



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: October 8, 2024

DATE: September 5, 2024

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Tammy Wines-Jennings, Assistant Director, Regional Animal Services
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THROUGH: Shyanne Schull, Director of Regional Animal Services

SUBJECT: Recommendation to adopt Washoe County Regional Animal Services' fee schedule effective January 1, 2025 to update fees related to licenses and permits, field enforcement, shelter operations, vaccinations and veterinary services, and to include: specified automatic and discretionary fee waivers; and a phased increase for the Variance Permit Annual Fee, Dangerous Dog Annual Fee and Exotic Animal Permit Annual Fee to begin with 50% of the fee increase on January 1, 2025, and 100% of the fee increase on January 1, 2026. If approved, the updated fee schedule will replace the current fee schedule adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on June 1, 2005. (All Commission Districts).

SUMMARY

Washoe County Code 55.090(2) requires that all fees required to be paid pursuant to WCC Chapter 55 (Animals and Fowl) be set from time to time by the Washoe County Board of County Commissioners ("Board"). Washoe County Regional Animal Services ("WCRAS") recommends that the Board approve an updated WCRAS fee schedule to update fees related to licenses and permits, field enforcement, shelter operations, vaccinations and veterinary services. The Board is also asked to approve fee waivers for certain specified circumstances—which are included in the fee schedule for easy reference. Finally, the Board is asked to approve a phased increase for three types of annual permits-- the Variance Permit Annual Fee, Dangerous Dog Annual Fee and Exotic Animal Annual Fee – which are also included in the fee schedule for easy reference. This fee update is long overdue, as fees have not been updated since the Cities of Reno and Sparks and Washoe County consolidated animal services regionwide in 2005. The specific recommendations are based on a Cost of Services Study conducted by MGT Consulting, staff input, and input from the Animal Services Advisory Board. Moving forward, WCRAS intends to update the fee schedule every 5 years so there is not such a significant percentage increase in fees in the future.

Washoe County Strategic Objective supported by this item: Fiscal Sustainability

AGENDA ITEM # _____

PREVIOUS ACTION

On April 26, 2024, the Washoe County Animal Services Advisory Board (“ASAB”) recommended that the Board of County Commissioners approve the updated fee schedule, the phasing of updated fees, and the fee waivers as proposed by staff with the following modifications: (1) that WCRAS will report back to the ASAB prior to implementing the second step fee increase; and (2) that a blanket fee waiver be added giving the Director of WCRAS discretion to waive any fees the Director deems appropriate.

On January 26, 2024, the ASAB discussed the results of MGT Consulting’s fee study and staff recommendations regarding an updated fee schedule. The ASAB provided recommendations relating to the proposed updated fees, recommended a stepped or phased approach to fees that would increase more than 100%, and provided input on possible fee waivers. The ASAB asked to bring the item back at the April 2024 ASAB meeting.

On June 1, 2005, the Board of County Commissioners established a fee schedule for Regional Animal Services covering the unincorporated areas of Washoe County and the Cities of Reno and Sparks to be effective July 1, 2005, in accordance with Washoe County Code 55.090(2).

On July 8, 2003, the Board established a fee schedule for the provision of animal services for unincorporated Washoe County and the City of Sparks.

BACKGROUND

Washoe County Code (“WCC”) 55.020 creates the department of Washoe County Regional Animal Services and provides for the operation of an animal services center (including the receipt, impoundment, care and disposal of animals), field services, enforcement of laws and ordinances pertaining to animals within Washoe County, emergency response in times of disaster, and other functions as may be assigned by the Board of County Commissioners. WCC 55.485 provides for charging owners or persons having the care, custody or possession of animals impounded pursuant to WCC Chapter 55 for all costs and maintenance incurred by WCRAS. Further, various provisions in WCC Chapter 55 provide for dog licensing and permitting fees. WCC 55.090(2) provides that all fees required to be paid pursuant to WCC Chapter 55 be set from time to time by the Board of County Commissioners.

