



# AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** Edward D. Reiskin  
City Administrator

**FROM:** Ann Dunn  
Director, Animal Services

**SUBJECT:** Friends of Oakland Animal Services  
Donation

**DATE:** July 6, 2021

City Administrator Approval

Date: Jul 13, 2021

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff Recommends That City Council Adopt A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator To Accept And Appropriate Donated Funds In An Amount Not To Exceed Two Hundred Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$225,000) From The Friends Of Oakland Animal Services To Fund A Volunteer Program Specialist Position Through June 30, 2023.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Adoption of the proposed resolution will allow Oakland Animal Services (OAS) to hire a Volunteer Program Specialist (VPS) through June 30, 2023. The position will provide substantial support to the staff and volunteers who work with dogs at OAS, increasing the number of harder-to-place dogs who have live outcomes, while also addressing public safety by ensuring dangerous dogs are not released into the community. Accepting this donation from Friends of Oakland Animal Services (FOAS) will allow OAS to improve its services at no cost to the City.

## **BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

On March 6, 2018, by Resolution No. 87079 C.M.S., the Oakland City Council approved the acceptance of \$225,000.00 from FOAS to fund a two-year VPS position, from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2020. Ultimately the person hired worked for 21 months and has since left that position, leaving approximately \$26,000.00 in unexpended funds from the 2018 FOAS donation. Given the time necessary to recruit and fill the position, it is estimated a new hire would start on approximately October 1, 2021. The total cost of filling the position, from October 1, 2021 through June 30, 2023, is estimated at \$249,455.00. FOAS has agreed to allow the \$26,000 remaining from the 2018 donation to be utilized to hire a VPS, and to donate up to an additional \$225,000 to fund the VPS through June 30, 2023. Funding will be made in two installments, at \$80,000 within 60 days of approval of this resolution, and the remaining \$145,000 prior to the start of Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2023.

City Council  
July 26, 2021

OAS intakes approximately 2,000 dogs annually, with approximately 60% coming in as strays with no known behavioral history. The stressful shelter environment makes it very challenging to adequately assess a dog's suitability for adoption since the reaction to the environment significantly impacts the dog's behavior. The VPS position will be filled by an individual who is adequately trained in dog behavior and best practices in assessments consistent with progressive animal sheltering. The VPS will support a robust volunteer program that improves the quality of life for shelter dogs by providing daily play groups and kennel enrichment which increases their chances for adoption.

### **ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

OAS plays a significant role in determining which dogs are suitable candidates for adoption and which represent a threat to public safety. It requires skill and training to balance the appropriate expectation of the community that OAS find live outcomes for as many animals as possible, while not releasing dogs who are dangerous to humans or other animals. Accepting the donation of up to \$225,000.00 from FOAS to fund a VPS will allow OAS to hire an individual with the necessary experience to make appropriate behavior assessments, while allowing OAS to increase the number of dogs saved by helping dogs who need some behavioral modification in order to be adoption candidates.

During the period that OAS had the VPS position filled, there was greater confidence in the Department's decision-making regarding which dogs are made available for adoption, both because the individual had greater skill in making the determinations and was able to provide support to foster volunteers and adopters of big dogs with some behavioral issues. Absent the ability to provide that support, OAS would necessarily have to be more conservative in its decision-making, putting more dogs at risk for euthanasia.

Additionally, when OAS lacks internal capacity for its dog behavior program, it must rely more heavily on its transfer partners to take animals into their programs. While these partners play an essential lifesaving role for the animals, potential adopters of these private organizations often face higher obstacles to adoption and pay significantly higher adoption fees. OAS seeks to keep adoption accessible to members of the community for whom a higher fee is a barrier, or who might not be considered a suitable adopter for organizations with restrictive adoption criteria.

Further, it is not unusual for an adopter of a large dog to experience some behavioral challenges that necessitate some form of intervention. Adopters who lack the resources to be able to afford dog training often face the difficult decision of surrendering an animal they love to the shelter or accommodating frustrating or potentially dangerous behaviors. Hiring the VPS will aid OAS in its goal of providing access to free or low-cost dog training to support people with limited resources in having the companionship of an animal.

FOAS is a nonprofit created to support OAS by providing resources that are beyond what the City budget can accommodate. In addition to funding unusual medical expenses and staffing, FOAS is working to provide community-serving programs to support low-income Oakland residents in having and keeping companion animals.

If the donation is not accepted, OAS will have reduced capacity to provide positive outcomes for the dogs in its care and to provide access to dog training for people with limited resources who need behavioral support to keep their dogs.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Adoption of this resolution has no negative impact on the City as the donated funds from FOAS will fully fund the VPS position through June 30, 2023. With hiring anticipated by October 1, 2021, the cost of funding the position is estimated at \$104,743 for nine months in FY 21-22 and \$144,712 in FY 22-23, for a total of \$249,455. With \$26,000 in unexpended funds remaining from the 2018 FOAS donation to fund the VPS in 2018, up to an additional \$225,000 is required to fund the position through June 30, 2023. Funding for this position will be appropriated in the Miscellaneous Grants Fund (2999), Oakland Animal Services Organization (62111), Project 1004272, Special Operations Program (PS13). The VPS position would be charged against this fund.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

No public outreach was deemed necessary for this report and resolution other than posting on the City's website.

### **COORDINATION**

Development of this report and resolution was coordinated with internal OAS staff, the Budget Bureau, the City Attorney's Office, and the City Administrator's Office.

### **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

**Economic:** There are no economic, environmental, or social equity opportunities associated with adoption of this resolution.

**Environmental:** There are no economic, environmental, or social equity opportunities associated with the adoption of this resolution.

**Race & Equity:** The proposed VPS will aid the goal of OAS to support people with limited resources in having the companionship of an animal and to make its adoption program more accessible to people with limited resources or who face other barriers to adoption. Additionally, the VPS will oversee a program to provide free or low-cost dog training or behavior support to adopters and community members who could otherwise not afford those services. OAS primarily serves people from Oakland who live in communities where there are limited supports for companion animals.

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator To Accept And Appropriate Donated Funds In An Amount Not To Exceed Two Hundred Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$225,000) From The Friends Of Oakland Animal Services To Fund A Volunteer Program Specialist Position Through June 30, 2023.

For questions regarding this report, please contact ANN DUNN, DIRECTOR, at (510) 535-5604.

Respectfully submitted,

*Ann Dunn*

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ANN DUNN  
Director, Oakland Animal Services

Reviewed by: Betsy Lake  
Deputy City Administrator

Prepared by: Ann Dunn, Director

