

Memorandum

Date: June 3, 2010

To: City Council Members

From: Jan Aramaki, Council Staff Member

RE: Proposed amendment to Salt Lake City Code, Animal Control, Chapter 8.04.521 Appendix A, regarding animal adoption fees

cc: David Everitt, Karen Hale, Ed Rutan, Gina Chamness, Randy Hillier, Shawni Larrabee, Chris Klekas, Laura Kirwan, Quin Card, Cindy Lou Trishman, Sylvia Richards, Nick Tarbet, Michael Stott, Joyce Valdez, Shawn McDonough, Jennifer Bruno, Lehua Weaver and Karen Halladay

POTENTIAL MOTIONS:

1. ["I move that the Council"] Adopt the ordinance (amending Appendix A to Chapter 8.04, Salt Lake City Code, pertaining to Salt Lake City Animal Services to allow their staff to set pet adoption fees based on demand for and adoptability of particular animals).
 2. ["I move that the Council"] Not adopt the ordinance.
-

NEW INFORMATION:

The Administration requests that the City Council consider adopting the adoption fee structure that was adopted by the County in June 2009. The proposed amendment to Appendix A of Section 8.04.521 of *Salt Lake City Code* will eliminate the current \$65 adoption fee for cats and \$95 adoption fee for dogs (adoption fee includes sterilization, microchip and adoption packet) replaced by a *"fee determined by SL County Animal Services staff based on demand for and adoptability of particular animals."* This ordinance would formalize the

current practice that the Council supported as a test, and would make the City ordinance consistent with the County's.

At the May 18 public hearing, a constituent voiced her opinion that even a small nominal fee should be charged for a cat's adoption. Her proposal states: *"I am speaking tonight about the proposal to offer incentives for certain adoptions at the County Animal Services . . . generally I think incentives are far more likely to affect human behavior than the threat of punishment . . . no animal should be given away. Even if the fee is \$5, there is respect that is attached to paying for something."*

Under the proposed adoption fee structure, the cost of sterilization, micro-chipping and adoption packet will be included as part of the adoption fee as determined by Animal Services for each animal based upon adoptability -- an individual who adopts a pet at no cost does receive a pet for free. Council staff asked the question how the sterilization and microchip fees are being subsidized. According to Animal Services, the increase in the adoption fee for most dogs has been subsidizing the cost of the reduced or free adoptions. The City Attorney's Office also informed Council staff an amendment has been proposed for the City's contract with Salt Lake County Animal Services stating the County agrees to hold the City harmless from any deficits caused by decreased adoption revenues.

As mentioned earlier, the adoption fee structure for the Council's consideration will bring the City's adoption fee in line with the County. Since the County adopted this fee structure in June 2009, 752 pets, mainly cats/kittens, have been adopted by individuals at no cost and there has been an increase in the adopted numbers for elderly or special needs dogs. Animal Services recognizes many community members have this same sentiment as the constituent - a pet owner may tend to place more value and respect for one's pet if a cost is associated with adopting the pet; however, there is also the opposite sentiment expressed by community members who say they have adopted pets at no cost and they value their pets as highly as if they adopted a pet by paying a fee.

Community members frequently find a pet cat/kitten from someone who is giving them away for free in parking lots or from neighbors and websites, but unfortunately many of these cats will never be spayed and neutered therefore breeding continues. Animal Services wants to continue encouraging the community to consider shelters as the best source for cat adoptions - lower shelter euthanasia numbers and adopted neuter/spayed pets from the shelter not contributing to overpopulation numbers have been the proven results.

The current adoption screening process by Animal Services will remain the same if the new adoption fee structure is adopted by the City Council. Their ultimate

goal is to look for permanent, caring homes for all pets. If individuals do not meet the requirements under the screening process, they will not qualify to adopt a pet whether an adoption fee is charged or not.

When Animal Services is faced with the challenge of finding a home for a pet likely to be euthanized, Animal Services releases the pet at no charge to partner rescue programs. However, most rescues are often times struggling with the similar challenges as shelters – too many cats and limited space. Therefore, a no fee adoption option allows Animal Services to extend the no adoption fee as is given to rescue programs to individuals who are willing to come in and apply at the shelter and go through the screening process.

The following information was provided to the Council for the public hearing that was held on May 18, 2010. Information is provided again for reference.

The County is currently using an adoption fee range for each animal from \$0 up to \$295 (costs associated with microchip and sterilization are included in the adoption fee). The Administration's proposal will allow Salt Lake County Animal Services to set the adoption fee based upon the level of adoptability for each animal (adult cats and older dogs have a lesser chance of being adopted therefore the adoption fee will be a lower fee; while animals that people have a higher appeal/demand for, such as puppies, purebreds and rare breed dogs, will have a higher adoption fee). The ultimate goal of the shelter is to have each pet adopted into a home and to uphold their standards -- individuals interested in adopting a pet are required to go through an adoption screening process regardless of the adoption fee charged.

