



Legislation Text

File #: 22-0600, Version: 1

Recommendation to request City Attorney to draft a resolution providing for a 60-day temporary amnesty program waiving late penalty fees for pet licenses for residents of Community Development Block Grant-designated areas;

Request City Attorney to draft a resolution providing for a 60-day temporary waiver on new pet license fees for residents of Community Development Block Grant-designated areas; and

Request City Manager to work with City staff to investigate the feasibility of utilizing available funding sources as potential offsets for any loss of revenue resulting from the temporary amnesty program and pet license fee waiver.

BACKGROUND:

In the City of Long Beach, pet owners responsible for dogs and cats over the age of four months old are required to obtain an annual pet license, which the pet must carry via a collar or microchip implant. This measure is taken to ensure household pets throughout the City are altered (spayed or neutered) and vaccinated against rabies as, except for certain exceptions, only these animals can be licensed. Other benefits of pet licensing include higher odds of reunification if the pet becomes lost, a 10-day window of care offered by Animal Care Services for the lost animal, and protection from further fines associated with unlicensed animals. The current license fees for dogs and cats are \$28 and \$12, respectively. The penalty fee for an expired license adds \$15 to the aforementioned annual license fee.

The Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), supports cities throughout the country to support the development of viable urban communities. The CDBG program aims to improve the local housing stock, create suitable living environments, and expand economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals. Per HUD, "low and moderate income" refers to households whose incomes do not exceed 80% of the county median income, adjusted for family or household size. The City's CDBG designated areas throughout Long Beach are majorly made up of Downtown, Central, West, and North Long Beach communities (Attachment A). The City's CDBG designated areas are the portions of our community most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A 2021 survey from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) found that from March 2020 to May 2021, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, one in five families throughout the United States acquired a dog or cat. Further, 90% of dogs and 85% of cats acquired during this time were still in the homes of the respondents at the time of

the survey, indicating households intend to keep these animals for the long-term. When asked about concerns related to their new pets, the top answers expressed worries over financial security and the ability to adequately care for their animals. Reports from both the Daily Forty-Niner and Long Beach Post reflect a similar influx in pet adoption occurred in Long Beach as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, likely leading residents to similar financial concerns as the ASPCA survey respondents.

City Council has allowed for temporary amnesty programs for late penalty fees on pet licenses, attempting to incentivize individuals to re-license or license their animals for the first time. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it several moratoriums on certain fees to alleviate financial distress for many Long Beach residents. A temporary amnesty for late penalty pet licensing fees and a waiver for first time licensees in CDBG-designated areas would remove a financial hurdle for our low- and moderate-income constituents, encourage residents to acquire pet licenses, allow Animal Care Services to collect licensing fees they may have never received if not for the program, and ensure more pets throughout Long Beach are safe.

This matter was reviewed by Budget Manager Grace H. Yoon on May 11, 2022.

The potential net fiscal impact from the proposed Programs is currently unknown and will depend on actual participation. However, by implementing the proposed Program, animal owners will be incentivized to renew their licenses, which may result in a net increase to animal licensing revenue over time. Although the proposed program will waive previously assessed late fees, it is unlikely that the City would have collected a significant portion of this revenue. The requested action is anticipated to require a minimal level of staff hours beyond the budgeted scope of duties and have a minimal impact on meeting other City Council priorities. There is no local job impact associated with the recommendation.

Approve recommendation.

AL AUSTIN, COUNCILMAN
EIGHTH DISTRICT