

## Response to Grand Jury Report

**Report Title:** County Delivery of Animal Care Services

**Report Date:** June 9, 2014

**Response by:** Stacey Cryer, Director of Health & Human Services Agency

### Findings:

I (we) agree with the findings numbered: n/a

I (we) disagree wholly or partially with the findings numbered: F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6, F7, F8

*Attach a statement specifying the findings or portions of the findings that are disputed, and include an explanation of the reasons therefor.*

### Recommendations:

Recommendations numbered R4 have been implemented.

*Attach a statement describing the implement actions.*

Recommendations numbered \_\_\_\_\_ require further analysis.

*Attach an explanation, and the scope and parameters of the analysis or studies, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the Agency or Department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.*

Recommendations numbered R1 & R2 will not be implemented because they are not warranted or are not reasonable.

*Attach an explanation.*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of pages attached: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Response to Grand Jury Report**

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### **Findings:**

**F1. "Organizational separation of Animal Control and Animal Care has led to discord between the two factions resulting in delivery-of-service problems."**

I (we) disagree wholly with this finding. Animal Care Services successfully works with Animal Control officers from the County as well as from the cities of Ukiah, Willits and Fort Bragg to deliver fully integrated animal control and animal care services to the citizens of Mendocino County.

**F2. "The Shelter physical plant is not properly maintained."**

I (we) disagree wholly with this finding. The General Services Agency provides custodial services to the Shelter on a daily basis as well as provides routine ongoing maintenance, as requested by HHS staff, at the site. The General Services Agency is also currently working on its deferred maintenance list as well as funded Capital Projects which includes the Shelter.

**F3. "The Shelter is operating beyond capacity. Overcrowding is so severe that the facility cannot do its core job (finding homes or disposing of animals) with respect to animals placed in its care."**

I (we) disagree wholly with this finding. The shelter inventory on the first of each month from July 1, 2013 through June 1, 2014 averaged 73 dogs (ranging from 61 to 82) and 63 cats (ranging from 21 to 103). The Shelter capacity for dogs is 86 regular kennels. Each regular kennel typically houses one dog, although multiple small dogs (such as Chihuahuas) or a mother with puppies may be placed together in a single kennel. The Shelter's capacity for cats and kittens is 134.

**F4. "Animal Care gives the impression to Animal Control that they would rather not have Animal Control bring in animals. This results in Animal Control working with owners longer than usual in cases of abuse or neglect rather than confiscating the animals."**

I (we) disagree wholly with this finding. One of Animal Care's primary responsibilities is the sheltering of animals, including those confiscated due to neglect. Staff of Animal Care Services understands that responsibility and takes it very seriously.

**F5. "The overcrowding has a very serious effect on staff morale and is severely detrimental to the well-being of the animals."**

I (we) disagree wholly with this finding. Additionally, the Grand Jury report offers no evidence to support the claim that the morale of shelter staff or volunteers has suffered due to the number of animals being cared for. There is no evidence of overcrowding (see response to F3). Animals are regularly exercised and cared for. When the Shelter population begins to approach capacity, steps are taken to relieve crowding, including encouraging adoptions, working with volunteer foster homes and local animal rescue groups. Additionally Shelter procedures allow adoption fee reduction and special promotions, both of which are used.

**F6. "The relationship between the management of the two organizations has become acrimonious hindering the possibility of meaningful dialogue."**

I (we) disagree wholly with this finding. In addition to working with Mendocino County Animal Control Officers, as well as the cities of Ukiah, Willits and Fort Bragg, to deliver mandated services to the citizens and animals of Mendocino County the Animal Care Management Team continues to work very closely with Animal Control Management on a wide variety of other projects related to animal welfare. Examples of these projects include:

- Large animal evacuation plan
- Animal neglect seizure cases
- Form review and updates
- Communication
- Use of inmates
- Dog grooming, handling program for inmates

**F7. "Senior staff at the Animal Care Facility appears to want to make the facility a no-kill facility. Keeping a dog in a 4x8 foot kennel or a cat in a 2x3 foot cage for up to or more than a year is cruel treatment."**

I (we) disagree partially with this finding. We agree that it is cruel to keep any animal in a small cage for more than a year. Animals are rarely kept for the duration stated in this finding. In 2013 we took in 1595 dogs. Only one dog was kept more than one year at a

foster home, from where it was adopted. It was in the shelter only for the legally mandated hold period.

In 2013 we took in 704 cats. Only one cat was kept for more than one year. It was in a foster home being socialized and trained for 120 days.

**F8. "Senior managers lack formal management training, including contract writing, negotiation and implementation."**

I (we) partially disagree with this finding. The HHSA Contract Unit presents an annual contract writing training for all HHSA staff who handle contracts. I (we) agree there is no formal training for contract negotiating for staff. In this arena staff works closely with the HHSA leadership and the General Services Agency, who are trained in contract negotiation. The Shelter staff also work closely with HHSA Fiscal Unit to track the payment of contract invoices and the receipt of contract payments.

We would also like to address the following statements that were made within the report:

**Statement: "No contract with California Exterminators was found in the offices of either the County Auditor or the General Services Agency."**

We strongly disagree with this statement. A copy of that contract dated April 10, 2013, was obtained from General Services Agency, who initiated that contract.

**Statement: "Boarders of large animals are not always compensated by the County."**

We strongly disagree with this statement. The Shelter has worked with General Services and the HHSA Contract and Fiscal Units to see that every legitimate invoice submitted to the County is paid in a timely manner.

**Statement: "In the adopted budget for 2013-2014, a goal of the shelter was for public education and training, yet the Final Budget allocates zero dollars for education and training."**

In FY 2013-14, Animal Care Services worked with Mendocino County Office of Emergency Services, North Coast Opportunities to host three training sessions that were attended by the public, several Mendocino County animal rescue groups, Shelter staff and Animal Control Officers. On October 12, 2013, the Shelter hosted a day-long hands-on training session given by Noah's Wish, in which participants were taught how to properly receive and house animals during a disaster. This was a follow-up training to a day-long classroom session that the Shelter hosted in the fall of 2012. On April 21,

2014, Steve Sloop of Shelter Art Foundation presented a training session on how to take effective photographs of shelter animals to better promote their adoption. On April 23, 2014, Mr. Dick Green of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals led two training sessions that addressed the operation of animal shelters during disasters. Each of these trainings was well received by members of the community – at no expense to the County General Fund. The Shelter will continue to look for ways to serve the needs of the public in an affordable manner.

### **Recommendations**

**R1. “The Board of Supervisors re-integrate Animal Control and Animal Care as a single operational unit under the Sheriff’s Office.” (F1, F2, F3, F4, F6).**

This recommendation number will not be implemented. This is a Board of Supervisors decision.

**R2. “The Board of Supervisors use a third party to perform quarterly health and safety inspections of the Shelter.” (F2, F3).**

This recommendation number will not be implemented because it is not warranted or reasonable. The County Safety Officer provides an annual inspection of the facility.

**R4. “The management of the Shelter be trained in all aspects of Shelter operations, including management, contracts, negotiations and implementation of contracts.” (F1, F6, F8).**

Recommendation 4 has been implemented. General Services Agency staff is trained in negotiations and will negotiate any or all contracts. Additionally General Services Agency has developed new procedural guidelines and will be providing annual training which includes contracts.