



**REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

AGENDA ITEM

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

DATE: July 15, 2008

SUBJECT: Animal Control Services

**Report in Brief**

The County of Yolo, through the Sheriff's Department/Animal Control Division and under an agreement with the City of Woodland, provides animal control services to the Woodland community. The general fund impact for providing animal control services has been increasing steadily each year. Due to reduced revenues, the FY 08-09 City budget proposed a significant reduction in animal control services. The proposal was conditioned on reaching an agreement for reduced services with the Animal Control Division. Unfortunately, Animal Control has not agreed with staff's assumptions when the proposal was developed for the budget. In fact, negotiations with the Animal Control has generated a proposal for reduced services that would require the Police Department to develop the capacity for responding to citizen's requests for service and will only allow animals to be accepted at the shelter if brought to the facility by a City employee. Given the City's fiscal situation and Animal Control's position, staff believes the City is left with a choice of adjusting the budget moderately and developing a field response capacity or adjusting the budget significantly and continuing the present level of service.

Staff recommends that the City Council approve an agreement with the Yolo County Sheriff's Department/Animal Control Division for animal control services limited to access to the shelter facility and direct staff to develop the capacity to provide field response for Woodland.

**Background**

The County of Yolo has historically provided Animal Control services to the incorporated cities and throughout the unincorporated areas. Section 3.1.1 of the Woodland Municipal Code adopted in 1974, delegates animal control responsibilities and authority to the County. County Animal Control Services operates under the Sheriff's Department. The shelter facility and administrative offices are located at the Sheriff's facility, 2500 East Gibson Road, Woodland.

For the past ten years or more the costs of providing the services has been allocated between the County and the cities based on a proportional formula of the number of patrol hours consumed by each jurisdiction and the number of animals housed at the shelter. The County collects and retains all fees (license fees collected from pet owners in the cities and unincorporated county, redemption fees, neutering fees, etc) for the animal control program. The proportional formulas are applied,

after all revenues generated by the program have been subtracted, to the costs of animal control services. Additionally, Animal Control Services has provided a night drop service where anyone can leave an animal at the shelter after hours and without staff assistance. For many years the County assumed responsibility for this portion of sheltered animals but in recent years has spread this cost among all participants based on the percentage of “sheltered” animals.

The table below provides an eight year history of animal control services impact to the City of Woodland General Fund.

Year	Total Contract	% Inc	Woodland Share	% of Total	One Year Increase	% Inc
01-02			\$ 158,905			
02-03	\$1,311,940		\$ 220,348	17%	\$ 61,443	39%
03-04	\$1,337,867	2%	\$ 268,286	20%	\$ 47,938	22%
04-05	\$1,349,847	1%	\$ 286,968	21%	\$ 18,682	7%
05-06	\$1,168,018	-13%	\$ 334,015	29%	\$ 47,047	16%
06-07	\$1,294,674	11%	\$ 387,436	30%	\$ 53,421	16%
07-08	\$1,494,336	15%	\$ 461,942	31%	\$ 74,506	19%
08-09	\$1,684,971	13%	\$ 534,034	32%	\$ 72,092	16%
<b>Cumulative</b>		<b>28%</b>				<b>236%</b>

\* Minus revenues

**Table 1**

The cost increase to the City of Woodland General Fund has been 236% since FY 01-02, an average of 19% per year. All of these costs are in addition to the fees and penalties collected from Woodland residents paid for animal control services. Due to the lack of statistics for the past two years these revenue figures are not available.

Year	Patrol Hours	% Inc	Shelter Hours	% Inc	Animals Housed	% Inc	CFS	% Inc
01-02								
02-03	4178		2423		1776		2463	
03-04	5554	33%	3044	26%	2006	13%	3024	23%
04-05	3928	-29%	4724	55%	2112	5%	2992	-1%
05-06	4853	24%	5676	20%	2145	2%	5793	94%
06-07	3970	-18%	5345	-6%	2653	24%	5917	2%
07-08	-		-		-		-	
08-09	-		-		-		-	
<b>Cumulative</b>		<b>-5%</b>		<b>121%</b>		<b>49%</b>		<b>140%</b>

**Table 2**

Table 2 (previous page) provides workload history for the City of Woodland over a similar period. Animal Control Services has not provided updated statistics since FY 06-07. The workload statistics do show an increase in all but the number of patrol hours provided, but the increase does not appear to be proportionate to the cost increase experienced by the City of Woodland.

