

City of La Quinta

CITY COUNCIL MEETING: July 7, 2015

STAFF REPORT

AGENDA TITLE: CONSIDER RESOURCES TO INCREASE CODE COMPLIANCE OPERATIONS

RECOMMEDATION

Provide direction to staff regarding code compliance operations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In January 2013, Code Compliance/Animal Control staff was reduced from nine to five officers, which resulted in code compliance efforts focusing on responding to complaints.
- Limited code compliance efforts have resulted in an increase in code violations in both residential and commercial areas.
- In the interest of increasing code compliance efforts, resource options are proposed for City Council consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT

Two options are proposed:

- 1) Adding one Animal Control/Code Compliance Officer (“Officer”) at an initial annual cost of \$113,000 (\$95,000 for the fully burdened employee cost and \$18,000 for an animal control vehicle and associated equipment operations and maintenance costs); or
- 2) Outsourcing all animal services to Riverside County, estimated at \$135,000 (the City currently expends \$15,000 annually for after hours and Sunday on-call assistance so the net cost would be \$120,000).

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

In January 2013 code compliance staffing was reduced as part of an overall City reorganization. When this occurred, the City’s Executive Team committed to evaluating code compliance efforts and identifying new approaches. Since 2013, code compliance has been generally limited to addressing complaints. Current staff resources include four Officers and a Supervisor. Each Officer performs both animal control and code compliance duties. Daily, one Officer is assigned to animal control. The other Officers provide backup support as needed, and address other non-animal code compliance. The City provides animal control from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday; Riverside County Department of Animal Services (RCDAS) provides on-call animal control service after hours and all day Sunday.

In analyzing service calls, there has generally been a one to one ratio between calls for code compliance and animal control services. Put another way, for every code

compliance action, the City performs an animal control action. As such, when the staff Project Action Team or PAT (comprised of Code, Community Development and City Manger staff) reviewed data to identify options, the data showed that animal control service needs must be addressed in order to make time to address/increase code compliance initiatives.

The number of code issues has steadily increased over the past 24 months. Since the Officers split their time between responding to animal control matters and addressing code compliance complaints, Officers are frequently challenged to find the time to address code compliance in a timely manner. As a result, there is minimal time to proactively address abandoned or unlicensed vehicles, illegal signs, or monitoring neighborhoods with a history of code compliance issues.

The PAT formulated a pro-active code compliance program that included the following elements:

- Reviewing current codes to identify their need and verify their relevance.
- Engaging in community dialogue on a neighborhood level to review City standards, discuss compliance measures, and enlist stakeholders in community improvement activities.
- Procuring grant and other outside funds to conduct neighborhood cleanup campaigns, dumpster rentals, and household waste and large object disposal initiatives.
- Establishing a code compliance implementation strategy wherein resources are pledged on a pro-active basis to assist the neighborhoods that experience the most acute code challenges.

Attachment 1 outlines the program parameters the Project Action Team developed.

Resource Deployment Options

In order to launch a pro-active code compliance effort, the question of how to best handle the City's animal control service needs must be addressed. The PAT formulated the follow options:

- Contract all animal control services with Riverside County. RCDAS' after-hours and Sunday on-call services was implemented in 2013 and to date has been successful. Currently six of the nine Coachella Valley cities contract 100 percent of their animal control services with RCDAS (Cathedral City, Coachella, Desert Hot Springs, Indio, Indian Wells, and Palm Desert). Palm Desert provides the closest comparison to La Quinta in demographics and expected level of service. Discussions with Palm Desert staff who manage the RCDAS contract indicated that the City is very satisfied with the service they receive.

Staff has discussed contract options with RCDAS. The preferred option would entail contracting for a dedicated-to-La Quinta animal control officer for 40 hours/week, Monday through Friday, with on-call support available after hours and weekends. City staff would no longer provide animal control services, freeing up a minimum of 52 hours per week to focus on code compliance.

The total annual cost is \$135,000; this estimate is based upon general information provided by RCDAS, actual La Quinta on-call service history for the past two years, and review of the costs Palm Desert has experienced. Since the City currently contracts with RCDAS for after hours and Sunday on-call service (\$15,000), the projected cost for this additional service would be \$120,000.

- Adding an Animal Control/Code Compliance Officer:
The four existing Officers provide both animal control and code compliance services. A second option would to add a full time Officer. Doing so would provide an additional 40 hours to address code compliance matters, and share the animal control and animal control backup assistance duties.

Implementing this option would require replacing one of the animal control vehicles at a one-time cost of \$65,000. The annual cost for this alternative is estimated at \$113,000. The RCDAS after hours and Sunday on-call service would remain.

Staff is seeking City Council input on these alternatives.

Report prepared by: Les Johnson, Community Development Director

Report approved by: Frank J. Spevacek, City Manager

Attachment: 1. Benefits of Additional Code Compliance Resources



City of La Quinta

Benefits of contracting Animal Control duties to Riverside County Department of Animal Services

- ❖ Current staff of 4 officers and a supervisor would be enabled to focus staff resources entirely to Code Compliance duties.
 - ❖ Varying amount of officers, from 3 to 1, would devote their time addressing code only issues Monday through Friday, when they normally back up the lead Animal Control officer daily, and are pulled from their Code Compliance duties on a regular basis.
 - ❖ The **City would gain 52 hours** normally dedicated to the lead Animal Control officer's duties which would be redirected to Code Compliance duties. (Mon – Thurs 9 hr. days, Fri- Sat 8 hr. days).
 - ❖ Saturday Animal Control patrol, could be entirely focused on Code Compliance patrol which would enable the officer to more effectively pull signs on Hwy 111 corridor including election time, deal with sign twirlers, contact RSO regarding pan handlers, address unpermitted garage sales, address unpermitted events (car washes, food vendors), unpermitted construction, encroachment on travel ways, dumping, illicit discharges etc.
 - ❖ Officers would be able to be more proactive v. reactive, and could also dedicate more time to vehicle abatement, which would enhance revenues.
 - ❖ The Code officers could also make contact at properties where the front yard landscaping is not well maintained, and **promote, and market programs** CVWD has in place regarding **turf reduction related to water conservation, and grant programs if instituted by the City for matching funds for turf reduction, and grants for Façade Improvement Program.**
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- ❖ **Alternative: Hiring additional officer(s) to do dual duties of AC/CC.** Hiring an additional officer would increase one additional officer in the rotation, and each officer would have more time to do Code Compliance.