



Legislation Text

File #: 15-0115, **Version:** 3

Recommendation to declare ordinance amending the Long Beach Municipal Code by amending Section 6.16.085 and by adding Section 6.16.062 all relating to animal regulation, read and adopted as read. (Citywide)

On November 18, 2014, the City Council directed City of Long Beach (City) staff to develop proposed changes to Title 6 of the Long Beach Municipal Code (Municipal Code) making it mandatory for dog owners to spay or neuter their pets, unless they possess a medical exclusion or meet certain exemptions, and requested recommendations for supporting the successful introduction and implementation of the Mandatory Spay & Neuter Ordinance, including, but not limited to, public education, spay/neuter vouchers, mobile services, and enforcement through administrative citations and license canvassing. Additionally, staff was directed to draft an ordinance making it unlawful to sell dogs, cats, or rabbits in any pet shop, retail business, or other commercial establishment, unless they were [1] obtained from a public animal shelter, humane society, or nonprofit rescue organization, or [2] bred in Long Beach possessing a breeding permit in accordance with current restricted breeding and transfer laws (6.16.190).

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine, Animal Care Services Bureau (ACS), in coordination with the City Attorney's Office, drafted a set of proposed Title 6 Municipal Code amendments based on comments made during the City Council meeting on November 18, 2014, and conducted a review of existing laws from other cities. The proposed changes represent a balance of mandating the spaying and neutering of all dogs, while providing an exemption process for the owners of dogs with health issues, pure bred show dogs, and working dogs, so that these types of dog owners can continue with their endeavors. The changes also include new laws regulating the sale of dogs, cats, and rabbits in the City. The new laws would take effect on October 1, 2015, providing ample time for affected parties to comply.

The current Municipal Code, Title 6.16.085, states: "No person responsible for a cat over the age of four (4) months shall allow such cat to remain unaltered, unless the cat is certified by a licensed veterinarian as not being suitable for spaying or neutering due to health reasons." The proposed changes would create parity for cat and dog owners alike.

In order to successfully implement the mandatory spay and neuter program for dogs, ACS will incorporate a three-pronged plan, which would include education, enforcement, and financial assistance. A marketing campaign, including, but not limited to, social media, traditional media, advertising, flyers, and posters would be incorporated to help educate the public. One part-time Animal License Inspector, dedicated to outreach and compliance, would be needed.

Enforcement is outlined in the new Municipal Code and is based on initial warnings and education, rather than severe financial penalties. Lastly, ACS currently administers a program that provides \$30-vouchers to residents to assist with spay and neuter procedure costs. The limited voucher program is currently funded mainly through donations from the public. Additional funding would be required to help increase the number and/or the voucher amount to help more residents in need of assistance. ACS will continue to partner with and support community groups, such as Friends of Long Beach Animals and Fix Long Beach, who are dedicated to providing free and low-cost spay/neuter services to residents.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Kendra L. Carney on January 22, 2015, and by Budget Management Officer Victoria Bell on February 5, 2015.

City Council action is requested on March 3, 2015, in order to implement the Ordinance in a timely manner.

ACS staff anticipate the net fiscal impact will be cost neutral to the General Fund as a result of proposed fee adjustments that are expected to fully offset the initial revenue loss and ongoing costs, as noted below.

The cost neutral impact would result from the following:

- Lost licensing revenue in the amount of \$187,500, as a result of the differential between the unaltered dog license fee (\$95) to the altered dog license fee (\$20);
- Ongoing educational and marketing materials in the amount of \$5,000;
- Increased Animal License Inspector staffing to provide program enforcement in the amount of \$21,000; and
- Increased support to the spay and neuter voucher program in the amount of \$30,000 to assist dog owners with the cost associated with compliance.

Revenue derived from the following fee increases:

- \$8 increase in the altered dog license fee (from \$20 to \$28);
- \$4 increase in the senior discounted altered dog license fee (from \$10 to \$14);
- \$10 increase in the unaltered dog license fee (from \$95 to \$105).

A review of surrounding agencies found the increases would be comparable. The ongoing cost increase, along with proposed fee adjustments, will be addressed through the FY16 budget process, dependent upon the action taken by the City Council. The recommended action will result in a positive impact on jobs. One part-time Animal License Inspector dedicated to this program will be hired.

Approve recommendation.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LONG BEACH AMENDING

THE LONG BEACH MUNICIPAL CODE BY AMENDING SECTION 6.16.085 AND BY
ADDING SECTION 6.16.062 ALL RELATING TO ANIMAL REGULATION

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