



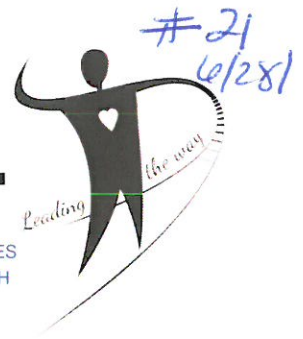
MONTEREY COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH Elsa Jimenez, Director of Health

ADMINISTRATION
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH/ANIMAL SERVICES
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR/PUBLIC GUARDIAN

CLINIC SERVICES
PUBLIC HEALTH



June 28, 2016

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Dave Potter, Vice-Chair, Board of Supervisors, District 5

Fernando Armenta, Board of Supervisors, District 1

Simón Salinas, Board of Supervisors, District 3

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Dear Chair Parker,

Thank you for forwarding the letter you received from Mr. Gary Tiscornia, Executive Director and CEO of the SPCA for Monterey County, citing concerns that the SPCA was not included in the Monterey County Animal Services and City of Salinas Animal Services consolidation feasibility study conducted by Management Partners. I have reviewed the SPCA's stated concerns and have summarized the following responses to several key statements:

- *“SPCA for Monterey County was not contacted by Management Partners for the Animal Services Consolidation Assessment for Monterey County and the City of Salinas animal services. This resulted in relevant data and accessible resources not being captured in or considered for their report.*

The City of Salinas and County of Monterey agencies determined at the outset of the proposed study to concentrate the scope of services in the evaluation of shared opportunities as a starting point. This decision was based on concurrent management vacancies and consideration of other cost saving opportunities. As noted in the report, Option C was the option the City and County were interested in pursuing.

- *“In FY 2014-15 that included 2,435 companion animals from Monterey County and the City of Salinas jurisdictions. These do not appear in the report and there is no assurance that the SPCA will continue to underwrite these services for the two jurisdictions in the future.”*

Both the City of Salinas and the County of Monterey have communicated to SPCA management and staff on multiple occasions to redirect any member of the public to deliver their pet or found stray to the respective shelter to avoid the SPCA from having to shelter these animals. Both the City and County shelter staff have retrieved and continue to retrieve animals when contacted by the SPCA. The SPCA does not contact the City or County on every occasion and instead keeps those animals in their shelter for possible adoption. The SPCA does charge fees to the public surrendering animals in many instances. The SPCA has for many years taken in owned pets and strays from the public. This can be corroborated by the City of Salinas's former shelter manager.

- *"The report erroneously states that, 'There is no inexpensive neutering or vaccination clinic available to [Salinas] City residents' other than 'a clinic [that] recently began operation in the City of Marina'. In fact, the SPCA veterinary clinic provides low-cost and no-cost sterilization services for pet owners five days a week and has been doing so since the 1960's."*

The City, County and the consultant agree that there are available services at the SPCA; however, the Monterey County Animal Services shelter is within proximity of City of Salinas residents and County residents in close proximity to the shelter. The County shelter has a fully equipped veterinary clinic with contract veterinarian services that are underutilized and would be a reasonable option for shared services by the City and County shelter operations, as well as potentially increasing operations to handle low-cost spay and neuter clinics for City and County residents.

- *"As a courtesy, we accept stray animals from Monterey County and City of Salinas jurisdictions because those facilities are often closed or their staff is unavailable, often keeping them for days without charge before many are taken to the proper shelter so their owners can claim them. In addition, we accept all owner relinquished animals from these jurisdictions."*

Budget impacts have had a significant effect to hours of operation at both the City of Salinas and County of Monterey shelters; however, there is no data as to the number of animals taken by the public to the SPCA during the days the shelters are closed. As previously noted the SPCA does take in owner relinquished animals from both jurisdictions and does charge a fee to the owner for this service.

- *"Our (SPCA) Humane Officers attempt to coordinate their investigative activities with Monterey County Animal Services when necessary, too often with poor results. Investigations have been compromised through the actions of County animal control officers."*

This statement cannot be corroborated and is unfounded as there is no record of any request to coordinate any investigative activities through County shelter management. There is also no information or any correspondence from SPCA to County management staff that any SPCA investigation has ever been compromised by County Animal Control Officers. It should be noted that currently 3 County animal control officers have received subpoenas to be witnesses in current SPCA investigations.