In a July 2009 memo, Salt Lake County Animal Services reported to the City Council that all shelters are faced with a significant challenge to find homes for adult cats (over 1 year old) and the number of cats returned to owners is extremely low. In an effort to find a solution to this challenge, in the fall of 2008, County Animal Services began exploring other programs. Their findings revealed several agencies have been extremely successful in increasing the number of pet adoptions as well as reducing euthanasia by offering significant discounts on adult cat adoption fees.

These findings led the County to conduct a pilot program during the first half of 2009 by offering significant discounts for cat adoptions with noted success. To

ensure that overall program costs were covered, revenue shortfalls during this period were subsidized by contributions to their adoption fund.

Salt Lake County has applied the adoption fee structure to both cats and dogs and expects the following trend to continue: lower euthanasia rates, a reduction in the time an animal is held in the shelter resulting in an expected decrease in reported animal illness, and an increase in the number of adopted animals that generally have a lower level of appeal to the public.

Since Salt Lake County adopted their new adoption fee structure in June of 2009, Animal Services reports:

Cats:

- 80 percent increase in the total number of cat adoptions;
- 139 percent increase in the number of adult cat adoptions.

Dogs:

- The economic downturn potentially has impacted the number of dog adoptions last year (a reported decrease before and after program implemented); however, euthanasia stats remain low. Euthanasia occurred for reasons of severe health problems or temperament issues, not for the length of time sheltered or lack of space. Animal Services reports success in having dogs adopted and rescued.

Refer to the attached Salt Lake County Animal Services' memo dated April 28, 2010 for reported percentages from 2007 thru 2010 regarding euthanasia rates.



April 28, 2010

**ANIMAL SERVICES
DIVISION**

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citizens of ...*

*Salt Lake City
Herriman City
Unincorporated Salt
Lake County*

Salt Lake County Animal Services is committed to reducing euthanasia in the shelter and we are continuously looking for new and innovative programs to help us reach those goals. A significant challenge in reducing euthanasia for any shelter is the large numbers of adult cats that are received. Cats have very low return to owner rates (often in the single digits) and they don't tend to move quickly once they are up for adoption.

In the Fall of 2008, we began looking at programs that were working in other areas of the nation that might be good options for solving our problem. We found several agencies that were seeing great success by offering deep discounts on adult cats or, in some cases, waiving the fees completely ⁽¹⁾.

During the first half of 2009 we tested eliminating the adoption fee for cats over six months with any revenue shortfalls during that period made up through donations to our adoption fund. The positive impact on our adoptions was immediate and dramatic.

In order to create a long term, sustainable program and ensure we are covering our costs, we have changed the adoption program fee from a set fee of \$30 to a fee range set by the 'market value' of the pet from \$0 up to \$295 (including microchip and sterilization).

The exact fee would be set when the pet goes up for adoption and would be determined by the overall adoptability and anticipated demand for a given pet. For example, we often waive or reduce the fee for lower demand pets such as adult cats and older dogs but we charge up to \$295 for pets that are often in high demand including puppies, purebreds and rare breed dogs.

We expect that over time this approach will result in the following:

- Lower euthanasia in our shelter
- Shorter hold times which will translate in lower incidence of illness
- Increase adoptions for harder to place groups

The final statistics for 2009 set new records for our agency. We adopted out 1,116 cats which represents an increase of over 80% and our adult cat adoptions increased by over 139%. The following table outlines the positive impact we are seeing on our euthanasia numbers:

	2007	2008	2009	2010 YTD (3/31)	% Change (*07 thru *10)
% of Adoptable Dogs & Cats Euthanized	23.8%	21.4%	8.5%	1.0%	-95.8%
Percentage of Adoptable Dogs Euthanized	8.1%	5.5%	1.1%	0%	-100%
Percentage of Adoptable Cats Euthanized	52.7%	45.4%	17.7%	2.9%	-94.5%*
Total Shelter Euthanasia Rate (includes both adoptable and unadoptable)	41%	38.9%	34.9%	21.0%	-48.8%

* In 2009 we received approximately 400 more cats than were received in 2007.
We believe this is due to more animals being abandoned due to the economy.

It is worth noting that our goal for animals adopted out of the shelter is that they be going to their permanent, 'forever home' and the fee change does not imply a lowering of our standards. People wishing to adopt still need to go through the adoption screening process, regardless of the fee they are paying for the pet. All pets adopted through Salt Lake County Animal Services are sterilized and microchipped.

Salt Lake County adopted the new fee structure as part of the June 2009 interim budget adjustment process.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best Regards,

Shawni Larrabee

⁽¹⁾ Link to articles regarding free adult cat adoptions:

<http://www.aspcapro.org/saving-lives/adoptions/free-adult-cat-promotions.html>

formalize the current practice that the Council supported as a test, and would make the City ordinance consistent with the County's.

