

RESOLUTION NO. 20150521-024

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is committed to being a leader in animal welfare; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin is nationally recognized as the first large city in the United States to successfully achieve no-kill status, which is defined as having live outcomes for a minimum of 90% of animals; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Animal Center provides shelter to more than 18,000 animals per year; and

WHEREAS, walking dogs can prevent dogs' behavior from deteriorating due to boredom, stress, and frustration; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Animal Center has stated they have over 600 volunteers; and

WHEREAS, existing staff and volunteer capacity is not sufficient to ensure dogs at the shelter are being walked in a timely manner; and

WHEREAS, observations from Austin Animal Center volunteers and the Austin Animal Advisory Commission reflect concerns that anywhere between 30 to 100 dogs at the center are not being taken out of their kennels on a daily basis; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Animal Advisory Commission found that the current practice of relying solely on volunteers to walk dogs is not working, identified a need for additional staff to walk dogs at the Austin Animal Center, and on March 23, 2015 unanimously recommended that the City Council allocate funding for at least two full-time temporary staff for dog walking and to improve living conditions for a minimum of one year; and

WHEREAS, as of November 30, 2014, the Animal Services Donations Fund had a balance of \$202,335, which could be utilized to hire contract dog walkers to provide a short term solution until Council is able to consider hiring full time employees as part of the Fiscal Year 2015-16 budget process; and

WHEREAS, the Animal Advisory Commission cited potential benefits of construction of a large Play Group area which could enhance large dog socialization, increase adoptions, relieve stress on volunteers by exercising more than one dog at a time, and that training from an outside organization would be needed to ensure success of such a program; and

WHEREAS, the Animal Advisory Commission further recommended that the City of Austin explore a contract with community organizations to work with the Austin Animal Services on a 12-month pilot program focused on dog exercise and enrichment; and

WHEREAS, the current online system for the Austin Animal Center does not allow for online adoption or adoption applications or volunteer trainings, which is an impediment to improving live outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the Animal Advisory Commission recommends that the City explore a more robust and accessible web presence with Corporate Public Information Office for the Animal Services Office that includes online applications for the adoption, foster, and volunteer programs, and could be a standalone site similar to the one used by the City of Austin Library Department; **NOW, THEREFORE**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to take immediate steps to increase opportunities to let dogs out of their kennels on a daily basis. The City Manager should consider utilizing the Animal Services Donations Fund to contract for temporary staff for the Austin Animal Center to walk dogs for a period of three months as a short-term solution to address the needs of animals at the shelter that are not currently being met.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to provide a report to the Council Health and Human Services Committee with options for long-term solutions that will improve animal welfare through dog-walking at the Austin Animal Center. The report should be provided no later than the June meeting of the Health and Human Services Committee. The report should include information about any options to contract with organizations to help implement enrichment programs and to improve the Animal Services Office web presence and online resources for potential foster homes, adopters, and volunteers.

ADOPTED: May 21, 2015

ATTEST: 

Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk