



Legislation Text

File #: HCC-99-FY22, **Version:** 1

Submitted by: Schaible
Submitting Department: Legislative
Agenda Section: Action

Item Title:

Animal Welfare and Community Safety Act

Suggested Action:

I move that the Mayor and Council direct the City Attorney to draft an ordinance amending Chapter 52 of the Hyattsville Charter and Code to include the following items:

- 1) Update animal welfare provisions to include prohibitions on long-term tethering and exposure to severe weather.
- 2) Categorize animal control violations as a Public Nuisance violation (less severe) or a Public Threat violation (more severe).
- 3) Clarify enforcement procedures by:
 - a) Requiring the City to designate persons responsible for implementing Chapter 52 municipal infractions.
 - b) Specifying when municipal infractions require a citation and/or coordination with the Prince George's County Animal Services Division.
 - c) Requiring the City to review and adapt Police General Orders to the requirements of Chapter 52.
 - d) Requiring the City to develop a Standardized Response Protocol for violations.
- 4) Enhance public awareness and preparedness on animal control issues by:
 - a) Providing educational outreach and promoting community awareness of incidents that may present a threat to public safety.
 - b) Requiring the City to collect and maintain data on animal control complaints and on actions taken in response to complaints and violations.
 - c) Requiring the City to prepare an annual report on Chapter 52 complaints and actions taken.

These amendments are further outlined in the attached "Animal Welfare and Community Safety Act Supplemental Information.

Summary Background:

Current regulations and enforcement of animal control issues in Hyattsville are unclear, haphazard, and have contributed to tragic outcomes for Hyattsville residents and companion animals. This amendment to Hyattsville Code Chapter 52 creates clear expectations for preventing and responding to animal aggression in Hyattsville and creates new protections to promote the humane treatment of companion animals.

The motion was considered by the Code Compliance Advisory Committee in March 2021 and received unanimous support by the committee in April 2021. They also recommended that the motion be revised to include a focus on enhanced educational outreach, that the motion is supported by the best available data, and that the motion emphasizes better coordination with the County. These requested changes have been incorporated into the motion.

In a meeting with PGCASD Chief Rodney Taylor on 11/13/2019, Mr. Taylor offered to provide Hyattsville with a “read only” software license for Chameleon, the software system that PGCASD uses to log its actions and record locations of confined and quarantined animals. Once obtained, this software will provide Hyattsville with valuable information in regard to any confinement or quarantine orders that have been issued by PGCASD within City limits.

Much credit is owed to the Hyattsville group Residents United for Furry Friends (RUFF) for helping identify shortcomings in our existing code and for their tireless work researching and recommending improvements to our Animal Control regulations.

Next Steps:

The City Attorney, in consultation with the Hyattsville Chief of Police and the Hyattsville Director of Community and Economic Development, will review and edit (as needed) the ordinance for future action by the Mayor and Council.

The animal control improvements outlined in this motion may require part-time support (staff liaison). Based on conversations with City staff, including the City Administrator, the cost for the part-time position will be \$45,000 or less for FY22. The costs include salary, equipment, and outfitting of a part-time employee as well as overtime costs for GIS support. This position requires prior professional experience working in customer service and experience in some aspect of animal control is preferred. The staff liaison will serve as the point of contact for animal control issues. This position will not be a full Animal Control Officer, but will serve as a contact for:

- Communicating with staff and residents on animal control issues when local support (non-County) is needed, and appropriate follow-up with the County following animal aggression incidents.
- Coordinating with PGCASD and City Staff on reporting.
- Tracking recurring issues involving animal aggression and providing feedback and recommendations to City staff and Council.
- Providing the community with information on new animal related policies and providing safety alerts as needed.
- Scheduling training, educational outreach, and occasional animal related safety events.
- Make recommendations on resources, potential partnerships, and future needs for municipal animal control.

While this motion will formalize animal control services, it is largely intended to educate and inform the public and better coordinate services with the County. The City of Hyattsville will still rely on PGCASD for many core services. These County services include animal impoundment, rabies control, investigating and maintaining the database of dangerous animals, quarantine orders, and confinement orders, and case management. Regular communication and partnership between the City and County will be essential to providing enhanced animal control services.

Fiscal Impact:

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City Administrator Comments:

The resource allocation is still to be determined and will require action through a separate ‘Budget Amendment’ to the FY2022 Budget.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with PGCASD will be needed to enable the transfer of data and any related inter-agency coordination requirements.

Based on timing and resources, staff anticipates operations could commence in early 2022.

Community Engagement:

Strategic Goals:

Goal 3 - Promote a Safe and Vibrant Community

Legal Review Required?

Pending