



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:
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Agenda Item Number: 6

Agenda Date: April 17, 2024

In Control: Governance Committee Meeting

DEPARTMENT: Neighborhood and Housing Services

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Veronica Garcia, Director

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Council Consideration Request on the establishment of a pet deposit assistance program.

SUMMARY:

On February 16, 2024, Councilmember Jalen McKee-Rodriguez issued a Council Consideration Request for the establishment of a pet deposit assistance program aimed at reducing the burden of pet adoption for renters.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Nationally, shelters and municipalities are experiencing a lower rate of adoptions and rescues since the pandemic has ended. While the City of San Antonio has experienced similar challenges, Animal Care Services (ACS) is evaluating strategies to minimize euthanasia due to shelter capacity and increase pet placement options. As part of the FY 2024 Budget, ACS efforts have strengthened adoption customer assistance, increased behavioral assessments, accelerated medical exams, and increased rescue stipends through key partnerships. As of March 2024, ACS has adopted 2,920

pets, a 21% increase compared to the previous year. There has also been an 11% increase in pets rescued through ACS. To date, ACS has been able to return to owner 3,313 pets, which keeps pets united with their families. All pets adopted through ACS are spayed/neutered, vaccinated, and microchipped which is included with the adoption fee.

While families who choose to foster or adopt pets from ACS are provided with affordable pet adoption options, financial assistance is not currently available to renters who may incur extra pet-related fees. Housing providers or property owners may charge pet owners a one-time, upfront fee to cover potential damages caused by pets, known as a “pet security deposit”. In addition to deposits or fees, some housing providers may charge a monthly pet rent.

Currently, the Neighborhood and Housing Services Department (NHSD) offers financial assistance to cover pet deposits through the Resident Relocation Assistance Program (RRAP) for renters who are at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability and moving to a new residence within the City limits. Eligible residents must demonstrate household income at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) along with a financial hardship, such as recent unemployment or other financial challenges.

In 2022 and 2023, the City was awarded a total of \$7.2 million through the Texas Department of Housing & Community Affairs, to help prevent homelessness with pandemic-related funding. The grant, which expanded RRAP funding and eligible expenses for two years, expired March 31, 2024. The City continues to offer relocation assistance to eligible residents who are at risk of experiencing homelessness through an annual General Fund allocation of \$100,000, which is available on a first come, first served basis.

ISSUE:

Animal Care Services provides affordable pet adoption options for individuals looking to adopt an animal; however, pet guardians are responsible for paying pet deposits, fees, and pet-related rent for rental housing. The RRAP program can assist income-restricted households in paying for upfront pet deposits and pet fees to obtain stable housing, but the program is limited to renters who are at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability and moving to a new residence within the City limits. This is the only program the City has that provides financial assistance for pet deposits and the entire program is funded by a \$100,0000 annual General Fund allocation.

Aside from the actual cost of the pet deposit and associated fees, another barrier to successful pet adoptions are the restrictions that rental properties have on the type of breed or weight of a pet. ACS experiences a significant number of requests to owner surrender due to these restrictions.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

RECOMMENDATION:

Currently the RRAP is the only program that provides financial assistance for pet deposits and fees. If City Council desires to create a separate program for pet deposit assistance, this should be discussed as part of the FY 2025 Budget Goal Setting Session scheduled for April 18, 2024.

Staff will brief the Public Safety Committee to get feedback on the program scope and better inform a future funding discussion.