees and removing those who have proven to be ineffective and/or detrimental
- 4) Assessing needs and developing plans for staff training
- 5) Assessing departmental data on animal intakes, disposition, quantity and types of calls for services, citations issued, etc.
- 6) Developing effective Standard Operating Procedures for field services and shelter services including strategies to reduce the average length of stay for animals in the facility and improved internal processes to reduce the euthanasia of behaviorally and medically healthy animals.
- 7) Determining areas of program needs that can be achieved collaboratively with the Animal Rescue League of Boston (ARL), the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA), other organizations, volunteer rescue groups, and individual volunteers.³

³ For example, this could include sharing lost reports through the shared database, Chameleon, referring citizens to services provided by the ARL or MSPCA (low-cost spay/neuter) and transferring animals between facilities.

8) Ensuring collaboration across city agencies including police and emergency services.

FOCUS 5: APPOINT AN ANIMAL CONTROL COMMISSION

Consistent with the City of Boston ordinance 7.9.1 (attached), the mayor should appoint members to the Animal Control Commission (we would suggest changing the name when the ordinances are updated; see section II). This would provide immediate support to the city in its initial process of making changes to the services provided as well as ongoing input by outside observers. This change will help ensure that there is adequate support and expertise to execute and sustain longer term initiatives.

FOCUS 6: TASK THE CITY'S DEPARTMENT OF INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY WITH CREATING ONLINE LICENSING/PET PORTAL CAPABILITY.

This is important not just for ensuring dogs are returned to owners, but also because it will create revenue and be of value to all dog owners. We believe it would be useful to explore the ability to process complaints online (e.g. barking dog, loose dog) via Citizens Connect or a new process.

A Pet Licensing Coordinator could assist the city in achieving targeted goals for licensing of dogs in Boston. The current number of dogs residing

in the City of Boston is unknown, but estimates range from 52,000 (using geographic information system or GIS online portal) to 87,644 (using the American Veterinary Medical Association dog ownership estimate tool). An increase in licensing in the first year would generate targeted revenue to support the program. Satellite licensing agents (in addition to the City Hall To Go and/or "Little City Halls") such as veterinary clinics or adoption organizations that can license a dog before he or she goes home would be a further benefit. See Pet Licensing Coordinator example from Seattle at <https://www.seattledogspot.com/blog/dog-blog/post/pet-licensing-saves-lives>.

FOCUS 7: MOVE DIRECTOR AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF TO THE SHELTER

Currently, the director of Animal Control and two staff members work at City Hall. It is difficult to be an effective leader and mentor when operating from an office remote to the team carrying out animal care and control work every day. This move will enable the department to be more cohesive and allow the director to have first-hand knowledge of staff and animal issues and needs. It also encourages multi-tasking and a sense of shared responsibility.

FOCUS 8: ENSURE THAT THE CITY'S ORDINANCES AND PRACTICES COMPLY WITH STATE LAW AND ARE EFFECTIVE AND APPROPRIATE FOR ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL SERVICES IN BOSTON.

Photo: Joyce Linehan



FOCUS 9: PROVIDE FEE STRUCTURE AND BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS WITH A GOAL OF EXPANDING PROGRAMS AND STAFFING. ⁴

FOCUS 10: PROVIDE DEPARTMENT-WIDE STATE APPROVED TRAINING, WORKING WITH THE ANIMAL CONTROL ASSOCIATION OF MASSACHUSETTS AND THE NATIONAL ANIMAL CONTROL ASSOCIATION.

⁴ For example, other comparable cities have higher per capita spending on animal control. San Francisco = \$3.75/per capita public spending; Miami - \$4.34; Los Angeles = \$5.30; Denver = \$4.63; Dallas = \$5.38; Phoenix = \$3.06. Source: Companion Animals and Chicago Communities: A Strategic Assessment for the City of Chicago, DePaul University, Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development, March 2012, p 9. Available at http://las.depaul.edu/chaddick/docs/Docs/Companion_Animal_Final_Report_030310.pdf.

FOCUS 11: EVALUATE STAFF BASED ON NEW OPERATING PROCEDURES AND TRAINING.

FOCUS 12: EVALUATE AND IMPLEMENT A STANDARD PRACTICE FOR CITATIONS FOLLOW UP AND COURT PROCEEDINGS.

The law enforcement departments of the Animal Rescue League and the MSPCA may provide appropriate training. The Animal Care and Control Commission should explore if it would be worthwhile to create a standing MOU with these organizations. This is an example of one way these nonprofits contribute to the city in lieu of taxes.

FOCUS 13: BEGIN IMPLEMENTING ITEMS FROM THE POLICY BRIEF UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE ANIMAL CONTROL COMMISSION, INCLUDING EVALUATING DOG RECREATION AREAS AND THE CURRENT ORDINANCE GOVERNING THEM. EXPLORE INITIATIVES TO CREATE MORE ANIMAL-FRIENDLY HOUSING. ⁵

⁵ Boston Housing Authority policies may be one way to easily open up more animal-friendly housing. For many years, the MSPCA ran a “Pets in Housing” program that helped establish guidelines and workable pet policies in multi-unit housing (public and private) with success.