

MAR - 9 2018



Town of Hempstead
Office of the Supervisor

Memo

To: Members of the Town Board
From: Laura A. Gillen, Town Supervisor
Date: March 9, 2018
Re: Corrective Measures for the Town of Hempstead Animal Shelter (the "Shelter")

Dear Councilmembers:

I wanted to update you on the status of certain efforts that have been made and are in the process of being made to address issues at the Shelter. My goal is to implement changes in the day-to-day operation of the Shelter, as well as to make other changes, some of which require Town Board approval. In the interest of mutual cooperation, I am looking for your support in improving the management of the Shelter and the quality of care and services provided to our resident pets.

Below is a list of items, in no particular order, that have already been implemented and/or are in the process of being implemented:

- 1) Financial audit: The Nassau County Comptroller's Office will continue its financial audit of the Shelter by reviewing accounts and records related to its financial condition. I will advise the Board once the audit is completed and of any recommendations that are suggested.
- 2) Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for privatization of Shelter services: A draft RFQ was shared with your offices and met with your approval. It will be issued and published today. The RFQ seeks qualifications from potential partners to help the Town carry out improved Shelter services with private/non-profit agencies. As you are aware, we are considering privatization as one approach to address Shelter concerns/issues. It is understood that even if one or more eligible partners come forward to assist with

privatization, the timeframe for implementation will require the Town to move forward with other changes to address immediate needs at the Shelter.

- 3) Issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for behaviorist services: The Town currently has an agreement with a behaviorist consultant who works approximately 35 hours a week at the Shelter. An RFP has been prepared and will be issued and published today for behaviorist services to supplement and/or replace those already provided and to ensure that the appropriate evaluations and behavioral services are provided to Shelter pets. Following the receipt of RFP responses, I will share them with you and ask that the Town Board award an agreement with one or more qualified behaviorists.
- 4) Issuance of an RFP for veterinary services: In 2015, the Town awarded contracts to New York Vet Specialty Center and Central Veterinary Associates, P.C. to provide off-site veterinary services. These contracts were for one year and contained options to extend the agreement for two additional one year periods. The three year period is set to expire later this year but can be terminated beforehand by the Town.

An RFP has been prepared and will be issued and published today for off-site veterinary services to supplement and/or replace those already provided and to ensure that the appropriate off-site veterinary services are provided to Shelter pets. Following the receipt of RFP responses, I will share them with you and ask that the Town Board award an agreement with one or more veterinarians.

- 5) Review of Policy and Procedures: My office is reviewing, in consultation with Shelter staff, all policy and procedure documents to reflect current practices with a focus on updating policies and procedures to reflect best practices.
- 6) Policy changes to the Trap Neuter Release (TNR) program: Modifications to the TNR Program will be implemented to target feral cat colonies. The goal is to conduct trapping in an area until completed instead of moving from location to location.
- 7) Installation of additional security cameras: There has been an inadequate amount of security cameras in necessary locations at the Shelter. Cameras will be added in the kennels, kennel runs, garage, medical room, isolation room, trailers, and medical van. The actions of employees, volunteers and members of the public will be recorded in these prime locations where most interaction between humans and animals takes place. The cameras will serve as a deterrent, aid in investigations and better protect the safety of our Shelter pets and/or our staff.

- 8) Training (and retraining) for Shelter staff and volunteers: All staff and volunteers will be required to participate in an annual training course concerning handling of animals, respectful treatment of animals, proper record keeping practices and sensitivity training. Supervisors and management level employees will be required to complete an annual management training course.
- 9) Shelter maintenance: The Shelter facility is in need of continuous maintenance and repair. Areas of the Shelter have and will continue to be painted and repaired on an ongoing basis.
- 10) Capital projects: The capital plan presented later this year will include the replacement of kennel bay doors and installation of an awning over the rear dog run area. In future years, I will propose additional upgrades and improvements to the Shelter in the event it is not privatized.
- 11) Website and social media: The Town's website is in the process of being updated to be more user-friendly. With the enhancement of the website, the Town will prominently feature the Shelter animals in need of new homes. At the same time, the Town will promote the adoption and rescue of animals on its social media pages.
- 12) Rescue and adoption programs: The Town will work with current and former rescue and adoption partners, and engage new partners, to enhance the existing rescue and adoption programs. The Town will review each rescue annually and conduct site visits to ensure that the rescue is operating in accordance with the Town's expectations. It is vital to the operation of the Shelter to find homes and/or suitable locations to place Shelter pets.

