



Contra
Costa
County

To: Board of Supervisors
From: Diana Becton, District Attorney
Date: August 6, 2019

Subject: Placement Agreement with Canine Companions for Independence to Provide a Service Dog to Work With Victims of Crimes

RECOMMENDATION(S):

APPROVE and AUTHORIZE the District Attorney, or designee, to execute a placement agreement with Canine Companions for Independence to provide a trained facility dog to provide comfort and assistance to victims of crimes during interviews, in-court testimony, and other traumatic situations.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This is a nonfinancial agreement. Canine Companions for Independence is providing the dog at no charge to the Contra Costa District Attorney's Office. The cost of expenses for the care and feeding of the facility dog is estimated to be approximately \$5,000 annually which will be paid out of the District Attorney's general fund budget.

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

☒ APPROVE

☐ OTHER

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF CNTY ADMINISTRATOR

☐ RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD COMMITTEE

Action of Board On: **08/06/2019** ☒ 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: August 6, 2019

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

By: Stephanie Mello, Deputy

Contact: Jason Chan, (925)
957-2234

cc:

facilities, greet jurors

BACKGROUND: (CONT'D)

and lift the spirits of courthouse staff who often conduct their business in an adversarial setting.

The Courthouse Dog Program utilizing specially trained dogs provided by Canine Companions for Independence will assist 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. 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.

The District Attorney's Office had tremendous success with the Courthouse Dog Program when it was last implemented in 2015-2017 with "JoJo".

This agreement includes indemnification of Canine Companions for Independence and its agents.

CONSEQUENCE OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

The District Attorney's Office will be unable to receive a facility dog from Canine Companions for Independence for the Courthouse Dog Program.