In FY04-05 in an effort to control costs, the City of Woodland and Animal Control agreed to reduce services from a 24-7 program to a 12 hour day, 7 days a week program with after hours call outs approved by the client agency. The impact of this reduction was to slow the increase to 7% for that year, not including the costs for after hour services. These after hour services highlighted another issue with the program since the original invoice for services included many duplicate calls, calls which did not occur 'after hours' and calls which were not authorized responses. After several months of collaboration with Animal Control, staff was able to reach an accurate accounting of after-hours services.

During FY 06-07 the City approached the Animal Control and other participating agencies with the idea of forming a joint powers authority to provide animal control services. The benefits of a JPA would be that all participating agencies could collaborate on the levels of service to be provided, and in determining the costs/fees for providing the services. This option was not favorably received by Animal Control.

### **Discussion**

The animal control services contract for the City of Woodland has been overseen for the past several years by the Police Department. The Police Department has made several attempts to control costs and the impact on the General Fund without success. The Department's efforts have been further frustrated by the lack of any statistical report of animal services activity for the past two years which might provide some insight into the cost increases.

In preparing the FY 08-09 City of Woodland budget, the Police Department proposed reducing animal control services to the minimum required by law. Using the most recent data available a potential savings of \$374,000 was estimated for FY 08-09. This proposal was presented in order to avoid service reduction alternatives that included closing one or both of the City pools and eliminating a day of service at the Library.

The proposal for a reduced program also required review from the City Attorney and discussions with Animal Control. The Department has sought review from the City Attorney regarding animal control services. The City Attorney has opined:

*In summary, the only mandatory duties (using the Attorney General's interpretation) imposed by Sections 597f and 597.1 are:*

- (1) The police department shall seize all animals upon conviction by a court that the owner/driver/possessor of the animal does not provide proper care or attention to the animal. (Section 597f (a).)*
- (2) The police department shall euthanize or take charge of any sick, disabled, infirmed, or crippled animal. (Section 597f (a); Section 597.1(b).)*

*(3) The police department shall convey any injured cats or dogs found in a public place to a veterinarian. (Section 597f(b))*

In addition as a rabies control area, animal control service must work in conjunction the Public Health Department to control the spread of the diseases. This occurs through mandatory vaccination and licensing of dogs, and quarantine of animals suspected of biting a human. These service levels would be consistent with the approach proposed in the budget.

Police Department staff has met with staff from the Sheriff's Department/Animal Control Division to discuss these reductions. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the implementation of an Animal Control agreement that would meet the legal mandates described herein and achieve the desired expenditure reduction incorporated into the FY09 budget. These meetings have not resulted in very favorable alternatives for the City of Woodland. In fact at a meeting on May 27, 2008, two weeks after the City Council's budget workshop, the County first provided a projected cost for FY 08-09 for full service animal control. That cost was \$553,868, a one year increase of \$91,926. A revised figure of \$534,034 was provided in a memo dated June 20, 2008, reducing the one year increase to \$72,096. The County has also provided a shelter services only proposal. This was initially proposed at \$253,868 but has been revised upward to \$269,221.

Given Animal Control's approach to working with the Police Department on this issue, the City is left with two options. Option #1 is to enter into a "shelter only" agreement with the Animal Control and develop the capacity for field response. Option #2 is to maintain the current agreement. Both options require an augmentation to the General Fund of \$178,881 (Option #1) to \$447,234 (Option #2).

The following information describes the two options in more detail.

**Option #1:** This option would authorize the City Manager to sign a shelter only agreement with the Sheriff's Department/Animal Control Division and direct City staff to develop a program to provide a limited level of field services. Animal Control would not provide field services. Should this option be selected it is appropriate that all fees and revenues generated from Woodland residents paid to the County apply only to shelter services. Due to the short time frame involved and Animal Control's demand for commitment to a contract, there would be an immediate reduction in services available and a time period required (estimated 12 months) to establish a basic level of field service. Unless a transition period could be negotiated with Animal Control Services, proactive animal control services would cease upon signing the shelter only agreement. During this phase police officers would be required to respond to animal service calls in which a human is threatened, injured/sick animal calls, and animal bite calls. Stray animal calls and other routine calls would not get a response. Obtaining the resources to provide some level of field service will minimally take 3-6 months. This start-up phase would involve hiring someone to provide animal control services, training as necessary, obtaining needed equipment and acquiring a suitable vehicle. At that time we would begin to provide some proactive services. This basic service level would provide coverage 40 hours per week with emergency call-out, reducing the current coverage by more than 50%.

