



Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Lara Biggs, Bureau Chief - Capital Planning/City Engineer
CC: David Stoneback, Public Works Agency Director
Subject: Resolution 15-R-20, Authorizing the City Manager to Submit an Application for the Cook County Animal Shelter Grant
Date: February 24, 2020

Recommended Action:

Staff recommends City Council adoption of Resolution 15-R-20 authorizing the City Manager to submit an application for the Cook County Animal Shelter Grant from Cook County for construction of an improvement project for the Evanston Animal Shelter building.

Funding Source:

Cook County has funded the Animal Shelter Grant Program at \$8,000,000 to likely be disbursed to two or more animal shelters for capital improvements. Additional funding information is included below.

Council Action:

For Action

Summary:

Cook County impounds several hundred animals per year, primarily dogs and cats. These animals are typically in the following categories:

- Stray animals in the Cook County Forest Preserves
- Animals collected during eviction proceedings or property standards complaints involving the Cook County Sheriff Department

Cook County does not operate an animal shelter, but instead contracts with individual animal shelters to take the impounded animals. Recently, Cook County reached out to find new shelters to contract with, but determined that the needed shelter capacity does not exist. Therefore, Cook County has budgeted \$8 million to be distributed through the Cook County Animal Shelter Grant program. This funded is to be invested in capital improvements to two or more animal shelters to expand shelter capacity. Taking the funding would obligate each shelter to enter into a long-term contract for receiving Cook County animals. Neither the grant agreement or the long-term operations contract are currently available for review; the terms of both would be negotiated once the grantees receive the notice of their selection.

Current Operations:

The City of Evanston owns and maintains an animal shelter building at 2310 Oakton Street. The City contracts with the Evanston Animal Shelter Association (EASA) for the operations of the animal shelter. The City provides a grant of \$65,000 per year to fund two full-time employees. The City also provides \$35,000 per year to offset the costs of supplies. EASA, which operates with a total annual budget of \$300,000, fundraises the remaining amount. In return for Evanston funding, EASA accepts animals impounded by the City as well as owner relinquished animals from the community. Since taking over operations, EASA has operated the shelter as no-kill, open admission shelter with a save rate of 96-97%.

On average, EASA processes over 570 animals per year. To accomplish this, EASA utilizes an extensive networks of volunteers. Approximately 175 volunteers staff 14 shifts per week at the shelter. They also use foster homes to house the animals. In 2019, 169 foster homes hosted 343 animals. In addition, the shelter operates programs to help residents afford to keep their own animals in their home, such as providing donated dog food, cat food and cat litter to residents who would not otherwise be able to feed their animals. More detailed information on EASA operations is available as an attachment.

Existing Building:

Constructed in 1973, the animal shelter building is inadequate for the current operations. The 3800-square foot building was originally intended to house a small number of animals for a short time. Euthanasia was utilized to manage the number of animals that were in residence. Because of the age of the building, it was not designed with modern shelter standards in mind. Inadequacies include:

- Not enough capacity to house dogs and cats
- No separate intake area for animals that are dropped off
- No isolation area for sick dogs or cats
- Minimal adoption facilities
- Lack of windows and natural light
- Inadequate storage
- No space for in-house medical procedures

The existing building does not meet the current building code. In particular, the HVAC is nearing the end of its useful life, and the City would not be able to replace it and bring the system up to code without somehow expanding onto the building to house new mechanical equipment. The current HVAC is also inadequate for maintaining even temperatures throughout the building; during warmer weather, the temperatures in some of the animal areas where animals are housed exceed 90 degrees. The building does not contain a fire sprinkler system.

Proposed Building:

On October 23, 2017, during a budget presentation, staff indicated the need to make significant investments into the animal shelter. The City Council directed staff to work with the Animal Welfare Board to complete an in-house study of shelter needs. Following an intensive effort by the board and staff, shelter needs have been identified to address the insufficiencies listed above. In response to the Cook County Animal Shelter Grant program,

staff has developed a concept plan and cost estimate for improvements incorporating the information developed over the last two years. While staff looked at reusing and expanding the existing building, it was not substantially less expensive than demolishing and building an entirely new facility, and the new facility option better suits the identified needs. The cost estimate for the new building (including demolition, parking lot and other site improvements) is \$6 million. A detailed cost estimate is attached.

