

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****May 24, 2011**

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Subject: Code Compliance Service Improvements**Introduction**

In October 2010, the Solid Waste Division was transferred to the Code Compliance Department. As part of the transfer and reorganization, the department has been working on service efficiencies and long-term funding strategies. The Solid Waste Fund has had relatively consistent costs and revenues even through the economic downturn. Staff reviewed the fund balance, revenue and cost forecasts, reserve fund policies, contract negotiations/renewal's and short/long-term capital needs, including three additional citizen drop-off centers and operating equipment.

At the end of the day, the fund is healthy, can support additional solid waste services and support a larger percentage of code compliance services that are currently paid through the General Fund. The fund cannot be used for general City services (must be solid waste oriented).

Action Taken

The following service improvements are being implemented to improve the City's response to public health, welfare and safety issues:

- Wildlife Response Team (already implemented to address wildlife issues)
 - 2 Animal Control Officers*
- Additional Animal Care and Control Officers (additional staff to respond to calls for service)
 - 8 Animal Control Officers*
- Safe Neighborhood Initiative Team (specialized team to address high violation areas)
 - 4 Code Enforcement Officers
 - 3 Animal Control Officers*
 - 1 Support Staff
- Four Litter Teams (will deploy four community service crews to address litter and blight throughout the city)
 - 4 Crew Leaders
- Commercial Waste Enforcement (address dumpster, container, litter and other violations that occur on commercial property, along gateway arterials, etc.)
 - 2 Code Enforcement Officers

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- Overtime Pay for Animal Control Officers (better response to emergency and police calls for service after hours)*
- Overtime Pay for Code Compliance Field Operations (will enable the department to schedule better attendance at neighborhood and community meetings)

*Animal Care and Control services will be funded through the General Fund savings created by charging the Solid Waste Fund for existing Code Compliance services that were originally budgeted under the General Fund but are eligible to be paid from the Solid Waste Fund.

Benefits of Service Improvements

The public will experience the greatest improvement in Animal Care and Control. These improvements will expand field staff by 60% and add a team of specialized officers that will sweep areas with the highest concentration of stray and/or high risk animals. Overtime will be increased so that staff can provide better after hours support to the Police Department and emergency call outs. These additional staff will also avoid having to close the shelter an additional day each week (currently closed on Sunday). Attachment A is a summary of the current Animal Care and Control operations.

The second area with the greatest improvement will be illegal dumping and litter control. Currently, the Code Compliance Department has a single staff person to address litter citywide and has no staff to address overflowing trash cans, improperly placed/maintained dumpsters and other commercial waste violations that are unsightly and pollute our environment. Through these improvements, four crew leaders will be added to address litter/illegal dumping, and two Code Enforcement Officers will be added to address commercial waste violations.

Along with these improvements, four Code Enforcement Officers will be added to work high violation areas and additional overtime will be provided so that officers can attend neighborhood and community meetings on a more regular basis.

These improvements will result in better service delivery to the public and a more timely response to high priority calls. The department is excited about the opportunity to better serve the community and improve public safety.

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Subject: Code Compliance Service Improvements**Long-term Budget Considerations**

Staff anticipates that the Solid Waste Fund will be able to support these additional services for the next three to five years, and perhaps as many as seven. Staff will monitor the fund closely and be prepared to implement vacancy management policies and other cost reduction strategies to avoid fee increases. This approach balances the need to provide essential services now and manage costs over the long run.

These additional services will be funded (\$1,166,743) for the remainder of FY11, with an M&C for the City Council's consideration in June, and will be included in the City Manager's proposed FY12 budget.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tom Higgins".

for **Tom Higgins**
Interim City Manager

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Subject: Code Compliance Service Improvements**Attachment A**

Animal Care and Control has 13 field officers that must provide 24/7 coverage throughout the City and Tarrant County. Factoring in days off and court time, there are only 3 to 4 officers on shift during the day and one officer on-call in the evening. The City receives approximately 50,000 animal calls for service each year, but, due to staffing limitations, Animal Care and Control can only respond to about 72% of them. Except for dangerous animals, some of these calls are not answered for several days.

While the economy has played a role in increased service requests (abandoned animals and cruelty), the biggest impact has come from the growth in the City. In 2006, the department needed 10 additional officers; however, there was only enough funding to add four. No additional staff has been added since that time, while the City has grown by approximately 100,000 residents. In addition to the population growth, the development of neighborhoods outside of Loop 820 has increased the travel time for staff. In many cases, officers can spend well over one-third to one-half of their day driving to/between calls and the animal shelter.

Budget reductions have also played a role. Over the past few years, the City has reduced shelter staff by three positions. This resulted in closing the shelter on Sundays, and staff is facing an additional closure day. Closing the shelter two days a week was factored into the budget reductions, but every attempt has been made to keep it open for adoptions and reclaims. This has also impacted field operations as field officers have had to take on some of the duties that were once handled by shelter technicians.

Finally, staff continues to see high service demands for stray large breed dogs that pose a substantial risk to the public and/or have attacked a person or other animal. The implementation of tranquilizer rifles has been highly successful in catching many of these animals. However, dangerous dogs take longer to process, and staff is not getting to as many low risk stray calls.

On average, an officer can respond to about 12 to 15 calls per day. At the end of each day, there are between 300 and 500 calls that they cannot get to. In the summer, this can be as high as 700. While staff does respond to some of these calls the next day, too many are closed out because we simply cannot get to them.

Animal Care and Control is truly a public safety service. While calls are prioritized, situations with animals are often unpredictable and can transition from a stray dog call to an aggressive dog call in a short period of time. Citizens expect to receive some form of officer response as a result of a report of a stray animal so that potential tragedies can be prevented. Currently, staffing levels have created a large gap between citizen expectations and response capabilities.