

# Agenda Report

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL                      **DATE:** AUGUST 9, 1999  
**FROM:** CYNTHIA J. KURTZ, CITY MANAGER  
**SUBJECT:** BARKING DOG COMPLAINTS

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council authorize the City Manager to approve the use of Inter-Con Security Systems, Inc. to respond to after-hours barking dog complaints, on a trial basis, until the end of the fiscal year and approve a journal voucher appropriating \$2,450 from the unappropriated General Fund balance to the Animal Control Budget Account #562200.

**BACKGROUND:**

At the June 21, 1999 meeting of the City Council, additional follow-up information was requested by the City Council on the number and the location of barking dog complaints investigated by the Pasadena Humane Society. The Council also requested the cost estimates for instituting an after-hours response to barking dog complaints, by either the Police Department or the Pasadena Humane Society. Finally, staff were asked by Council to further refine the administrative process for handling barking dog complaints so that an individual's problem can be resolved without using small claims court when it is a private issue and there are no other people who have registered a complaint.

**Revised Administrative Procedures for Handling Barking Dog Complaints**

In the June 21, 1999 Agenda Report, staff reported that under the revised administrative procedures for handling barking dog complaints an animal control officer visits the owner of a dog alleged to be creating a nuisance and informs the owner that a complaint has been received. The officer explains the potential outcome if the nuisance is not abated and provides written material about how to control a barking dog. The written material is sent if the dog owner is not at home. In most instances, the animal control officer's first contact with the dog owner is enough to resolve the problem and the complainant is not obliged to undergo the required documentation process or arrange to have the matter heard in small claims court as a private nuisance. This change has been adopted by the Humane Society and is now part of the administrative process for handling all barking

dog complaints regardless of the number of registered complaints filed with the Humane Society.

In instances where residents live in isolated areas, the same procedure would be followed; and in most instances, the complaint would be resolved upon the animal control officer's first contact with the owner of the barking dog. If it is not possible to produce corroborating evidence because no neighbors live close enough to substantiate a barking problem, the resident would be able to follow the other steps in the administrative process to reach resolution. A copy of the Barking Dog Flow Chart illustrating the Administrative Procedures is attached to this Agenda Report as Exhibit 1.

**Barking Dog Complaints from January 1998 – July 1999**

Staff obtained from the Humane Society the locations of all barking dog complaints for the eighteen-month period between January 1998 and June 1999. This information is broken down by council members' districts in the chart below. The majority of these complaints were quickly abated or investigated, substantiated and settled using the administrative procedures implemented as a result of previous Council action. Of the 128 complaints reported to the Humane Society, seven cases were re-occurring complaints, which required additional follow-up by an animal control officer before the complaints could be settled. Four cases were forwarded to the Code Enforcement Commission for a hearing after all administrative procedures were exhausted. The distribution of complaints by day of the week is as follows: Monday (41); Tuesday (24); Wednesday (30); Thursday (22) Friday (9); Sat (2); and Sun (0). The Humane Society is closed on Sundays.

**Barking Dog Complaints between January 1998 and June 1999**

District 1	11	9%
District 2	27	21%
District 3	22	17%
District 4	16	13%
District 5	19	15%
District 6	28	22%
District 7	5	4%
<b>Total</b>	128	100%

### **After-hours Response for Barking Dog Complaints**

The Pasadena Humane Society office is open from 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Mondays through Fridays and from 9:00a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Barking dog complaints can be registered with the Humane Society during these hours by telephone; however, animal control officers are not normally dispatched to handle barking dog complaints after 6:00 p.m., although a dispatcher is on duty until 11:00 p.m. After hours on Monday – Saturday (between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.) and all day Sunday, a caller to the Humane Society reaches the dispatcher or a message center and is advised of the business hours when calls can be received. An animal control officer is dispatched to respond to a complaint by the next business day when a message is taken by the dispatcher. Callers who reach the message center are asked to call back during normal business hours.

The City Council requested staff to investigate the cost for providing after-hours response to barking dog complaints by the Pasadena Police Department or the Pasadena Humane Society. Staff also contacted the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Regulations and Inter-Con Security Systems, Inc. to determine their availability and capacity to provide after-hours response for barking dog complaints in Pasadena.