The following items are being proposed for consideration and discussion:

- A) Transferring the Animal Shelter and Control Division: The Shelter is currently under the jurisdiction of the Department of General Services, together with eight other divisions, including the Division of Cemeteries; Real Estate Division; Traffic Control Division; Buildings and Grounds Division; Mail Services Division; Reproduction Services Division; Telephone Services Division; and the Division of Public Works.

Based on the nature of the Shelter operation, special oversight is required. I am proposing to transfer the Shelter division, inclusive of its employees and budget, to the Department of Public Safety. This transfer can be done as a pilot program and be reevaluated in one year following the transfer. This proposal will require the adoption of a local law to amend Chapters 63 and 66 of the Hempstead Town Code.

I want to stress that this proposal is not intended to be a reflection on the Commissioner of the Department of General Services and is purely intended to provide focused oversight by a department involved in administrative and enforcement functions.

- B) Reorganization of the Shelter Division: I am further proposing to restructure the organization of the division into separate, clearly delineated subdivisions, such as behavior evaluation, adoption and rescue, TNR, animal control, veterinary care, and intake and administration. Each subdivision will have an assigned manager responsible for oversight, who will report to the Shelter Director and the Commissioner/deputy commissioners.

- C) Renaming the Shelter Division: Chapter 66 of the Hempstead Town Code established the "Animal Shelter and Control Division". The current name of the division does not adequately represent all of the functions handled at the Shelter. While sheltering and control are components, the Shelter also handles adoption, rescue and other programs. It is my recommendation to rename the division the "Division of Animal Services".

- D) Personnel changes: My staff will interview each staff member at the Shelter, and together with the Department of Human Resources and the Department of Civil Service, will review the titles and job responsibilities for each employee to ensure that they are working in title and are qualified for the jobs they have been assigned. Transfers and reassignment of employees within the Division will be made as necessary. Any personnel changes requiring Town Board approval will be discussed and put forward for consideration.

While these recommendations will not resolve all of the issues at the Shelter, it is important to begin the process of moving forward with corrective measures.

I sincerely believe that the Board is interested in improving the service delivery and quality of care at the Shelter and I hope that we can work together on implementing these proposals for the betterment of our Shelter pets.

I look forward to meeting with you individually to discuss this proposal in greater detail.

cc: Jim LaCarrubba, Chief of Staff
Rebecca Sinclair, Deputy Chief of Staff
Mitchell L. Pitnick, Esq., Counsel to the Supervisor
Joe Ra, Esq., Town Attorney



TOWN OF HEMPSTEAD
Office of the Town Board
Inter-Departmental Memo

To: Laura A. Gillen, Supervisor
From: Members of the Town Board
Date: March 12, 2018
Subject: RE: Corrective Measures for the Town of Hempstead Animal Shelter

We are in receipt of your letter regarding proposed changes to the Town of Hempstead Animal Shelter. We share your commitment to the welfare of animals in the Town of Hempstead. While the Board acknowledges your efforts to revise the day-to-day operations of the shelter, it is clear that some initiatives proposed will require Town Board approval. Further, many of your proposals will require the thoughtful and careful analysis of the Board, both in terms of the financial cost and the impact on animals in our care.

Please, therefore, provide the Board with your financial impact study so that we can fully understand the cost to the taxpayers for your proposed changes. The Board is looking to adopt measures based upon substantive feedback from experts, data and best practices. We, therefore, believe it is prudent to await the results of the RFQ on privatization of the shelter prior to implementing changes to a \$4 million operation.

In addition, it is important that we fully utilize the professional resources of our highly capable CSEA workforce in assessing the current status of shelter operations. Unlike the Nassau County Comptroller, the Hempstead Town Comptroller and his Audit staff have the full legal authority to conduct a performance audit of the Animal Care programs of the Animal Shelter, and should therefore have been engaged, along with the Board, in the process prior to the recently announced County audit.

The recent horrific mauling of a baby and her mother in Elmont is a clarion reminder that the Town of Hempstead is entrusted with the sacred duty to keep its residents safe. It is imperative that the Town of Hempstead Animal Shelter continue to deploy qualified and skilled employees to handle such serious situations.

The Board supports all efforts to improve the performance of the animal shelter. The proposals provided represent a starting point that need to be significantly refined with input from our finance team, our union partners, our legal team, and in certain instances, the Town Board for approval. We look forward to helping to develop a comprehensive list of recommendations that will enhance the care of animals and shelter operations and meet our fiduciary, legal, ethical and labor relations obligations for the satisfaction of all our stakeholders.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that the Town of Hempstead Animal Shelter is meeting its statutory obligation to provide animal control services to keep residents safe, and provide for the humane treatment of animals. Thank you.