



Contra  
Costa  
County

To: Board of Supervisors  
From: Mark Peterson, District Attorney  
Date: January 21, 2014

Subject: Facility Dog Program to Provide a Service Dog to Work With Victims of Crimes in Contra Costa County

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**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the District Attorney, or designee, to execute a contract with Canine Companions for Independence in an amount not to exceed \$3,000 to provide a facility dog trained to work with victims of crimes to provide comfort and assist them in remaining calm while being interviewed or providing testimony in the courtroom.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The cost is estimated to be approximately \$2,500 - \$3,000 for the first year. Most of these costs are one time training costs for the handler. (100% State Forfeiture Funds)

**BACKGROUND:**

Facility dogs, also known as courthouse dogs when working in a criminal justice environment, are specially trained by a certified organization to work with victims of crimes and to help them remain calm in the courtroom. Since 2003 courthouse dogs have provided comfort to sexually abused children while they undergo forensic interviews and testify in court. These dogs also assist court participants in their recovery, visit juveniles in detention facilities, greet jurors and lift the spirits of courthouse staff who often conduct their business in an adversarial setting.

☒ APPROVE

☐ OTHER

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF CNTY ADMINISTRATOR

☐ RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD COMMITTEE

Action of Board On: **01/21/2014** ☒ APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED ☐ OTHER

Clerks Notes:

**VOTE OF SUPERVISORS**

AYE: John Gioia, District I Supervisor  
Candace Andersen, District II Supervisor  
Mary N. Piepho, District III Supervisor  
Karen Mitchoff, District IV Supervisor  
Federal D. Glover, District V Supervisor

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of an action taken and entered on the minutes of the Board of Supervisors on the date shown.

ATTESTED: January 21, 2014

David Twa, County Administrator and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

By: Chris Heck, Deputy

Contact: Cherie Mathisen,  
957-2234

cc:

Courthouse dogs specialize in assisting individuals with physical, psychological, or emotional trauma due to criminal conduct. These facility dogs graduate from assistance dog organizations that are accredited members of Assistance Dogs International to ensure that they do not create a public danger and are stable, well-behaved, and unobtrusive to the public

### BACKGROUND: (CONT'D)

. Courthouse facility dogs are handled by criminal justice professionals, such as a deputy prosecutor, a law enforcement officer, a victim advocate, or a forensic interviewer.

The use of courthouse dogs can help bring about a major change in how we meet the emotional needs of all involved in the criminal justice system. Their calming presence promotes justice with compassion. The dog's handler in the District Attorney's office will be an assistant investigator and a victim advocate who will use the dog to provide emotional support to victims to help them through the trial process.