



Memorandum

TO: MAYOR LICCARDO

FROM: Councilmember Matt Mahan

SUBJECT: BUDGET DOCUMENT

DATE: May 25, 2022

Approved *Matt Mahan*

Date 5/25/22

RECOMMENDATION

That the following proposal be enacted.

Proposal

Program/Project Title: Animal Care Shelter Service Restoration

Amount of City Funding Required: \$53,000 One-time (This year only); \$138,850-\$299,700 Ongoing (This year and future years - depending on how many personnel in each classification are hired).

This change is:

One-time Ongoing

Cost Estimate Number (if applicable): CE-FY22-23:062

Proposal Description, including the reason for the need and anticipated outcomes (Please describe how the proposal will affect services for San José residents, community groups, businesses, etc.):

Executive Summary:

About twenty years ago, San Jose leaders made the decision that active colony management of feral and/or community cats is the best way to control their population. For twenty years this decision has been fairly effective due to the strong partnership between volunteer colony managers and trappers, various non-profit rescue partners, and San Jose Animal Control Shelter (SJACS).

However, about a year or two before the pandemic began, SJACS began to have staffing problems and their part in this balanced relationship began to weaken. Because trapping volume is variable, and because staffing was tight and schedules were variable, surgeries for the TNR program had to be reduced. Trappers, colony managers, and rescue partners tried to fill in where they could and began alerting staff to the resulting growth in population of feral and community cats.

When Covid hit in early 2020, SJACS stopped their TNR program all-together. In late 2021 the shelter started up the program again, but limited the number of cats that could be brought in. Over the last several months, as staffing problems have been exacerbated, SJACS continued to limit the number of cats and days of service, until recently when they completely halted the program again.

The Community Cats Working Group shares on their website some information about how quickly cats can reproduce. A female cat can become pregnant at just 16 weeks of age and have multiple litters per year. Within another 16 months that cat and her kittens can produce 36 more cats. Within 7 years a single cat and her kittens can produce 420,000 more cats. (<https://www.sjd10leadership.org/projects/community-cats>) There are some professionals who estimate there are upwards of one million feral cats in Santa Clara County, and at least half of those are in San Jose. If this problem isn't addressed now, it will grow exponentially in a very short time. We need only to look as far as Campbell, where their decision to make colony management illegal has greatly increased their cat population.

In addition, the staffing crisis has affected the dogs coming through the shelter. In one instance, a pregnant dog was not identified and gave birth alone. When she was checked on, the puppies were dead and she was in bad shape. Another person shared an instance where a few dogs identified for rescue were not released for ten to 14 days while waiting for spay and neuter services. These same rescue partners and volunteers report they have seen animals in pain, crying, waiting for someone to look at them and treat their pain. They have seen these delays in treatment lead to fatal infections, amputations, and enucleations (eye removal). Rescues and volunteers report some dogs wait an average of two weeks for their first health check and vaccinations. They cannot be removed from their kennel for exercise until this health check is completed. Without vaccinations they must be kept isolated and miss out on a key socialization period, which leads to them becoming fearful dogs that will be poor adoption candidates and more likely returned to the shelter before their first birthday.

Rescue partners report their budgets have been decimated providing veterinary services for animals that are abandoned or rejected by the shelter due to lack of staffing. Many have already expended their annual budget by the end of April. Rescue partners take 35% of the animals that come into the shelter and are the key to maintaining the 92% Live Release Rate touted on the Neighborhood Services CSA Dashboard, allowing the shelter to avoid killing about 5,000 animals per year.

It is my understanding that as of last Friday, nearly 200 dogs are waiting in the shelter. Most need vet services before they can move to the next stage of their adoption journey. While San Jose's dogs wait for services, City funds are being expended to feed and kennel them, and rescue partners have shifted their focus to saving animals from other parts of the state, making them less available when the shelter is ready to release dogs to them, resulting in more dogs staying longer in the shelter. It's a vicious cycle.

Notably, the pandemic has exacerbated the veterinary and vet tech shortage and made it more apparent. We elevated vet salaries in February to match other local shelters, but some of those other shelters—competing for the same vets—have already raised their salaries since our last salary survey. All local shelters in the We Care network report they are thinly staffed and looking for at least one or more part-time vets. VCA and other private vet services are now offering **signing bonuses of \$75,000** and one Bay Area shelter is reported by an applicant to be offering a similar bonus this month.

