

Public Safety, Civil Rights & Health Committee

September 25, 2013

Agenda Item #1

Staff Report

Minneapolis Animal Care and Control (MACC) is committed to ensuring cost effective and positive outcomes for animals that are brought into the city's shelter. Today MACC requests the ability and resources to directly adopt to the public all adoptable dogs sheltered at MACC. Implementing public adoption for all adoptable dogs at the Minneapolis Animal Care and Control shelter will support a community and city value of reducing the humane euthanasia of domestic pets while ensuring public safety.

Currently, bully breed dogs are not adopted out to the general public, but rather they are transferred to animal rescue organizations who then adopt them out. The current practice is in place since MACC does not have the resources and/or tools to ensure the proper and appropriate placement of bully breed dogs. The purpose of the practice is to protect the public (given the unknown past handling of these dogs) as well as the animals (so they are not re-victimized).

With the current policy, approved animal rescue groups are the only source of placement for adoptable bully breeds at the MACC shelter. Even though MACC has tripled the number of approved rescues in the past 3 years, there are still dogs they cannot timely place due to lack of foster homes. This results in dogs spending longer stays at the shelter and/or being humanely euthanized.

Of the 152 adoptable animals humanely euthanized at MACC last year, 45% were bully breed dogs. In addition, bully breeds may end up in the shelter for 3 weeks before being transferred to a rescue group, due to the capacity of rescue organizations.

Creating the opportunity for public adoption of bully breeds will increase the rate and speed at which adoptable bully breeds are adopted from the shelter. The goal would be to adopt out all adoptable dogs and reduce the average stay of dogs in the shelter by 3 days. Last year the average stay of a bully breed dog was approximately 12 days.

To achieve this goal, Minneapolis Animal Care and Control needs the resources and tools to behaviorally assess all power dogs as well as screen potential dog adopters.

- **Behavioral assessments** would be overseen by MACC's contract veterinarian. Dr. Derr brings extensive experience in shelter medicine and behavioral assessments of dogs; including implementing behavioral assessment programs at a number of shelters (e.g. the Animal Humane Society). She would be responsible for training staff, quality control,

supervision and conducting assessments. In addition to the contract veterinarian, behavioral assessments would be done by veterinarian technician interns and Animal Control Officers.

- **Screenings** of potential adopters of dogs would be overseen by MACC's Program Development Coordinator. The Coordinator would be responsible for supervising a part time (.5) volunteer coordinator. In addition to the volunteer coordinator, screenings would be done by volunteers and MACC staff.

As noted in the 2014 budget request, Minneapolis Animal Care and Control would need a budget increase of \$51,000 to implement this plan. This is currently not in the Mayor's 2014 Budget.

The first year of the program will shed light on the potential cost savings for implementing the all dog adoption program. The potential cost savings include reduced kenneling costs due to a reduction in the number of days dogs are in the shelter as well as reduced euthanasia costs. Savings are estimated at approximately \$15,000.

In addition, additional resources will come into the City of Minneapolis, through adoption fees. Currently, there is a fee to rescue partners to cover the spay/neuter surgery and a rabies vaccination for animals transferred to rescue groups. Dogs adopted to the general public have a flat fee of \$150 (\$185 for puppies). Additional adoption staff resources will allow for appropriate pricing of animals and adoption fees for bully breeds. There is a projected revenue increase of \$10,000 with an opportunity to grow the number.

Over the past 5 years, Minneapolis Animals Care and Control has dramatically increased the percentage of adoptable animals leaving the shelter for a new home. In 2012, 91% of adoptable pets were adopted out as opposed to 61% in 2007.

This increase resulted from a concerted effort by MACC to draw attention to and increase the adoption opportunities for animals sheltered at MACC. The number of approved rescue groups tripled, media spots occurred on all major channels and printed media, "Pet of the Week" goes out through social media, adoption promotions occurred, volunteers are making the animals more adoptable through enrichment, socialization and exercise, and the MACC webpage has been updated to highlight photos of sheltered animals. This summer, photos of MACC sheltered animals began being posted on a national animal website as well as the City's website. Additional marketing efforts are planned in collaboration with the Communications Department.

Implementing a program where all adoptable dogs are made available for public adoption will continue to increase the percentage of dogs at MACC finding forever homes.