The Pasadena Humane Society submitted a proposal to establish a Barking Dog Program for Pasadena which would provide dedicated staff to investigate all barking dog complaints in the City, including after-hours between 6:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M. and on weekends. An animal control officer will be called to respond to a complaint after a call has been received from either a resident or the Police Department. If the animal control officer verifies that there is a barking problem, he will then inform the owner about the complaint and instruct the owner to correct the problem. The Barking Dog Program would also be responsible for mediating neighbor disputes between a complainant and an owner involving a barking dog; attending neighborhood meetings and Code Enforcement Commission hearings; and providing instructions to dog owners on how to control their barking dogs. The goal of the program would be to lessen the burden a resident must undergo to receive relief from a barking dog problem. The Pasadena Humane Society has submitted a budget of \$85,000 to cover the cost of personnel, a lease vehicle, educational materials, office space, and materials and supplies.

The City of Pasadena Police Department is unable to provide the available resources to answer after-hours complaints for barking dogs in an expedient manner. Cost to the Police Department would be measured in lost time and negative consequences that may result from slower attention to more pressing service priorities. Without a dedicated officer and car standing by to respond to barking dog complaints, calls related to barking dogs would be prioritized among other service calls received, likely resulting in delays in investigating the barking dog complaint.

The Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control declined to submit a proposal to handle barking dog complaints for Pasadena. The County does not provide animal control services during after-hours for any of their contract cities unless the incident involves public safety or an injured animal. Under the County Program, barking dog complaints are not considered to be an emergency and are not treated as warranting after-hours service. The County routinely investigates barking dog complaints within seven days after a resident has sent a written complaint to the County. In those cities where the County provides animal control services, after-hours complaints related to barking dogs are referred to their local police departments.

Inter-Con Security Systems, Inc. proposes to provide after hours Barking Dog Abatement Services on a trial basis until the end of the fiscal year using Inter-Con personnel from their Pasadena office. Inter-Con proposes that a barking dog complaint can be forwarded to Inter-Con, from either the Humane Society or the Police Department. A supervisor would be dispatched to verify the complaint, and, if warranted, Inter-Con would place a call to the property owner of the barking dog by using a reverse telephone directory from their Pasadena office. The Humane Society would provide Inter-Con with a script and training on how to conduct the telephone contact and what to include in the documenting report. Inter-Con would prepare a written report on every complaint, including the results of their initial investigation and telephone call to the owner, for follow-up by the Humane Society on the next business day. The Humane Society will use the forwarded information from Inter-Con to begin their investigation. Inter-Con recommends that there not be face-to-face contact with the dog owner during after-hours, for safety reasons, unless accompanied by a police officer.

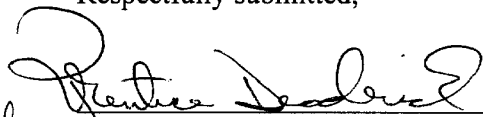
Inter-Con proposes this service at a nominal cost of \$35.00 per call to cover expenses. At a projection of 70 after-hours complaints a year, the annualized maximum cost would not exceed \$2,450. The services would be procured under a purchase order administered by the Public Health Department, and funds would be transferred from the unappropriated General Fund balance to cover this expense. Using Inter-Con Security Systems, Inc. offers the most cost effective, immediate response to after hours barking dog complaints.

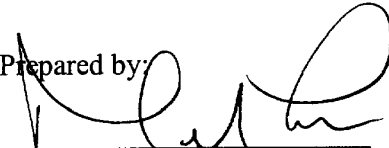
CITY COUNCIL  
Barking Dog Complaints  
August 9, 1999

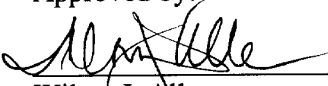
**FISCAL IMPACT:**


This action by City Council will appropriate \$2,450 from the Unappropriated General Fund Fund Balance to the Animal Control Budget Account # 562200, increasing FY 2000 appropriations in that Budget Account by \$2,450 from \$648,104 to \$650,554.

Respectfully submitted,

  
for CYNTHIA J. KURTZ  
City Manager

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