With such terrible conditions and animal suffering, it is not a surprise that there is a significant turnover of Animal Care Attendants (ACAs) who find it too difficult to listen daily to the cries of the suffering animals that they are powerless to help.

As a solution we propose the following:

- In addition to the SJACS positions already included in the Proposed Operating Budget, in order to address the current demand/need for TNR services, to bring back low cost Spay/Neuter services for our

residents, which has been halted for about a year now, and to effectively manage the intake of stray, found, and surrendered pets, additional part-time vets and vet techs are also needed. Funding for an additional 2 part-time vets and up to 4 part-time vet techs would increase capacity and allow the shelter to restore hours of operation to effective levels. Costs are estimated at:

- Part-time equivalent (20 hours/week) of 2 Animal Shelter Veterinarians PT-U (\$79,100 each);
 - Part-time equivalent (20 hours/week) of 2-4 Animal Health Care Technician PT-U (\$27,250 each);
- Responsibilities of one of the newly proposed Division Manager positions will include Rescue Partner Management, however considering their other important responsibilities, it is most likely that this will not get the attention that it needs to effectively address the current crisis situation and restore balance to the partner relationships. The shelter relies heavily on their rescue partners to obtain positive outcomes for the animals and maintain their high live release rate. The majority of cats, dogs, kittens and puppies that leave the shelter do so by going to a rescue partner (**35%**), rather than adoption (**17%**), so the relationship with rescues is integral to the success of the shelter.

Relations with rescue partners are currently very strained, and they are starting to work with other shelters outside the area. There are animals in need everywhere and rescues can pick and choose who they work with. SJACS needs a dedicated person who can focus on restoring these relationships. Without the rescue partners, either the shelter will have to euthanize more animals, lowering our live release rate, or keep animals in the shelter longer, raising our costs and increasing the burden on our facility and staff.

Hiring a dedicated Rescue Partner Manager, even at a part-time level for now, would allow the Division Manager to more fully focus on their main responsibilities of addressing the internal challenges, and provide the dedicated focus needed to manage Rescue Partner relationships. However, a full-time Program Manager classification employee is estimated at **\$225,000**, and currently there is no part-time listing for the Program Manager classification. That should be looked into and evaluated in the future, but in the meantime, Staff has provided a cost estimate for a part-time Volunteer Coordinator classification. This position would be helpful in supporting the efforts of the Division Manager to re-establish a strong and productive working relationship with our rescue partners, and allow the Division Manager to have more time to address the challenges faced by the shelter.

Costs are estimated at:

- Part-time equivalent (20 hours/week) of 2 Volunteer Coordinator PT-U (\$32,500 PT Unbenefited + \$3,000 NP)
- To help reduce the burden on the shelter until the new and existing positions are filled, we ask that **\$50,000** be granted to St Francis Animal Protection Society of Campbell so that they can spay and neuter pets of the unhoused, feral, and community cats, through their network of partnerships. A major focus will be on the cat colonies in the Guadalupe Gardens, homeless encampments, and along the Guadalupe River. This will pay for about a dozen days of surgical services for over 400 animals, preventing a potential tsunami of pregnant animals, kittens, and puppies left behind when the homeless encampments are emptied.

Fulfilling these requests would: reduce severe overpopulation of cats in San Jose, reduce blight and health hazards, save the City money, restore effective relations with non-profit partners, resolve internal challenges of the shelter, and provide better service overall to pet owners, trappers, all residents, and all animals brought to the shelter.

SEE BELOW for additional detailed background and analysis information, including our own City of San Jose peer-reviewed case study, and disease and health hazard concerns, in the Supporting Documentation section below.

Funding Source

X Essential Services Reserve: \$50,000 - One-Time contribution to St Francis + \$3,000 non-personal costs for the Rescue Partner Coordinator.

X Other (Please specify program/project/fund): F001 GENERAL FUND Ongoing \$249,700 to hire additional staff

Department or Organization Contact

Please list the contact information for the individual that certified cost estimates contained within your recommendation:

Name and Title: Jim Shannon, Director; Matt Cano, Director

Department or Organization: Budget Office; Public Works

Phone Number:

Email: Jim.Shannon@sanjoseca.gov; Matt.Cano@sanjoseca.gov

Supporting Documentation - Animal Care Service Restoration:

Animal Care Shelter Service Restoration

Background:

About twenty years ago, San Jose leaders made the decision that active colony management of feral and/or community cats is the best way to control their population. Prior to this decision, staff used poison to reduce populations, but concerns over secondary-kill of predators from eating poisoned cats prompted the discussions that lead to this decision.

