MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Susana Carbajal, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Rolando Fernandez Jr., Interim Animal Services Officer

DATE: September 4, 2025

SUBJECT: **Updated Process for Notification to Rescue Organizations**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a follow-up to the June 11, 2025 Animal Services Office (ASO) memo regarding Notification of Euthanasia, Dog Behavior and Risk Assessments, and Process Improvements. After receiving feedback from professional staff, volunteers, and stakeholders, ASO is initiating improvements in two key areas 1) identification of animals earlier in the process for rescue only options with proper notifications, and 2) identification of public safety risk animals sooner to move forward with the necessary steps to identify an appropriate outcome with proper notifications.

Urgent Placement List

ASO will continue to use the Urgent Placement List (UPL) to inform the public, rescue groups, stakeholders, and partner organizations about dogs in urgent need of placement. The UPL will be updated regularly, maintained as a live resource on the ASO website, and distributed weekly to all subscribed stakeholders. To improve transparency and clarity, the UPL will categorize dogs into the following groups:

1. Exhibit behavioral concerns,
2. A bite history that does not pose a public safety threat; or
3. Experience a poor-quality of life.

Rescue Placement List

By the 5th business day of the month, ASO will publish a new notification list titled the Rescue Placement List (RPL). The RPL will identify dogs with:

- A bite history and/or significant behavioral concerns that pose a threat to public safety if placed without specialized support.

Dogs on the RPL are **only eligible** for placement through **qualified rescue partners** equipped to provide the behavioral rehabilitation and structure required for these animals to become safe in a community setting. Placement on the RPL communicates that a dog's only available outcome is either rescue or humane euthanasia.

The week after the RPL is published, ASO will provide notification to stakeholders on the euthanasia listing to inform the **5-Business Day Commitment period**. A summary email is provided including all ASO efforts to place dog. During this time, ASO will collaborate with rescue organizations to explore placement opportunities. Each request for rescue will be reviewed based on:

- The dog's behavioral and bite history and its potential threat to public safety if placed without specialized support; and
- The rescue organization's ability to manage and support the dog responsibly.

Following the 5-Business Day Commitment period, ASO will issue a **48-hour euthanasia notice**, per **Austin City Code §3-1-26**, to rescue organizations who have opted into the notification list. If no viable rescue option is confirmed, humane euthanasia will proceed.

Behavior Assessment
ASO begins behavioral observations at intake, documenting observations from:

- Community members or field officers who observed the dog prior to intake
- Staff and volunteers during shelter interactions

These observations help establish a behavioral profile for each dog and inform placement decisions throughout the animal's stay at ASO. For dogs with a bite history, ASO has formalized an internal review process titled the Dunbar Team. The Dunbar Team will be responsible for assessing each bite incident to ensure consistency in dog bite classification using the following criteria:

- Descriptions of the incident
- Photos and/or videos of the resulting injuries
- Classification using the **Dr. Ian Dunbar Dog Bite Scale**

This classification system, adopted by City Council on February 1, 2024, ensures consistency, transparency, and accountability in determining bite severity and risk. These evaluations support safer outcomes and more informed decision-making. ASO is also developing two new behavior-focused programs that aim to increase live outcomes while improving safety and quality of life for animals in the shelter:

1. **Behavior Modification Support Program** – to design and implement targeted interventions
2. **Continuous Behavioral Monitoring** – to track progress and adjust plans throughout the dog's time in ASO care

Conclusion
ASO staff is deeply committed to ensuring each dog in our care is given the best opportunity for a positive outcome. The creation of the RPL and formalizing the Dunbar Team are process improvements that will help identify placement options for dogs in our care earlier and identify public safety risk animals sooner and move forward with the necessary steps to identify an appropriate outcome with proper notifications.
Should you have any questions, please contact Interim Animal Services Officer Rolando Fernandez Jr. at Rolando.fernandez@austintexas.gov 512-404-4047.

Attachment: ASO Euthanasia Notification Timeline

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Erika Brady, City Clerk
Corrie Stokes, City Auditor
Mary Jane Grubb, Municipal Court Clerk
Judge Sherry Statman, Municipal Court
CMO Executive Team
Animal Advisory Commission

Euthanasia Notification Timeline

Rescue Placement List Published

By the 5th business day of every month, ASO publishes RPL and contacts all rescue organizations to assist with rescue placement for each dog.

5-Business Day Commitment Period

The week after the RPL is published, ASO will send Notification to stakeholders on the euthanasia listing to inform the 5-Business Day Commitment period. A summary email is provided including all ASO efforts to place dog.

Code 3-1-26 Euthanasia Notification Released

After the 5-Business Day Commitment period, ASO sends a 48-hour euthanasia notice, per Austin City Code §3-1-26, to rescue organizations. A summary email is provided including all ASO efforts to place dog.

ASO Two Day Hold Period

ASO holds dogs for 2-Business Days and is responsive to any confirmed request for rescue placement. If no rescue is confirmed, ASO will proceed with humane euthanasia.