



## CONSENT CALENDAR

### City of San Bernardino Request for Council Action

**Date:** April 17, 2024

**To:** Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

**From:** Charles A. Montoya, City Manager;  
Kris Watson, Director of Animal Services

**Department:** Animal Services

**Subject:** **Response to Grand Jury Report**

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that the Mayor and City Council of the City of San Bernardino, California, review and approve the response to the County of San Bernardino Civil Grand Jury Report, titled "Who Let the Dogs Out? A Tail in Two Cities", released in December 2023.

**Executive Summary**

The San Bernardino County Civil Grand Jury conducted an investigation into increased dog bites in the County. The final Grand Jury report compares the number of dog bites in the City of Rancho Cucamonga to the City of San Bernardino. Their investigation concluded the City of San Bernardino has a higher rate of bites as compared to Rancho Cucamonga and the report includes recommendations to reduce dog bites in the City. The City is required to respond to the Grand Jury's findings and recommendations. There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

**Background**

In 2023, the San Bernardino County Civil Grand Jury initiated an investigation into dog bites in the County after an elderly woman was mauled to death by two dogs in the Baldy Mesa area of the County in October 2022. Their investigation centered on a comparison of dog bites and animal control in two different cities in the County: Rancho Cucamonga and San Bernardino.

The Grand Jury interviewed staff from Rancho Cucamonga and San Bernardino, requested reports, and observed Animal Control Officers in the field performing their duties. Through their investigation, they determined the City of San Bernardino has a higher rate of dog bites as compared to the City of Rancho Cucamonga. The report from the Grand Jury includes a total of seven (7) findings and twelve (12)

recommendations for the City.

### **Discussion**

Staff received the Grand Jury report in January 2023 and began to prepare the City's response to the findings and recommendations.

Overall, the report is balanced and found Department staff to be well-trained and informative in their subject area. The findings and recommendations center on staffing, community outreach, and written procedures. Below is the list of findings and recommendations from the Grand Jury as well as a summary of the City's responses.

- **F-1 The Animal Services Department is underfunded and understaffed.**
  - *R-1a Increase funding for Animal Services.*
  - *R-1b The Grand Jury recommends increased funding is necessary to allow Animal Services to hire additional ACOs.*

The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. The Department has not been fully staffed for years. We have two vacant positions that are in the process of recruitment. Once all Animal Control Officer positions are filled, the Department will evaluate the need for additional staffing.

- **F-2 San Bernardino Animal Services needs a veterinarian on site to take care of pets' medical needs.**
  - *R-2a Hire an on-site veterinarian which would save time and money.*
  - *R-2b The Grand Jury recommends a Partnership with San Bernardino City Unified School District to create an Animal Services Pathway program for high school students to learn about animal care, becoming groomers, veterinary technicians and veterinarians.*
  - *R-2c Create an outreach program for prospective veterinary hires.*

The respondent agrees with the finding and the City is actively recruiting for this position. The Department is working on the additional recommendations proposed by the Grand Jury.

- **F-3 San Bernardino Animal Services does not currently have a checklist that all ACOs may use to inspect the yard of an offending owner of a stray or biting dog. This is needed for consistency of documenting the encounter and putting the owner on notice to remediate the problem area.**
  - *R-3 The Grand Jury recommends that the Animal Services Department develop a uniform written checklist for ACOs to check and ensure that the yard is secure. A copy of the checklist is to be given to the owner.*

The respondent agrees with the finding and the Department will work on creating the recommended checklist.

- **F-4 The SBCAS Policy and Procedure Manual is not complete, nor updated every year, thus the procedures for ACOs are not completely clear and laid out in written form.**
  - *R-4a The Grand Jury recommends that the SBCAS complete writing the Policy and Procedure Manual and eliminate the names of employees and use the staff positions instead. Review the Manual annually and present current changes in laws to staff monthly.*
  - *R-4b Hold monthly or bimonthly staff meetings at the Shelter with management and ACOs to bring everyone up to date on the latest laws and/or developments in the field of Animal Care.*

The respondent agrees with the finding and is currently working to update the Policy and Procedure Manual. The Department currently holds monthly all-staff meetings and bimonthly unit meetings.

- **F-5 Currently, ACOs do not have assigned areas (beats) of responsibility within the City of San Bernardino. If SBCAS assigned different beats to each ACO, it would save time and fuel, provide a quicker response, and increase time for educating the pet owners and public who reside in the ACO's area.**
  - *R-5a The Grand Jury recommends that SBCAS divide the city into separate beats of the city and require ACOs to cover just that portion of the city each day.*
  - *R-5b The Grand Jury recommends the City of San Bernardino provide animal care training to the public twice annually. Each ACO is to provide training for pet owners in his/her beat via online or in-person.*

The respondent agrees with the finding and is waiting on additional data to create the areas assigned to the Unit once all Animal Control Officers are hired and fully trained. The Department will provide regular training opportunities for the community through the existing neighborhood associations.

- **F-6 The public perception of Animal Control Officers is that they are a threat to their pet.**
  - *R-6 The Grand Jury recommends that the SBAS reach out and educate the public about Animal Services via in-person and other forms of media.*

The respondent agrees with the finding and is working to increase community outreach to residents regarding the services and programs the Department offers to assist pet owners.

- **F-7 One of the biggest reasons for the continued spike in dog attacks/bites in the City of San Bernardino is due to the number of non-spayed/neutered animals in the city.**
  - *R-7 The Grand Jury recommends the SBAS reach out and educate the public in the City of San Bernardino about the benefits of spaying/neutering dogs. Education to be delivered in-person and other forms of media.*

The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. A recent report revealed that dog bites were increasing throughout the State. Additionally, the lower median household income combined with increased poverty rates for residents in the City of San Bernardino illustrate

the challenge the community experiences with gaining access to spay/neuter services for their pets. The Department believes that supportive services, including access to low cost or free spay/neuter is vital to lowering the number of loose dogs in the City and subsequently, reducing dog bites.

Prior to the release of the Grand Jury report, the City was already in the process of implementing many of the recommendations, so the responses agree with many of the findings and have timelines associated with implementation of the recommendations.

### **2021-2025 Strategic Targets and Goals**

The City's response to the Grand Jury Investigation aligns with Strategic Goal Number 3: Improved Quality of Life by evaluating public safety and improving the level of service the Department of Animal Services provides to the community.

### **Fiscal Impact**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

### **Conclusion**

It is recommended that the Mayor and City Council of the City of San Bernardino, California, review and approve the response to the County of San Bernardino Civil Grand Jury Report, titled "Who Let the Dogs Out? A Tail in Two Cities", released in December 2023.

### **Attachments**

Attachment 1 – San Bernardino Response to Civil Grand Jury Findings Regarding Animal Control

Attachment 2 – SB Animals – 2023-Grand Jury-Final Report Confidential

Attachment 3 – 2023 Final Report Acknowledgement Form

### **Ward:**

All Wards

### **Synopsis of Previous Council Actions:**

N/A