For twenty years this decision has been fairly effective, as evidenced by the fact that most of us don't even know there are such cats in our city, and populations have been kept under control in general. The success of this process has been due to the strong partnership between the volunteer colony managers and trappers, the various non-profit rescue partners, and the San Jose Animal Control Shelter (SJACS). Today you can see testimony to this on the SJACS website:

- “Feral” cats were born on the streets and have not been socialized to people. Most have never had any human contact but some were once semi-tame cats that now have to fend for themselves. These cats do the best they can to survive, facing many hardships but many manage to lead a good existence, especially here in California with our temperate climate. They live in neighborhoods, shopping centers, creeks, commercial properties and near dumpsters—anywhere they can find shelter. Many compassionate people provide daily food and water for these street cats. However, the greatest threat to feral cats is overpopulation. Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)

has proven to be the most humane and effective method of managing feral cat populations. With TNR, a feral cat is humanely trapped, spayed or neutered, then returned to the location where they were trapped. It breaks the breeding cycle while allowing the cat to live out its natural life in its original territory.

Removing feral cats from a location is very ineffective as it only opens a territorial void and then more unaltered cats move in, starting the breeding cycle all over again!

- "It is the mission of San Jose Animal Care & Services to provide a welcoming and humane place for animals and those who care for them; to protect, educate and serve the public; to develop programs that improve the lives of people and animals; and to create opportunities for our community and supporters to help us succeed."

However, about a year or two before the pandemic began, SJACS began to have staffing problems and their part in this balanced relationship began to weaken. Because trapping volume is variable, and because staffing was tight and schedules were variable, surgeries for the TNR program had to be reduced. Trappers and colony managers tried to fill in where they could and began alerting staff to the resulting growth in population of feral and community cats.

When Covid hit in early 2020, SJASC stopped their TNR program all-together. In late 2021 the shelter started up the program again, but limited the number of cats trappers could bring in. Over the last several months, as staffing problems were exacerbated, they continued to limit the number of cats and days of service, until recently when they halted the program again. This statement is currently on their website:

- **The Shelter is experiencing severe resource challenges and is unable to offer public spay/neuter services at this time. As soon as this is remedied, the website will be updated accordingly. Please consider other Bay Area agencies at this time. We are very sorry for the inconveniences we know this is causing.**

The Community Cats Working Group shares on their website some information about how quickly cats can reproduce. A female cat can become pregnant at just 16 weeks of age and have multiple litters per year. Within another 16 months that cat and her kittens can produce 36 more cats. Within 7 years a single cat and her kittens can produce 420,000 more cats. (<https://www.sjd10leadership.org/projects/community-cats>) There are some professionals who estimate there are upwards of one million feral cats in Santa Clara County, and at least half of those are in San Jose. If this problem isn't addressed now, it will grow exponentially in a very short time. We need only to look as far as Campbell, where their decision to make colony management illegal has greatly increased their cat population.

In addition, recent conversations with three of our non-profit rescue partners revealed that each of them handled approximately 500 cats that SJACS never saw. The burden that the missing partnership of SJACS is placing on our rescue partners is not sustainable. If they become burnt out and discontinue their services, we can expect that we will all be highly aware that such cats exist in our city.

Analysis:

There are many factors contributing to the existence of feral and community cats, including socio-economics, cultural beliefs, and shelter policies that make it difficult for responsible animal owners to surrender pets when moving or otherwise unable to continue caring for their pets. But the primary cause of the current crisis of over-population is the current dysfunction and staffing shortages of SJACS.

We are grateful to the City Manager for hearing the concerns of the community and staff and adding in funding for two much needed positions on the SJACS staff. These two additional staff members will certainly improve the situation. However, more needs to be done if we are to restore the balanced relationship, as well as reduce community cat numbers to a sustainable level once again.

Responsibilities of one of the newly proposed Division Manager positions will include Rescue Partner Management, however considering their other important responsibilities, it is most likely that this will not get the attention that it needs to effectively address the current crisis situation and restore balance to the partner relationships. The shelter

relies heavily on their rescue partners to obtain positive outcomes for the animals. The majority of cats, dogs, kittens and puppies that leave the shelter do so by going to a rescue partner, rather than adoption, so the relationship with rescues is integral to the success of the shelter. Hiring a dedicated Rescue Partner Manager, even at a Part-time level for now, would allow the Division Manager to more fully focus on their main responsibilities of addressing the internal challenges, and provide the dedicated focus on managing the Rescue Partner relationships that is needed.

