



Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of Regulatory Services

Date: November 4, 2009

To: Council Member Don Samuels, Chair – Public Safety & Regulatory Services Committee

Subject: Animal Care & Control/Minneapolis Police Department Domestic Violence Intervention Initiative

Recommendation: Approval of the request

Previous Directives: None

Department Information

Prepared by: Lori Olson (673-3914), Dan Niziolek (685-4912), Joel Fussy (673-2939)

Approved by:

Rocco Forté, Assistant City Coordinator for Emergency Preparedness & Regulatory Services

Burt Osborne, Director of Operations, Licensing & Environmental Services

Lori Olson, Deputy Director of Environmental Management & Safety

Presenters in Committee: Lori Olson, Dan Niziolek, Joel Fussy

Reviews

- Permanent Review Committee (PRC): Approval ___ Date _____
- Civil Rights Approval Approval ___ Date _____
- Policy Review Group (PRG): Approval ___ Date _____

Financial Impact

- No financial impact

Community Impact

- City Goals – A Safe Place to Call Home

Supporting Information

Minneapolis Animal Care and Control (MACC) has been asked to assist the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) in their current domestic violence intervention efforts. MACC would provide no cost kenneling to assist individuals trying to leave a violent domestic relationship but are not leaving because of concerns about their pet's safety.

Over the past year, the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) implemented a Domestic Abuse project which has resulted in significant increases in convictions for domestic violence cases. Given the growing recognition of the connection between domestic violence and animal violence, Minneapolis Animal Care & Control (MACC) has been asked to partner with the MPD in an effort to continue improving the City of Minneapolis's work on domestic violence.

Background:

Current research highlights the relationship between domestic violence and animal abuse. For example:

- Up to 75% of domestic violence victims report that their partners threatened or killed family pets.
- Similar to domestic abuse, abusers demonstrate power and control over the family by threatening, harming, or killing animals.
- Up to 48% of battered women delay leaving abusive situations out of fear for the safety of their animals.
- Investigation of animal abuse is often the first point of social service intervention for a family experiencing domestic violence.

Purpose:

Given the clear link between animal cruelty and domestic violence, the purpose of this initiative is to identify partnership opportunities for MPD and MACC to ensure the safety of domestic violence victims. Currently, MPD and MACC work in isolation on domestic violence and animal violence. By partnering, MPD and MACC expect greater efficiencies and better outcomes.

Initial Project:

Provide for the immediate, temporary kenneling of animals to support individuals trying to leave a violent domestic situation. Research indicates that victims of domestic violence are inhibited from leaving a violent relationship if they are unable to ensure the safety of their pets. Battered women/men shelters often do not allow pets. Many other states and cities provide kenneling of domestic pets for victims of domestic violence.

MACC is not asking for additional resources, but would incorporate the domestic violence intervention work within existing operations. Given the public safety purpose of this initiative, this work would be a high priority for MACC and may displace other lower priority work.

The kenneling of animals at no cost serves a number of public good and public safety purposes:

- Increases the number of individuals leaving violent domestic relationships.
- Decrease the potential for adults and kids to be abused in domestic violent relationships.
- Decreases the number of times MPD will need to respond to specific addresses for domestic violence.
- Decrease the incidents of animal abuse.

Specifics:

MPD will:

- Identify situations where the welfare of a pet is preventing a victim from leaving a violent relationship.
 - Officers would be trained in identifying situations where the presence of a pet is preventing a victim from leaving.
 - Determine interest of victim in kenneling their pet at MACC.
- Identify and determine the ownership of the pet.
- Notify MACC of an animal needing kenneling. The officer will have the option of bringing the animal to MACC or calling for a MACC officer to assist.

MACC will:

- Provide no cost kenneling and care of pets involved in a domestic violence situations identified by the MPD.
 - MACC would kennel the pet for up to 5 days, after which the owner would need to reclaim the animal.
 - Owners of pets would sign an agreement related to the kenneling of the pet, including 1) the victim agrees to not bring the abusive person to the shelter and 2) that any animal not claimed in 5 days would become the property of MACC.
- Facilitate the visitation of the pet.
- Kennel the animal to prevent contact with the abusive partner.

In addition, pet rescue organizations are being recruited to be available to foster the animal beyond the 5 days of no cost kenneling at MACC.

MACC and MPD will report back to Council in one year to provide an evaluation of the initiative.