

WASHTENAW COUNTY/HUMANE SOCIETY OF HURON VALLEY CONTRACT REVIEW

November 28, 2006

I. EFFECTIVE ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL

There are many benefits to good animal care and control services. With the understanding that animals enhance people's quality of life, an effective community strategy for animal control includes preventing animal cruelty and keeping animals from damaging property, hurting and threatening people, causing auto accidents, disturbing the peace, and spreading disease. (*Animal Control Management: A Guide for Local Governments, 2001.*)

Effective animal care and control services should protect both people and animals by:

- Uniformly enforcing laws related to public health and safety
- Preventing the spread of diseases that pose a health hazard to the community's citizens and pets
- Responding to public nuisance complaints
- Investigating complaints of animal cruelty
- Rescuing mistreated and injured animals
- Sheltering stray and homeless animals
- Providing first aid to sick and injured animals and ensuring proper vaccinations
- Working to reunite lost pets with their families
- Placing healthy, behaviorally sound animals in responsible homes
- Humanely euthanizing suffering animals and those that are not adoptable
- Promoting proper licensing/identification of dogs and cats
- Creating incentives for the public to have pets sterilized
- Preventing future problems through community education and training

II. HUMANE SOCIETY SERVICES THAT OVERLAP WITH COUNTY DUTIES

- ↓ **Animal Shelter:** HSHV receives hundreds of animals each month, approximately 8,500 in 2005. The animals that come to us are strays, turned in by their owners, held as bite cases or otherwise court ordered, and those picked up by our cruelty investigators and rescue workers. Our staff and volunteers provide food, shelter, medical treatment, and individual attention to keep the animals healthy and happy while they are in our care. HSHV strives to place as many homeless animals as possible into caring homes through our adoption program. Seriously injured and sick animals, and those deemed unadoptable due to temperament or health problems are humanely euthanized. HSHV never sells animals for research.
- ↓ **Cruelty Investigations:** HSHV maintains a Cruelty Investigation Department staffed by 1.5 trained Cruelty Investigators. Our lead Cruelty Investigator has reached the highest level of national certification for cruelty investigation. Animal cruelty is illegal in the State of Michigan and can be prosecuted as a misdemeanor or felony offense. There are also local ordinances against animal cruelty. We receive and investigate over 300 complaints of animal cruelty a year, and prosecute when possible. Our Investigators work closely with the Sheriff's Department and other local authorities.
- ↓ **24 Hour Rescue Services:** HSHV maintains 24 hours a day, seven days a week rescue services for animals at large, wildlife and domestic, that are sick or injured. HSHV Officers pick up sick and injured stray animals and wildlife, and bring them to our shelter or to wildlife rescue groups for care. Animals that are severely injured or have rabies, distemper or other contagious diseases are humanely euthanized.

III. WASHTENAW COUNTY CONTRACT WITH HSHV

Currently Washtenaw County has a contract with the HSHV to accept and impound all animals brought to the shelter by Animal Control. **The previous contract amount of \$169,000 was in place for approximately 15 years. The current contract amount is \$200,000.**

Contract Language —

- A. *Accept and impound, in accordance with the laws of the State of Michigan or other applicable ordinance, all dogs and cats brought to the CONTRACTOR's facility by any law enforcement officer in the employ of the COUNTY, or any local unit of government within Washtenaw County.*
- B. *Release animals impounded pursuant to paragraph 1A. above, in accordance with instructions from the impounding officers; and*
- C. *Collect statistics which accurately reflect the number and source of animals brought to its shelter, the jurisdiction (city, village, or township) in which the animal was picked up, and the disposition of the animals, and agrees to maintain an accounting system which accurately indicates its cost under this Agreement.*

IV. THE PROBLEM

The County, by outsourcing the care of impounded animals to HSHV and choosing not to construct and operate its own animal control facility, places the burden of caring for all strays, cruelty cases, bite cases, court holds, and sick and injured wildlife on HSHV. By providing impoundment services for Animal Control, HSHV becomes the de facto "pound" for the entire County.

In addition to shelter, food, and daily care, HSHV must provide all animals with a basic level of medical care consisting of first aid, vaccinations, and veterinarian supervised euthanasia (for those who can not be returned to their owners and are not adoptable, sick and injured wildlife, and those court ordered to be destroyed). Table 1 shows the number of strays impounded from Washtenaw County impounded at HSHV. Table 2 shows the cost of caring for those animals.

(Table 1)

Total and Stray Dog and Cat Intake

Dog/Cat Population	2005	2005	2004	2004	2003	2003
	Total Intakes	Wash. Strays	Total Intakes	Wash. Strays	Total Intakes	Wash. Strays
Dogs	3,131	1,464	3,288	1,567	2,603	1,530
Cats	3,721	1,801	4,591	2,241	3,241	1,698
Total	6,852	3,265	7,879	3,808	5,844	3,228
Strays as % of total		48%		48%		55%

(Table 2)

HSHV Expenses for Dogs and Cats Only

Total HSHV Budget	\$2,129,000
Shelter expenses for dogs and cats only	\$1,063,497
Total dog and cat days	50,245
Average cost per day	\$21.17
Total Wash. Cty. strays received	3,265
Average days per stray	7.5
HSHV cost of impounding stray dogs and cats (# of strays x ave. # of days x ave. cost per day)	\$518,400

1. Clearly the current annual contractual rate of \$200,000 is far below our actual costs. It is important to note, however, that serving as the County impound facility not only taxes our finances, it also strains our organizational management, daily operations, and public image. Handling strays and problematic animals, such as bite cases, dangerous animals, and court cases, demands more attention and care than the rest of our animal population. Often these

animals are housed with us for extended lengths of time, and have a much higher euthanasia rate. The euthanasia rate for our stray population is approximately 65% versus 30% for animals relinquished by their owners. Bite cases must be quarantined for 10 days, and require careful handling. We also must work to match lost animals (strays) with their owners. For lost pets being returned to their owners, shelter staff are required to ensure tickets given by Animal Control Officers are paid, that the animals have updated rabies vaccination, that the owners obtain a license before allowing the animal to go home, and that pertinent information is maintained and communicated to Animal Control. Dealing with strays and aggressive animals also requires our staff to deal with difficult and sometimes dangerous animal owners.