2021 Shelter Numbers:

	DOG	PUPPY	CAT	KITTEN	OTHER	TOTAL
ADOPTION	821	111	392	1,153	137	2,614
RESCUE	696	165	540	3,263	522	5,186

- The rescue groups need a streamlined point of contact and reliable communication in order to effectively work with the shelter to achieve positive outcomes for the animals
- Having a dedicated person to manage the rescue inquiries would free up current/other shelter staff for animal care, intake, etc. which is currently stretched beyond capacity
- Kittens are the highest volume of intake, at greatest risk, and in greatest need and the group most helped by the rescue partners
- Shelter capacity is limited by their capacity to care for animals due to staffing issues
- Animals are shown to do better in rescue/foster care than in the shelter environment and it is in both the shelter and the animal's best interests to facilitate moving the animals outside of the shelter environment to rescue partners

In order to address the current demand/need for TNR services, additional part-time vets and vet techs are also needed. Funding for an additional 2 part-time vets and up to 4 part-time vet techs would increase capacity and allow the shelter to restore hours of operation to effective levels.

To help reduce the burden on the shelter until the new and existing positions are filled, we ask that \$50,000 be granted to St Francis Animal Protection Society of Campbell so that they can spay and neuter pets of the unhoused, feral, and community cats through their network of partnerships. A major focus will be on the colonies in the Guadalupe Gardens, homeless encampments, and along the Guadalupe River. This will pay for about a dozen days of surgical services for over 400 animals.

TNR has been studied extensively and it has been proven to not only reduce the number of feral and community cats to a manageable level, it saves the city money. The San Jose Animal Care Shelter researched between 2008 and 2014 the impact of implementation of a TNR program with low cost Spay and Neuter and significantly and cost effectively reduced the number of cats and kittens as well as dead cats brought to the shelter. With the abandonment of both programs, the numbers of animals have increased, colony sizes have grown and the number of colonies have increased. Colony locations depend on food availability and when the number exceeds available food, some animals migrate into a new location. It is under that circumstance that human/colony conflicts increase ranging from annoyance at breeding noises to an increase in feces within backyards, parks, and school grounds,

Significant reductions in shelter intake and euthanasia numbers

A two-year program in Alachua County, Florida, was implemented to capture and neuter at least 50% of the estimated community cats in a single zip code. If the cats were friendly, they were adopted out. If not, they were returned to the area. Researchers then compared trends in shelter cat intake from the target zip code to those of the rest of the county. After two years, per capita shelter intake was 3.5 times higher and per capita shelter euthanasia was 17.5 times higher in the nontarget area than in the target area. Clearly, high-impact targeted TNR combined with the adoption of

socialized cats and nuisance resolution counseling for residents is an effective tool for reducing shelter cat intake (Levy et al., 2014).

Levy, J.K., Isaza, N.M., and Scott, K.C. (2014). Effect of high-impact targeted trap-neuter-return and adoption of community cats on cat intake to a shelter. The Veterinary Journal, 201, 269-274.

Dramatically reduced shelter intake, impound and euthanasia numbers

This study examined the impact of a municipal shelter’s Return to Field program in San Jose, California. These programs are shelter-based and include sterilizing, vaccinating, ear tipping and returning healthy, impounded community cats to the place they were found, with or without an identified caregiver. Over four years, the shelter’s program garnered decreases in cat intakes (from 70% to 23%), cat and kitten impounds (by 29.1%) and euthanasia for Upper Respiratory Disease (by 99%) (Johnson and Cicirelli, 2014).

