

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Clackamas County Board of County Commissioners (BCC)  
FROM: Dan Johnson (Director) & Mike Bezner (Assistant Director)  
RE: Dog Services Funding Strategies  
DATE: January 27, 2026

---

**REQUEST:** Direct staff to pursue a funding strategy to increase services available at the County's Dog Shelter.

**BACKGROUND:** Dog Services provides a shelter to house stray and dangerous dogs, as well as statutorily mandated licensing and enforcement of rabies vaccinations. Currently, shelter services operate 7 days a week with 7 permanent staff to care for sheltered dogs. While shelter services have been reduced over the past few years due to funding reductions, shelter needs are increasing: Dog Services sheltered 660 dogs over the past year. More than half of those dogs housed - 300-400 annually - are directly related to law enforcement encounters where County Sheriff's deputies and city police officers detain dogs.

As a result of the lack of staff due to past budget reductions combined with current employees on medical leaves, the shelter capacity had been reduced to 10 dogs, which was the maximum number of dogs that staff could provide adequate care for. Recent employee returns from leave have helped raise the shelter capacity to 15 dogs, but to restore historic shelter capacity, Dog Services needs to add 2 full-time employees at a total cost of approximately \$250,000. As a result, for the past 2 months most stray dogs from the public are not accepted and law enforcement agencies have been informed that ONLY "high risk" dogs will be accepted for containment. "High risk" dogs have already bitten and are a significant threat to public safety.

In the Dog Services 25/26 Budget additional funding was requested. With other pending needs, this request was not able to be supported by the Budget Committee or Board. On September 9, 2025 at Issues, staff presented service reductions to align with current funding. In response to that request the BCC suggested a few options for increasing revenue that included increasing license fees, increasing enforcement for failure to license, and charging cities for the use of the shelter. Staff was also asked to come back to the BCC to give an update on these options. The following is an update on each of them:

- Increase license fees- All but 2 cities in Clackamas County (Lake Oswego and Happy Valley) rely on the County to issue Dog Licenses to owners within their cities. County License fees were already raised July 1, 2025 and annual rates are now \$32 for an “altered” dog, and \$52 for a “fertile” dog. The County eliminated discounts for paying for multiple years up front, and raised the late fee maximum from \$10 to the total cost of the license. There is a diminishing return to raising license fees since compliance is relatively low. Raising fees too much will likely result in less compliance and might not appreciably raise overall revenue. This is not unique to Clackamas County- it is a nationwide statistic. Note that Multnomah County charges \$27 and \$42 for dog licenses and does give multi-year discounts. They also give people 65 and older a 50% discount. Washington County charges \$34 and \$56, but they also give a multi-year discount and about a 30% discount for people 65 and older.
- Increase enforcement for failure to license- Dog Services has increased its enforcement activities, but they are limited in part by the lack of staff available. It is Clackamas County Code for veterinarians to submit to the County all records of dog rabies vaccinations. Staff then cross-references these against current dog licenses. Where there are gaps, citations are sent out. It is a labor-intensive process, and when staffing is limited, the licensing officer is sometimes required to perform other work at the shelter. But, these efforts have produced results. Licensing is up almost 20% in the past year.
- Charge cities for the use of the shelter- No city in Clackamas County has its own dog shelter. They all rely on the County to provide this service. Staff has developed a plan to charge all cities with populations over 1,000 a proportional amount based on population to raise the \$250,000 needed to add 2 animal care specialists. Many of the dogs from both law enforcement and the general public that are being turned away are from city police departments, so this would have a direct benefit to cities.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends the BCC direct staff to begin negotiating with cities to charge a fee for use of the County Dog Shelter, to be used to add two full-time shelter workers.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Dan Johnson*

Dan Johnson, Director