



MEMORANDUM

TO: Health and Human Services Committee

FROM: Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager

DATE: June 23, 2015

SUBJECT: Update on Resolution 20150521-024

On May 21, 2015, City Council approved Resolution 20150521-024 which directed the City Manager to take steps to increase opportunities to let dogs out of their kennels while housed at the Austin Animal Center; and to provide a report on long-term options to improve animal welfare at the Austin Animal Center and to increase the Animal Service Office's online capabilities.

The resolution also directed that a report be given at the June meeting of the Health and Human Services Committee however, staff was not able to compile the information in the time between when the resolution was approved and the June meeting of the Health and Human Services Committee. We are working with the Health & Human Services Committee Chair to consider this at the next available meeting.

This extra time has allowed staff to develop sound recommendations that will help us fulfill our goal to continually walk dogs. Our new Chief Animal Services Officer has developed some initial ideas and has reached out to members of the Animal Advisory Commission and the animal welfare community to go over her short, mid and long term plan for the issue.

The plan is as follows:

Short term plan for dog enrichment needs (immediately):

- Meetings with stakeholders, volunteers and staff are being conducted gathering more information specifically for solutions to immediate issues.
- Within the first week of July, large dry erase boards will be strategically installed in the Center near kennels so that volunteers and staff can track which dogs have been out for bathroom and exercise breaks.
- Begin a targeted recruitment campaign specifically for volunteers to walk dogs. Media release to go out the week of July 29.

Mid-term plan (Next 4 months):

- An analysis will be conducted on how Animal Center personnel spend their time throughout the day with a focus on efficiencies and opportunities for modification.

- Dog play group training is scheduled for August 22 to August 30, 2015. Play groups are currently being done daily successfully at Austin Pets Alive and they will be collaborative in the launching of the Animal Center play groups.
- Customized play group training sessions will be held for staff, volunteers and appropriate stakeholders and partners.

Long-term plan (next 4 to 8 months):

- Implement standardized enrichment plans for animals based on their individual needs.
- Explore bringing in students to play music in kennel areas for the dogs and cats and possibly students to read to the animals.
- Look into bringing in national experts on behavior and assessment for training. Staff has heard that there is a need for consistent assessment training and this relates directly to ensuring each animal in our care has appropriate enrichment opportunities.

If there are any questions, please feel free to let me know.

Cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
Tawny Hammond, Chief Animal Services Officer
Animal Advisory Commission