- *Monterey County animal services... "no longer accepts residents and taxpayers' pets that need shelter and instead refer them to the SPCA."*

Despite staffing shortages, County animal control officers continue to focus on patrolling and taking in strays that may pose a public health risk due to rabies and or safety due to a vicious nature of the animal at large. Owner surrendered animals do not pose this risk. The County shelter has had this policy in place for many years and is not a result of staffing shortages. It should be noted that many animals are in fact abandoned by owners at the City and County shelter properties and both take in those animals. A fully staffed and supported County and City operation may provide some relief to animals taken in by the SPCA.

- *"It (Monterey County Animal Services) uses grant funding to sterilize unowned cats brought to it, even when the cats are friendly, and re-abandons them on the streets to an uncertain fate. This reduces cost and euthanasia rate but is inconsistent with the stated mission of animal services to protect, enhance, and promote the health safety, and quality of life for the companion animals and people of Monterey County.*
- *The City of Salinas ... "like Monterey County Animals Services, it too turns away most companion animals owned by Salinas residents and taxpayers. It has also adopted the policy of sterilizing unowned cats and re-abandoning them to uncertain fate on the streets of Salinas."*

Both the City of Salinas and the County of Monterey implemented the "Community Cats" program with support from our respective Animal Control Advisory Boards. The Community Cats program bases its efforts on trapping, neutering and returning cats (including feral cats) to the location from which they were found. Studies indicate that most stray cats are "owned cats" and capturing them as "strays" often leads to euthanasia as the owners fail to retrieve them. Stray cats are not a public health threat. This effort does in fact promote safety for the animal (cat) as we do not euthanize it and allows the animal to live a full life as a companion animal when it returns to its owner.

In fact the *"The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) supports the management of community cat colonies primarily through TNR (Trap/Neuter/Return) and scanning for the presence of a microchip, vaccination, sterilization, ear tipping and, when feasible, microchipping."* <http://www.aspcapro.org/feral>

- *“The Management Partners assessment recommends entering into a Joint Powers Agreement to realize economies of scale but is silent regarding the significant increases in funding necessary to reach an acceptable level of service for tax paying residents. In addition, there is no discussion of the 2,435 pets that are the responsibility of these agencies but were turned away last fiscal year.”*

The Purpose of the presentation before the Board of Supervisors and the Salinas City Council today is to obtain direction on next steps. If those next steps are to consider evaluation of the formation of a JPA, the consultant would then evaluate all issues including economies of scale and an acceptable level of service.

As stated previously, there is no basis or supporting information to the statement that 2,435 animals have been turned away by the City of Salinas or the County of Monterey as the SPCA accepts and charges fees for intake of owner surrendered animals and they can contact the City or County for pick-up of stray animal as both agencies have requested.

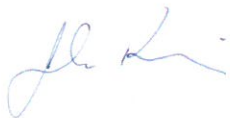
- *“We (SPCA) were asked if we would be interested in taking over County Animal Services a number of years ago and declined to consider it at that time.”*

As Bureau Chief for the Health Department with responsibilities of oversight of the Animal Services Division since March of 2010, I have not been aware of any request, any direction from my former and/or current Director of Health or the Board of Supervisors to request/or communicate to the SPCA to “take over” County shelter operations. The City may have other information as to conversations but we are not aware of any formal proposal.

As to the new “*CEO coming on board on July 11, 2016*”, both the City and the County welcome the opportunity to work with the CEO in a mutually collaborative effort in the possible formation of a JPA or to consolidate services, if appropriate, and certainly to revisit issues of apparent discord between the SPCA, the City of Salinas and the County of Monterey.

Thank you for your consideration of these responses, I am available to discuss any questions you may have regarding the study, its findings or this response.

Sincerely,



John Ramirez, MPH, REHS

Director, Monterey County Environmental Health Bureau