WCRAS has not updated its fee schedule since the fee schedule was originally established upon regionalization of animal services in 2005. Accordingly, the current fee schedule is very outdated.

In April 2023, WCRAS commissioned a fee study by MGT Consulting. MGT Consulting is a nationally recognized and locally focused company that partners with governmental agencies to help achieve high-value, transformational change through their capabilities and industry knowledge, all powered by technology. MGT Consulting helps public agencies optimize their resources, particularly related to revenue and spending. They help to understand the full cost of public services. Their consultants are nationally – recognized experts in cost-of-service analysis and revenue recovery for government clients.

The MGT fee study identified direct WCRAS staff time for each fee-related activity or service and calculated the direct cost of staff time for each fee using productive hourly rates. The study determined indirect or “overhead” costs and compared total costs to the current fee schedule. As part of the fee study, MGT Consulting also compared WCRAS’s fee schedule with the fee schedules of five different comparable jurisdictions. The fee study found that for FY 2023, \$2,453,398.00 of WCRAS’ costs are related to user fee services. However, the expected revenues generated from user fee services were only \$1,040,574. The actual revenue received in FY23 for licenses, permits and charges for services only totaled \$526,882. The variance is due to unpaid accounts (which are sent to collections), or fees that are not getting charged due to people not redeeming their animals and/or not having specific fees for some of the services in WCRAS’s fees schedule. Even if the full \$1,040,574 had been received, the current fee amounts would only recover approximately 42% of costs for fee-related services. Ultimately, the proposed fee adjustments are based on the fee study which takes into account results of the cost analysis, historical cost recovery levels, and market comparisons.

MGT recommended increases to 23 current fees, removal of 8 current fees, the addition of 16 new fees, and no change to 5 current fees.

On January 26, 2024, the results of the fee study were presented to the Animal Services Advisory Board for its input and recommendations. The ASAB recommended a stepped/phased increase to any fees that are going to increase more than 100% and provided recommendations for certain fee waivers.

Staff created a proposed fee schedule based on MGT Consulting’s recommendations, staff input, and ASAB input and recommendations. Many of MGT Consulting’s recommended fees were incorporated into the proposed fee schedule. However, there were a few exceptions. For example, for dog licenses for unaltered dogs, WCRAS’s proposed fees are higher than fees proposed by MGT Consulting, but in line with other jurisdictions and industry standards. Currently and historically, dog licenses for unaltered dogs cost more than licenses for altered dogs, which supports WCRAS’s spay/neuter efforts. The higher fee for unaltered dogs will go directly into WCRAS’s Spay/Neuter program to help support low-cost spaying and neutering services for the community. However, for dog licenses for altered dogs belonging to seniors, WCRAS’s proposed fees are less than the fees proposed by MGT Consulting. For several other fees, WCRAS’s proposed fees are less than the fees proposed by MGT Consulting, such as fees for permits, dog and cat impound fees, and vaccination fees.

With regard to phasing of fees, as recommended by the ASAB, WCRAS is proposing a stepped fee increase for three types of fees—variance permits, dangerous dogs, and exotic animal permits. For these three fee types, the fee increase will be incremental with the first step to occur January 1, 2025, and the second (and final) step to occur January 1, 2026. *See Attachment A (Fee Schedule).*

Staff is also proposing a specific list of fee waivers to be incorporated into the fee schedule for easy reference. Some of the fee waivers are automatic and some are at the discretion of the WCRAS Director, as indicated below:

Automatic Fee Waivers:

- License Fees for adoptions through partnering shelters
 - Nevada Humane Society, SPCA of Northern Nevada and Pet Network

