



Contra
Costa
County

To: Board of Supervisors
From: Beth Ward, Animal Services Director
Date: June 18, 2019

Subject: Contract with Unconditional Dog

RECOMMENDATION(S):

APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the Animal Services Director, or designee, to execute a contract with Unconditional Dog, in an amount not to exceed \$200,000 to provide animal enrichment services at the Animal Services Department's shelters for the period July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This contract is funded 100% by the Animal Benefit Fund (non-General Fund).

BACKGROUND:

The Animal Services Department is contracting with Unconditional Dog, also known as the "Shelter Enrichment Team" (SET), to determine the behavioral needs of dogs within the shelter, provide program activities to enrich their well-being during their temporary stay with a focus on the "at risk" population of dogs in our care, and to educate staff, volunteers, and the public about ongoing behavioral maintenance needs for the dogs in our care.

☒ APPROVE

☐ OTHER

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF CNTY ADMINISTRATOR

☐ RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD COMMITTEE

Action of Board On: **06/18/2019** ☒ APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED ☐ OTHER

Clerks Notes:

VOTE OF SUPERVISORS

AYE: John Gioia, District I Supervisor
Candace Andersen, District II Supervisor
Diane Burgis, 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: June 18, 2019

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

By: Laura Cassell, Deputy

Contact: Beth Ward,
925-608-8470

cc: Robert Campbell, Auditor-Controller

BACKGROUND: (CONT'D)

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Unconditional Dog is responsible for providing behavioral assessments, as well as, supporting staff and volunteers in providing enrichment for dogs based on their individual needs, focusing especially on those pets that the volunteer team are unable to handle due to safety concerns or legal restrictions. The goal of these services begin as soon as the dog enters the Contra Costa Animal Services (CCAS) programs, with assessment and the creation of a behavior plan, to maintain or improve the pet's mental, physical, and emotional well-being, to secure more rapid movement towards a positive outcome such as rescue, adoption or the return to their owner.. Working together with medical, volunteer, shelter, transfer partner coordinators, and adoption counselors, Unconditional Dog will address concerns that impact the individual dog's program and successful placement in an appropriate foster or permanent home.

Unconditional Dog is responsible for establishing and overseeing the dog foster program to provide temporary housing while improving the target population's mental wellness to promote a successful path for a permanent home. Unconditional Dog endeavors to ensure successful placement following adoption, by working with the adoption counselors, staff, and other volunteers, to ensure they understand the program for each dog as they interact with potential adopters. Unconditional Dog provides classes to share behavioral concepts and positive reinforcement handling techniques to staff, volunteers, and the public. They also provide behavioral information for each dog to adopters via the Chameleon behavior record, as well as access to public training classes, and individual behavior consults when needed.

The following narrative addresses the questions and concern brought forward by members of the public regarding the Contra Costa Animal Services (CCAS) Shelter Enrichment Team at the March 12, 2019 Board of Supervisors meeting, during public comments. The primary questions and concerns brought forward at that BOS meeting were:

- Concerns that the SET contract negatively impacted Bridge Program funding.
- Questions regarding SET program transparency, how the program is paid for, and how the Department defines success.

The concern that the Unconditional Dog contract negatively impacted funding set aside for the Bridge Program is based on a lack of appropriate information. The Bridge Program, which supported the health and behavioral care of animals rescued from CCAS, was terminated due to logistical inefficiencies involving the County's financial reimbursement process that caused the program to be unsuccessful. This information was communicated to our rescue partners via email on December 11, 2018. Upon termination, the remaining Bridge Program funds were re-allocated to the Panda Program to help provide extended medical care to animals in our custody BEFORE a transfer partner pulls them.

As a County Department, Contra Costa Animal Services (CCAS) strives for transparency at

all times. This includes the Shelter Enrichment program. The Department has received, and responded to, multiple detailed records requests over the past year regarding this program. Additionally, the Department has detailed the program on our website, which includes a general description of the program, the initial contract deliverables, the report detailing the year one results of the program, as well as a draft copy of the contract being presented to the board today.

In creating the program, Contra Costa Animal Services (CCAS) agreed that success would be defined as demonstrating maintained or improved behavior from the dogs our shelter enrichment team works with, allowing them more opportunities for a positive outcome. The program was designed to provide enrichment, both in and out of kennels, for dogs at our two shelters, in addition to conducting evaluations of dogs' behavior and providing training for volunteers and the public. When considering what success would look like, the Department did not believe that the program would result in a reduction in length of stay, an increase in adoptions, or a decrease in adoption returns. Our goal was simple: maintain or improve their behavior while awaiting a positive outcome.

It is also important to note that our SET program did not apply to our entire dog population – only to the dogs that the Department identified as most at risk of degrading in our care. In FY 18/19, the program was budgeted to cost \$300,000, and for FY 19/20, the program is estimated to cost \$197,820. This cost reduction is largely due to the program moving into the second phase of the plan. The first phase was similar to the old adage of having someone do the fishing for us. Due to our staffing and volunteer levels, plus the level of training required, it was not realistic for CCAS to have staff and volunteers solely complete this task during phase one. In previous years, the department executed contracts with behavior specialists, at an average cost of \$178,000/yr., to perform our behavior assessments. By adding enrichment and training elements to this program for \$122,000 more in FY 2018/19, the Department has been able to expand our capacity to help dogs in our care without negatively impacting staff.

In fiscal year 19/20, the Department will move into phase two, which will be focused on “teaching us to fish.” Phase two will involve teaching/training staff and volunteers to understand and report canine behavior, while continuing our enrichment program and expanding it to include the development of a foster dog program. It is the goal of the department that, in fiscal year 20/21, staff positions are added to our department to support the enrichment and foster programs, and the contract with Unconditional Dog will not be needed.

CONSEQUENCE OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

Failure to approve this contract will affect the Department's capacity to provide animal welfare and care to sheltered animals at the Pinole and Martinez shelters.

CLERK'S ADDENDUM

Speakers: Dia Goode, Laura Mees., Wendy Wolf.