

# CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

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MEETING DATE: December 11, 2025

PREPARED BY: Richard Cannone, Assistant City Manager  
Daniel Hurtado, Public Safety Coordinator

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE SPAY/NEUTER PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM AND RESCINDING THE CITY'S PET REIMBURSEMENT POLICY

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

1. Adopt a Resolution entitled "A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA, RESCINDING THE CITY'S PET REIMBURSEMENT POLICY AND ESTABLISHING A NEW SPAY/NEUTER PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM WITH ANIMAL SAMARITANS."
2. Authorize the City Manager, or designee, to administer the program.
3. Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary implementation documents.

## **BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:**

One of the major initiatives within the FY 2025 Animal Services budget was to enhance outreach and marketing efforts to increase public utilization of available animal service programs, including reimbursements for adoptions, vaccinations, and mobile clinics. Part of this effort included expanded social media outreach and partnerships with community locations such as the Palm Desert Library. These efforts showed strong early results, most notably, the City's first vaccination clinic under this initiative reached full capacity, filling all 100 available appointments.

Despite targeted outreach, the City's long-standing Pet Reimbursement Program continues to experience minimal participation. Established in 2010 and later expanded to include reimbursements for spay/neuter procedures, vaccinations, microchipping, and adoption fees, the reimbursement model has not generated sustained engagement. Since 2020, only 42 residents have utilized the reimbursement option, averaging roughly ten participants per year. This long-term underutilization indicates that the reimbursement model has not effectively met resident needs or encouraged widespread participation.

In early 2025, the City piloted an alternative approach by issuing a limited number of direct-use spay/neuter vouchers sponsored by Animal Samaritans. All 90 vouchers were claimed within one week. This strong response demonstrates that residents prefer a simple, no-cost, voucher-based model over a reimbursement system that requires upfront payment and administrative tasks, such as making copies, uploading documentation, and filling out forms.

Staff met with the City Council Animal Services Subcommittee on October 30, 2025, to discuss transitioning from the reimbursement program to a voucher-based system. Following this discussion, the subcommittee recommended rescinding the existing spay and neuter reimbursement policy and establishing a new voucher-based partnership program with Animal

Samaritans, a local nonprofit animal welfare organization with facilities in Thousand Palms and Indio. The subcommittee further recommended allocating \$50,000 from the unencumbered funds within the Animal Services Budget to support the implementation of this program.

The attached Resolution establishes the Animal Samaritans Spay/Neuter Partnership Program, replacing the reimbursement model with a streamlined and resident-centered system. Under this program, the City will provide 100 percent cost coverage for spay and neuter procedures, including microchipping, for Palm Desert residents. Each household may utilize the program for up to four animals, aligning with Title 6 of the Palm Desert Municipal Code regarding the allowable number of household pets. Residents are automatically eligible for this program and are only required to provide proof of residency when vouchers are issued. Similar to the pilot program, vouchers will only be available at the Palm Desert Library, allowing residents extended access to the service after 5 p.m. and on weekends.

All standard elements of the procedure, including surgical labor, anesthesia, medications, supplies, pain management, and required take-home items, are included in the City's cost coverage. The average cost for a spay or neuter procedure is approximately \$215, with an additional \$5 for microchipping, for a total average cost of \$220 per animal. Animal Samaritans will invoice the City monthly for services performed, providing transparency, predictable reporting, and consistency in fiscal oversight.

This partnership provides several important benefits:

- Eliminates financial and administrative barriers for residents.
- Ensures that City funds directly support essential sterilization and microchipping services, maximizing existing resources.
- Enhances community animal welfare by helping reduce pet overpopulation.
- Reduces staff workload by replacing receipt-based reimbursements with standard monthly invoicing.
- Advances a major initiative from this year's Animal Services budget, improving marketing and public engagement, by transitioning to a service model that residents clearly respond to, as demonstrated through the successful vaccination clinic and rapid voucher participation.

Importantly, the existing reimbursement program will remain in place for vaccinations and adoptions, and staff is actively developing a similar voucher-based system for these services to further improve accessibility and participation.

**Legal Review:**

This report has been reviewed by the City Attorney's Office.

**Appointed Body Recommendation:**

The Animal Services Subcommittee, at its meeting on October 30, 2025, recommended moving forward with the proposed program.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The Approved FY 2025-26 Annual Budget includes \$620,000 for Animal Services and Program Resources. Animal Services and Programs are estimated to cost \$511,974 following contract negotiations, leaving a balance of \$108,026 available for additional animal services. Staff recommends allocating \$50,000 of the balance to support the new voucher-based program, therefore there is no additional impact to the General Fund with this action.

<b>FY 2025-26 Animal Services &amp; Program Budget</b>	<b>620,000</b>
<b>FY 2025-26 Shelter Services</b>	198,014
<b>FY 2025-26 Field Services</b>	293,960
<b>Mobile Clinics</b>	17,500
<b>Pet Reimbursement Program</b>	2,500
<b><i>Total Budget Allocated</i></b>	<b>511,974</b>
<b>FY 2025-26 Budget Available</b>	108,026
<b><i>This request</i></b>	<b>50,000</b>
<b>Remaining Balance Available</b>	<b>58,026</b>

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Resolution 2025-
2. Contract
3. PowerPoint