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Salt Lake County has applied the adoption fee structure to both cats and dogs and expects the following trend to continue: lower euthanasia rates, a reduction in the time an animal is held in the shelter resulting in an expected decrease in reported animal illness, and an increase in the number of adopted animals that generally have a lower level of appeal to the public.

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SALT LAKE CITY ORDINANCE {PRIVATE }

No. _____ of 2010

(Amending Animal Services Fee Provisions)

An ordinance amending Appendix A to Chapter 8.04, *Salt Lake City Code*, pertaining to Salt Lake City Animal Services, to allow staff to set pet adoption fees based on demand for and adoptability of particular animals.

Be it ordained by the City Council of Salt Lake City, Utah:

SECTION 1. That Appendix A to Chapter 8.04, *Salt Lake City Code*, pertaining to animal services fees is amended to read as follows:

APPENDIX A

SALT LAKE CITY ANIMAL SERVICES

ANNUAL PERMITS AND FEES

A.	Permit Fees:	
	Business selling only tropical or freshwater fish	\$ 50 .00
	Commercial operations:	
	Up to 30 animals	100 .00
	Over 30 animals	175 .00
	Feral cat colony registration	5 .00
	Pet rescue permit	25 .00
	If issued at shelter's request	0 .00
	Riding stables	50 .00

	Late fee (in addition to regular fee)	25 .00
	Domestic fowl permit	\$5.00 per bird to a maximum fee of \$40.00
B.	Pet License Fees:	
	1 year license:	
	Microchipped	\$ 25 .00
	Sterilized	20 .00
	Sterilized/microchipped	10 .00
	Unsterilized/no microchip	35 .00
	3 year license:	
	Sterilized	40 .00
	Sterilized/microchipped	20 .00
	Senior citizens:	
	1 year license:	
	Microchipped	20 .00
	Sterilized	15 .00
	Unsterilized/no microchip	30 .00
	3 year license:	
	Sterilized	30 .00
	Onetime fee for life of sterilized/microchipped pet	15 .00
	Replacement tag	5 .00
	Transfer fee	5 .00

	Late fee (in addition to regular fee)	25 .00		
C.	Service And Violation Fees For Pets:			
	Adoption fee (includes sterilization, microchip and adoption packet):	Fee determined by staff based on demand for and adoptability of particular animals		
	Board fees per day for pets	12 .00		
	Voluntarily relinquished pet	35 .00		
	Euthanasia fee:			
	Cat	25 .00		
	Dog	50 .00		
	Pet disposal fees:			
	Up to 25 pounds	25 .00		
	26 - 50 pounds	30 .00		
	51 - 75 pounds	40 .00		
	76 - 100 pounds	45 .00		
	Over 100 pounds	\$45.00 plus \$1.00 per pound over 100		
	Transportation fee	\$ 35 .00		
	Rabies deposit	25 .00		
	Sterilization deposit:			
	Cat	25 .00		
	Dog	50 .00		
	Where indicated, fees for second, third, and subsequent violations are for those occurring within a 24 month period.			
		<u>First Offense</u>	<u>Second Offense</u>	<u>Third Offense</u>
				<u>Subsequent Offenses</u>

	Impound fees	\$35.00	\$70.00	\$125.00	\$250.00
	Minimum notice of violation penalties:				
	Animal nuisance, commercial permit, permit display	\$50.00	\$100.00	\$200.00	Criminal
	Licensing, permits, tags, rabies vaccination, at large, number of animals, staking, female dogs in heat, harboring stray animals, animals as sales premiums, sale of baby rabbits, fowl, and pet turtles	\$25.00	\$50.00	\$100.00	Criminal
D.	Service Fees For Livestock:				
	Board fees per day:				
	Large livestock		\$ 15 .00		
	Small livestock		12 .00		
	Impound fees:				
	Large livestock		75 .00		
	Small livestock		30 .00		
	Transportation fees - per trip or trailer		50 .00		
	Dead livestock removal/disposal fee:				
	Small livestock:				

	Removal	150 .00
	Disposal	45 .00
	Large livestock:	
	Removal	300 .00
	Disposal	65 .00

Purchase price for unclaimed livestock is based on costs incurred by animal services during impound and recommendations made by the state brand inspector. (Ord. 6-09 § 1, 2009)

SECTION 2. This ordinance takes effect upon publication..

Passed by the City Council of Salt Lake City, Utah this _____ day of

_____, 2010.

CHAIRPERSON

ATTEST:

CITY RECORDER

APPROVED AS TO FORM
Salt Lake City Attorney's Office
Date 4/21/10
By [Signature]

Transmitted to Mayor on _____.

Mayor's Action: _____ Approved. _____ Vetoed.

MAYOR

CITY RECORDER

(SEAL)

Bill No. _____ of 2010.

Published: _____.

HB_ATTYY-#7879-v1-amending_8_04_animal_service_fees_option_B.DOC