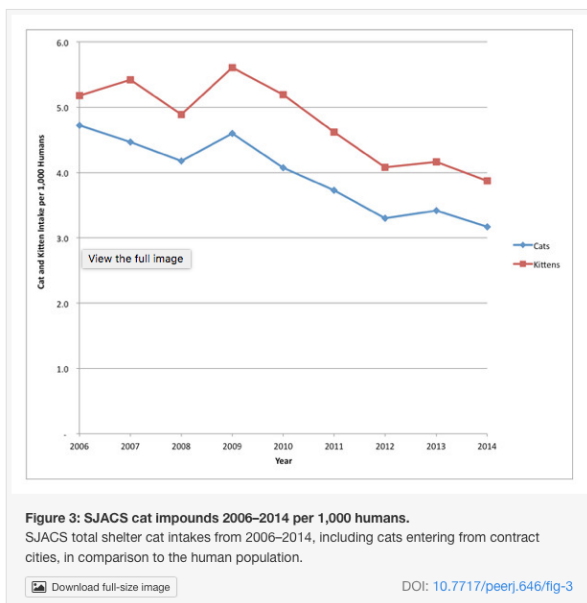
Johnson, K.L. and Cicirelli, J. (2014). Study of the effect on shelter cat intakes and euthanasia from a shelter neuter return project of 10,080 cats from March 2010 to June 2014. PeerJ, 2:e646, <http://dx.doi.org/10.7717/peerj.646>.

Decreased intake helps expand capacity to care for other cats

An evaluation of 8 years of data from San Jose Animal Care and Control compared intake and health before and after the implementation of a Return to Field (Shelter Neuter Return) program. Initiation of the program was associated with a decreased number of cats admitted to the shelter and a lower proportion euthanized. With increased resources to care for cats with URI and changes in the URI treatment protocol, fewer cats were euthanized for URI and more cats were treated at lower cost and with a briefer shelter stay.

Edinboro, C, Watson, H, Fairbrother, A. (2016) “Association between a shelter-neuter-return program and cat health at a large municipal animal shelter.” Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association 248, no.3:298-308.

Further results in the research study noted above from former Shelter Director Jon Cicirelli show impact of TNR (then called SNR). <https://peerj.com/articles/646/>



The decline in adult cat and kitten intakes at the shelter is readily apparent, coinciding with the implementation of the SNR program. In 2009, when cat intakes were climbing, total impoundment for cats and kittens was 10.2 per 1,000 humans. By 2014, after four years of SNR, the total cat impound rate had decreased to 7.0 per 1,000 humans, or a total of 29.1% fewer cat impounds.

Additionally, it was found the number of dead cats picked up on the street declined 20% from 1,629 in CY 2009 to 1,308 in FY 2014

Expenses to alter the feral cats were approximately \$72 per cat; however, the annual stray cat population in the shelter has decreased by more than 3,000 cats per year, resulting in fewer expenditures for cats that require housing,

euthanasia, cleaning chemicals and all the various materials, supplies and personnel needed to care for those cats. Expense to return cats to their capture site was handled by the rescue volunteers.

Quality of Life Issues and Health Hazards

Many people have significant concerns about health hazards of so many feral cats in their yards and in their neighborhoods. Here are some causes for concern:

Community cats and family pets are both susceptible to various zoonotic diseases that can be transmitted to humans. Most are extremely rare. Two diseases, Rabies and Cat Scratch Fever, are transmitted through bites. The other diseases are transmitted through contact with feces, fleas, or direct contact with the cat or its lounging area. Toxoplasmosis can harm unborn infants and is usually transmitted through infected food; however, it is found in the soil used for feces. Roundworm is a risk for children who eat dirt. Ringworm, a fungal infection, survives in warm, moist areas and can be tracked from outside into a home. The Plague comes from fleas on infected animals and is a risk in California, albeit rare. When colonies increase in size, the risk of transmission of these diseases to humans increase as colonies develop closer to residences where they interact with "outdoor" pets who bring the diseases into the home. As colonies become more visible, new animals are discarded by irresponsible owners and those unable to successfully surrender their animals to the shelter due to process problems, adding to colony population and creating problems in the colony and the community.

<https://www.vet.cornell.edu/departments-centers-and-institutes/cornell-feline-health-center/health-information/feline-health-topics/zoonotic-disease-what-can-i-catch-my-cat>

In some locations, coyotes have been known to feed on cat colonies within city boundaries. Coyotes have been seen carrying cats in San Jose. Increasing cat colony populations may be attracting more coyotes. Once these coyotes get a taste for cats and find an easy food source, family pets become targets as well.

<https://strayferalrescue.org/dealing-with-coyotes.html>

<https://abc7news.com/coyotes-san-jose-evergreen-foothills-coyote-sighting/10852453/>

<https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/pets-go-missing-as-hungry-coyotes-linger-in-san-jose-neighborhood/>

Maps and trapping data show that D3, D5, D7, and D8 have the largest colonies, with the most kittens coming from D8 in the Eastridge Mall area. If this information is of interest, it can be provided upon request.