- Fees for those experiencing homelessness
 - Limited to required and core vaccinations, de-wormer, license
- Fees for adults 60+ during 60+ (senior) vaccination clinics
 - Limited to required and core vaccinations, de-wormer, license
- First time impound, boarding, vaccination fees (except the license and veterinary fees) if the animal is reclaimed within 24 hours of arrival in the shelter. Any other impound will be full price no matter when the animal is picked up.
 - One requirement of this fee waiver is the animal receives a microchip if it doesn't already have one.
- Impound, boarding, vaccination fees (up to 5 days, except license and veterinary fees) if the animal is impounded due to a significant incident or accident in which the owner was transported to the hospital.
- Impound, boarding, vaccination fees (up to 5 days, except license and veterinary fees) if the animals were impounded due to a natural or manmade disaster such as a fire, flood, hurricane or tornado, and the animal's owner was temporarily deprived of their ability to provide humane care.
- Impound, boarding, vaccination fees (up to 5 days, except license and veterinary fees) if the animals were impounded due to domestic violence and the animal's owner was temporarily deprived of their ability to provide humane care.
- Impound, boarding, vaccination fees (up to 5 days, except license and veterinary fees) if the animals were impounded due to the death of an owner and the animals are being redeemed by the owner's next of kin or designee.
- Boarding fees (excluding veterinary fees) for dogs pending a dangerous or vicious dog declaration if the dog is surrendered within 5 days of impound.
- Variance Permit fees for the owner/operator(s) of a rescue organization that uses their residence to foster animals. The rescue organization must be in full compliance with all Washoe County Code, in good standing with WCRAS, and actively transferring animals from WCRAS into their program during each calendar year. This does not apply to fosters associated with the rescue organizations.
- Fees for a 1-year license for active and retired military

Discretionary Fee Waivers:

- License fees at outreach events
 - Fees for services at special events
- Limited to required and core vaccinations, de-wormer, license

- Appointment admin fee for outreach special events

On April 26, 2024, the proposed fee schedule, that included a phased approach to certain fees which will increase more than 100% and specific fee waivers, was presented to the Animal Services Advisory Board. The ASAB voted to approve the updated fee schedule, the phasing of updated fees, and the fee waivers as proposed by staff with the following modifications: (1) that WCRAS will report back to the ASAB prior to implementing the second step fee increase; and (2) that a blanket fee waiver be added giving the Director of WCRAS discretion to waive any fees the Director deems appropriate. In consultation with legal counsel, staff are not proposing that a blanket fee waiver be added to the fee schedule giving the Director of WCRAS discretion to waive any fees the Director deems appropriate. However, all other items recommended by the ASAB are included in the proposed fee schedule for this Board's consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT

Should the Board approve the proposed fee schedule, it is estimated that the Animal Services Fund (F205) will have an increase in revenue of approximately \$577,641 in FY25, for the remainder of the fiscal year from January 1, 2025, until June 30, 2025. The estimated annual increase for future fiscal years is \$1,155,281. This additional revenue is projected to increase Animal Services to close to full cost recovery (89%) for user fee services and will still require a portion to be funded by other sources to complete all services.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation to adopt Washoe County Regional Animal Services' fee schedule effective January 1, 2025 to update fees related to licenses and permits, field enforcement, shelter operations, vaccinations and veterinary services, and to include specified automatic and discretionary fee waivers; and a phased increase for the Variance Permit Annual Fee, Dangerous Dog Annual Fee and Exotic Animal Permit Annual Fee to begin with 50% of the fee increase on January 1, 2025, and 100% of the fee increase on January 1, 2026. If approved, the updated fee schedule will replace the current fee schedule adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on June 1, 2005.

POSSIBLE MOTION

I move to adopt Washoe County Regional Animal Services' fee schedule to update fees related to licenses and permits, field enforcement, shelter operations, vaccinations and veterinary services, and to include the specified automatic and discretionary fee waivers, and a phased increase for the Variance Permit Annual Fee, Dangerous Dog Annual Fee and Exotic Animal Permit Annual Fee with an effective date of January 1, 2025.

Attachments:

Attachment A: Washoe County Regional Animal Services Fee Schedule

Attachment B: MGT Consulting Cost of Services Study

Attachment C: WCRAS Fee Study Comparison Table-Current vs. Recommended vs.
Proposed