



September 6, 2012

Contra Costa Grand Jury
P.O. Box 911
Martinez, CA 94553-0091

Dear Grand Jurors,

We appreciate the fact you have taken the time to investigate our operation at the Antioch Animal Services Shelter. Your report has affirmed the hard work and dedication of our shelter employees and the efficiency by which they complete their tasks, yet always keeping in mind the welfare of the animals first and foremost. As you are aware, like many other municipalities, the City of Antioch has suffered from an economic downfall over the past four years. This has resulted in the Volunteer Coordinator being laid off at the shelter and work furloughs for all shelter staff on Fridays. All the while we have seen an increase of intakes at the shelter, and a significant reduction in our revenues through licensing and other fees.

Although our volunteer program was suspended for a short time after the coordinator was laid off, we did continue to maintain the volunteers we had in place. Furthermore, we conducted recruitment over a year ago for additional volunteers and are currently conducting a second recruitment. Volunteers take time to recruit, train, supervise and manage. There is turnover in these positions just like any other job. Although many stay with us for years, others may only do so for a short time for various reasons. We intend to continue our efforts in this area to supplement our current shelter staff.

We are proud of the services our shelter is able to provide to our community, especially in light of the fact we are able to do so at approximately one-third the cost of the county. Moreover, the Contra Costa County Animal Services Department is subsidized by parcel taxes from the properties in the City of Antioch, although residents of this city receive no services from the county shelter. Furthermore, this was all accomplished in light of limited budgets and staffing and at a time when other municipal shelters are closing their doors.

FINDINGS:

1. The Antioch Shelter currently has an insufficient number of volunteers to provide adequate time out of kennels for training, socialization, playtime or exercise for the animals each day, which is part of the humane treatment of animals. ***Respondent Disagrees***

4. The County Shelter and the Antioch Shelter should consider establishing advisory councils to provide direction and suggest priorities for each shelter. ***The recommendation is not reasonable.***

As you are aware, the Chief of Police is the department head in charge of the shelter. The Chief of Police takes direction from the City Manager, who in turn receives policy directives from the City Council. Input is given at council meetings from those who are community stakeholders relative to the animal shelter and animal advocacy. The formation of an advisory council would create another step of additional bureaucracy for information to reach the Chief of Police, City Manager and the City Council. Moreover, we currently do not have the staff or resources to support such an advisory council.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Jakel", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jim Jakel
City Manager

cc: Mayor and City Council
Lynn Tracy Nerland, City Attorney
Dawn Merchant, Finance Director

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS RESPONSE TO
GRAND JURY REPORT NO. 1205:
Tail of Two Shelters**

FINDINGS

1. The Antioch Shelter currently has an insufficient number of volunteers to provide adequate time out of the kennels for training, socialization, playtime or exercise for the animals each day, which is part of the humane treatment of the animals.

Response: This requires a response by the City of Antioch.

2. The Antioch Shelter's spay/neuter fees are higher than fees charged for comparable services by nearby shelters and, for this reason, may discourage adoption from this shelter.

Response: This requires a response by the City of Antioch.

3. The cost differences between the two shelters (as shown in Table 1) are great enough to merit closer examination for cost effectiveness.

Response: Respondent agrees with the finding.

4. Neither shelter has an advisory council to work with management to develop plans to meet space, population, and fiscal issues.

Response: Respondent agrees with the finding. Contra Costa County does not have an advisory council for the state purpose.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Antioch Shelter should explore ways to increase the number of volunteers to ensure the humane treatment of the animals and that each animal receives adequate personal attention (walking, socialization) each day.

Response: This requires a response by the City of Antioch.

2. The Antioch Shelter should explore options to provide lower cost spay/neuter fees for newly adopted animals.

Response: This requires a response by the City of Antioch.

3. Each shelter should examine its cost per animal to ensure that the amount being spent provides for efficient, effective, and humane treatment for the animals.

Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented by the County Animal Shelter, but will be implemented in the future. We believe that the Contra Costa Animal Shelter already provides for the efficient, effective and humane treatment for the animals. However, the County also believes it is a good idea to review performance from time to time. An analysis of this type takes significant staff time. Due to vacancies in several positions in the Contra Costa County Animal Services Department, staff is not currently available to perform this work. When these vacancies are filled and staff is available, a review will be performed. The Department will make every effort to complete the review no later than October 15, 2012.

4. The County Shelter and the Antioch Shelter should consider establishing advisory councils to provide direction and suggest priorities for each shelter.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented for the County Animal Shelters as it is not warranted. The County has been looking at its advisory boards as a part of the entire County structure and has found that there some that are duplicative, have not been effective, or are cost and staff intensive. In an effort to streamline process, increase effectiveness, and reduce unnecessary expenses, the Board of Supervisors has eliminates those bodies no longer necessary. This proposal is counter to the streamlining and the restructuring that the County has been doing for the past seven years. The County Animal Services Department works closely with a number of organizations who provide advice and input into the operations of the shelter. A new advisory council is not needed to provide this service.