While the Police Department has studied this alternative several unknowns remain. One potentially significant issue is the level of cooperation from Animal Control staff in implementing this proposal with specific concern on their acceptance of animals into the shelter. Their proposal states they will not take sick or injured animals however no specifics are provided on how they will determine if an animal is “sick” or “injured.” The Department has estimated costs for this proposal. Staff has attempted to be conservative in the figures provided. Additionally staff has looked at possible revenue enhancements that might offset the General Fund subsidy. These enhancements would require action by the Council. In addition the City would need to amend Chapter 3 of the municipal code to incorporate animal control regulations into the code. The actual costs of providing the services will not produce the level of savings projected in the FY09 budget in comparison to the current Animal Control agreement. However, the City should be in a better position to raise fees or control expenditures to reduce the General Fund impact and future costs.

**Option #2:** This option would authorize the City Manager to sign a contract with the Sheriff’s Department/Animal Control Division to provide animal control services for FY 08-09 at level consistent with current service levels. Animal Control had demanded that a signed contract be provided to them by July 1<sup>st</sup> in order to elect this alternative. Given the timing of the City Council’s consideration of this issue, Animal Control is continuing to serve Woodland into mid-July. This option would require a General Fund augmentation of \$446,096 in FY 08-09. Based on prior history it seems relatively certain that the City will have little to no ability to control future General Fund costs for the program under this option. In addition to the past pattern of cost escalation, Animal Control insists on programming the fees at current levels and has not been receptive to increasing fees because of concerns that citizens would not pay for services such as neutering and licensing.

<b><u>Animal Control Services Cost Comparison</u></b>		
	<u>Option 1</u>	<u>Option 2</u>
Sheltering	\$ 269,221	\$ 269,221
Patrol	-	\$ 262,293
Personnel	\$ 70,000	-
Vehicle (annualized)	\$ 12,500	-
Equipment	\$ 10,000	-
Contracts (Vets)	\$ 102,960	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 464,681</b>	<b>\$ 531,514</b>
<b>Offsets</b>		
State Reimbursement	\$ 119,000	\$ 119,000
License (surcharge)	\$ 15,000	-
Fines	\$ 65,000	-
	\$ 199,000	\$ 119,000
<b>Net</b>	<b>\$ 265,681</b>	<b>\$ 412,514</b>

The table above compares the cost of the options. Based on staff's estimates, Option #1 generates a comparative savings of approximately \$147,000 for FY09. However, as stated herein, there are several unknown factors that could impact these savings. Staff believes the most desirable advantage is that the City would have the ability to control a higher share of the future costs and revenues. The ability to control costs has eroded to the point that the City is forced to accept cost increases provided by Animal Control one month prior to when they are to become effective that have ranged as high as 19% annually.

The most desired option from the City's standpoint is to develop an alternative that would meet the legally mandated requirements based on the City Attorney's opinion with reduced costs from the Sheriff's Department/Animal Control Division to match the reduced level of service. This option would provide only mandated services on a time and materials basis as proposed in the FY 08/09 budget. This was discussed with Animal Control and they are unwilling to offer this option due to the need to maintain a minimal level of resources to be able to provide any service to the City.

The City Council should note that the information described in this report is not intended to be critical of the animal control services provided by the Sheriff's Department/Animal Control Division. These services are provided in a professional, courteous and capable manner that insures the health and welfare of the animals in their care. The issue is the continuing increase in costs as service levels diminish and the fact that the City receives the cost estimates approximately 30 days prior to the beginning of a new fiscal year. Simply stated, City staff believes that these costs will continue to increase at the levels described herein if the City does not take some level of control for these services.

### **Fiscal Impact**

The options available to the City of Woodland identified in this report will require an additional General Fund augmentation for the program in the FY 08-09 budget of between \$178,881 for Option #1 and \$447,234 for Option #2. Staff will need to develop strategies to adjust the FY09 and return to the Council at a later date.

### **Public Contact**

Public notice of this agenda item occurred with the posting of the City Council agenda. A copy of the agenda and report has been provided to the Sheriff's Department Animal Control Division.

**Alternative Courses of Action**

1. Approve an agreement with the Yolo County Sheriff's Department/Animal Control Division for animal control services limited to access to the shelter facility and direct staff to develop the capacity to provide field response for Woodland and to develop budget adjustment strategies to offset an increase of \$178,881 to the FY09 budget.
2. Approve an agreement with the Yolo County Sheriff's Department/Animal Control Division for the current level of animal control services and direct staff to develop budget adjustment strategies to offset an increase of \$447,234 to the FY09 budget.

**Recommendation for Action**

Staff recommends that the City Council approve Alternative No. 1.

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