2. Also not included in the calculation above are the "other domestics" taken in as strays (rabbits, pigs, ferrets, etc.) and sick and injured wildlife that are brought in by Animal Control, our Cruelty/Rescue Dept., and the public, a responsibility often carried by a public animal control facility. Last year we assisted 751 animals in these categories, the cost of which is estimated to be an additional \$35,000 for shelter and disposition alone.
3. The County contract with HSHV does not cover any costs related to animal cruelty investigation. The County offers some animal control services, but leaves much of the burden of pursuing cruelty investigations to HSHV--although law enforcement, when appropriate, is required to investigate and prosecute complaints of animal cruelty. Animal Control also does not maintain 24 hour staff trained in animal handling, again leaving the task of animal rescues on HSHV after Animal Control coverage ends. It is likely, that if HSHV were not fulfilling these duties, the County would assume this responsibility at least in part. Annual costs for 24/7 cruelty and rescue activities at HSHV are an additional \$152,860.

V. COST COMPARISONS WITH OTHER COUNTIES

Many years ago Washtenaw County chose to outsource its animal impoundment responsibilities to HSHV. According to national best practice standards, a community should spend at least \$4 per resident on animal control activities to ensure the health and safety of its citizenry. (*Animal Control Management: A Guide for Local Governments, 2001.*) At the current population of 342,000 residents, Washtenaw County would be spending \$1,368,000. While few communities actually meet this ideal, Washtenaw County is far below the spending rate of nearby counties.

Below are annual spending comparisons among county animal controls. Every county listed, aside from Washtenaw County, runs its own animal control facility. Existing within each community is a County-run facility that takes strays, bite cases, sick wildlife, etc., and a privately-run humane society that primarily takes in animals turned in by their owners. These numbers are for county units of governments only, and do not include any expenditures made by municipalities, private non-profit organizations or rescue groups.

(Table 3) **2006 County Animal Control Expenses**

County	Total Population	# of Animals Handled Annually	Animal Control Facility Budget	Expenditure Per Resident
Livingston County	172,880	1,949 dogs, cats, wildlife, other	\$500,000	\$2.89
Monroe County	150,670	2,800 dogs, cats, wildlife, other	\$400,000	\$2.65
Jackson County	162,320	5,000 dogs, cats, wildlife, other	\$363,000	\$2.24
Oakland County	1,208,000	9,000 dogs, cats, wildlife, other	\$2,420,000	\$2.00
Macomb County	788,150	10,500 dogs, cats, wildlife, other	\$1,500,000	\$1.90
Washtenaw County	342,000	3,265 dogs, cats 4,016 + wildlife, other strays	\$200,000 + \$39,000 each for 2 County Animal Control Officers	\$0.81

VI. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Our current shelter was built in 1951. The County population has nearly doubled since that time. Moreover, the popularity of family pets has exploded over the last several decades. National studies show that 65% of households own one or more pets. In Washtenaw County there are an estimated 93,000 households with pets; therefore, the need to offer the community quality animal care and control services is more important than ever.

Our current shelter is crumbling down around us. Our need for a new and updated facility is desperate and immediate. Despite our best efforts, our failure to prevent the spread of disease and provide a low-stress environment severely compromises our ability to meet basic standards of care of the community's animals. Moreover, our dark, dank, and noisy shelter repels many potential adopters. Sadly, our facility is one of the most out-dated and dilapidated in Michigan.

Increases in space and improvements in infrastructure and design are critically needed so we can successfully fulfill our role as caretakers of stray, unwanted, injured, sick and abused animals. Through a new shelter we intend to maximize our effectiveness--with the ultimate aim of adopting out more animals, euthanizing fewer, preventing animal cruelty and over-population, and being a resource to the large community of pet owners.

We are planning to kick-off a multi-million dollar capital campaign at the beginning of next year, and have already received two leadership gifts toward our goal. We are in the process of acquiring the site for the new facility and have engaged the architects who will begin a needs assessment before the year end that will shape the size and design of our building.

HSHV is committed to ensuring that our community receives the best animal care services possible. We have enjoyed a great relationship with Washtenaw County over the years and hope that it will continue. Still, as described above, our role within the community and the costs related to doing business are significantly altered by serving as both the Humane Society and the county animal impound facility.

For years, HSHV has subsidized the cost of being the animal impound facility with hard-earned privately fundraised dollars. Dollars that could and should be used for improved operations and greater prevention services that meet critical parts of our mission.

We believe that HSHV is best suited to for the job of caring for stray animals. We offer the kind of commitment to animal welfare that the community expects and fiscal efficiencies through economies of scale and avoidance of duplication of administrative overhead. However, the current situation is one that we can no longer endure and our Board of Directors has decided that we can only continue in this relationship if we are paid for actual services rendered.

In order for us to do adequate planning and design for our new shelter we need to know whether our contractual relationship with Washtenaw County will continue. It is our hope that we can come to a mutually beneficial agreement that financially supports the true costs good animal care and control services for our community.