



# City of San Antonio

## Agenda Memorandum

**File Number:**  
**{{item.tracking\_number}}**

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**Agenda Item Number:** 4

**Agenda Date:** October 15, 2024

**In Control:** Public Safety Committee

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**DEPARTMENT:** Animal Care Services

**DEPARTMENT HEAD:** Michael Shannon, Interim Director

**COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED:** Citywide

**SUBJECT:**

Council Consideration Request on Comprehensive Safety Measures for Loose and Dangerous Dogs

**SUMMARY:**

The Animal Care Services Department will present a briefing on a Council Consideration Request (CCR) submitted by Councilmember Alderete Gavito, requesting comprehensive safety measures for loose and dangerous dogs. This CCR outlines current processes and addresses additional measures to enhance public safety related to roaming dogs.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

On May 2, 2024, Council District 7, submitted a CCR recognizing that San Antonio is experiencing a severe and ongoing issue with dangerous, loose, and roaming dogs. The CCR requests the following measures to address habitually irresponsible pet ownership, the

overpopulation of roaming pets, and public safety issues related to dangerous dogs:

- 1) Increase fines for repeat offenders for roaming dog violations.
- 2) Sterilize pets found free of restraint.
- 3) Implement a pseudonym program to protect the identity of people filing Dangerous Dog affidavits.

Current minimum fines for Free of Restraint violations are based on offense:

- \$100 for first offense
- \$200 for second offense
- \$300 for third offense

ACS also issues Sterilization Orders to owners whose pets are found free of restraint and reclaimed. The orders require sterilization of the pet within 30 days of issuance. In FY 2024, 1,825 sterilization orders were issued, 70% of which were followed up on for compliance.

To initiate a dangerous dog investigation, State law requires a signed affidavit detailing the incident. ACS currently requires a legal name on the affidavit.

## **ISSUE:**

### **City Code Chapter 5 Changes:**

ACS is recommending several changes to Chapter 5 of the City Code to implement the measures outlined in the CCR.

- 1) Increase minimum fines for repeated Free of Restraint violations as follows:
  - \$100 for first offense
  - \$500 for second offense
  - \$750 for third offense and beyond
- 2) Clarify language to allow City to sterilize pets found free of restraint before being reclaimed by their owner rather than mandating the use of 30-day sterilization agreements.
- 3) Clarify language regarding the utilization of pseudonyms on dangerous dog affidavits.

ACS plans to have these changes implemented by January 2025.

### **Administrative Changes:**

In addition to the Chapter 5 changes, ACS intends to achieve 100% issuance of sterilization orders to pets reclaimed by their owner, as well as 100% follow up on those orders to ensure compliance.

Additionally, ACS plans to begin allowing pseudonyms on dangerous dog affidavits to protect the identity of the complainant. If the designation is appealed in court, however, the individual's actual name will be required to be disclosed.

To promote public safety, ACS has already begun to perform proactive inspections of dogs with a history of multiple bites or violation(s) after a bite. The CASA Team has reprioritized its workload to incorporate these efforts. .

**State Legislation Changes:**

ACS intends to pursue changes to State Law during the 2025 Legislative Session to increase enforcement of dangerous dogs. Changes may include allowing ACS to initiate dangerous dog investigations from affidavits signed by an ACO in lieu of a complainant, increase penalties for owners of dangerous dogs, and seek to prohibit individuals with multiple dangerous dog-related offenses from owning pets.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

This item is for briefing and possible action.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

This item is for briefing and possible action.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends moving forward with changes to Chapter 5 of the City Code to increase minimum fines for repeat free of restraint offenders and change language regarding ACS ability to sterilize reclaimed pets. Staff also recommends pursuing State legislative changes to add specific dangerous dog and responsible pet ownership measures. ACS plans to brief the Animal Care Services Advisory Board at its November meeting.