Detailed Funding Information:

Currently, the only mechanism for funding the animal shelter improvements is through the City of Evanston paying the entire amount. Staff is recommending the City Council authorize applying for the Cook County Animal Shelter Grant program to help offset the costs of the needed improvements, although it is unlikely that the entire project will be funded by Cook County. Although EASA does not currently fundraise for capital improvements, they have indicated their willingness to amend the current agreement and contribute up to \$500,000 over 10 years. Staff is recommending the City apply for a grant for \$4.5 million and self-fund the remaining project cost through the Capital Improvement Fund. A proposed summary of the project funding is as follows:

Funding Source	Amount
Cook County Animal Shelter Grant Program	\$4,500,000
Evanston Animal Shelter Association	\$ 500,000
City of Evanston	\$1,000,000
Total	\$6,000,000

The Evanston Animal Shelter estimates that they would need to contract for additional services to address the increased capacity and needs due to Cook County animals. They estimate two part-time positions would be needed and they would contract with a veterinarian part-time to provide onsite vet services at the shelter. EASA had indicated their willingness to fundraise for these positions, although the cost should be partially or fully offset by the long-term operations fees in a Cook County contract.

Timeline:

Because of the lack of information available from Cook County on detailed terms of the grant agreement and the long-term operations contract, staff would return to City Council with this information prior to entering into final agreements with Cook County, with modifications to the EASA contract to expand fundraising at that time. Applications are due to Cook County on February 28, 2020. Applications will be reviewed by Cook County from March – May 2020, and awardees are expected to be notified in June 2020.

If the City were to decide to move forward with constructing an animal shelter, the following is the estimated schedule:

Notification of Award	06/2020
Planning and Design	09/20 – 05/21
Construction	06/21 – 05/22
New Animal Shelter in Service	06/22 (earliest date)

In addition, the City has received a letter from Cook County Commissioner Suffredin supporting Evanston's application for this grant funding. A copy of this letter is attached for reference.

Attachments:

[Resolution 15-R-20 Authorizing Application for Cook County Animal Shelter Grant](#)
[Evanston Animal Shelter Association Viability and Program Document](#)
[Cook County Commissioner Letter of Support](#)

1/23/2020
1/29/2020

15-R-20

A RESOLUTION

Authorizing the City Manager to Submit an Application for the Cook County Animal Shelter Grant

WHEREAS, the City of Evanston owns and maintains an animal shelter in Evanston operated by the Evanston Animal Shelter Agency (EASA); and

WHEREAS, the animal shelter building has been deemed to be inadequate for current animal shelter operations; and

WHEREAS, due to the current design of the building, a substantial investment of capital funding would be required to rehabilitate and bring the animal shelter building to current standards; and

WHEREAS, Cook County has designated eight million dollars (\$8,000,000) for animal shelter capital improvements through the Cook County Animal Shelter (CCAS) Grant Program in Cook County; and

WHEREAS, the City of Evanston wishes to apply for funds through the CCAS Grant Program, which would potentially provide up to four million five hundred thousand dollars (\$4,500,000) towards the building and site improvement project, with the remainder of the funding provided from the City of Evanston (in the amount of one million dollars (\$1,000,000)), in conjunction with fundraising efforts by the EASA (in the amount of five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000)); and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Evanston has determined it is in the best interests of the City to apply for the CCAS grant for county funding to contribute towards the rehabilitation project and improve EASA's operating capacity and capabilities,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EVANSTON, COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS:

SECTION 1: The City Manager is hereby authorized to sign and submit all necessary application documents for the CCAS grant.

SECTION 2: The City Manager is also authorized and directed to negotiate and execute any additional documents required for the grant application as she may determine to be in the best interests of the City.

SECTION 3: That this Resolution 15-R-20 shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval in the manner provided by law.

Stephen H. Hagerty, Mayor

Approved as to form:

Assistant City Attorney

Attest:

Devon Reid, City Clerk

Adopted: _____, 2020

A Home for Cook County's Animals - Call for Projects Evanston Animal Shelter Association Viability and Program Overview

Introduction

The Evanston Animal Shelter Association (EASA) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) volunteer-based animal welfare organization. EASA was formed in June of 2015 by several shelter volunteers in order to respond to a request for proposal issued by the City of Evanston after the previous organization had been asked to leave because of controversy surrounding a high euthanasia rate for dogs. Upon taking over operations EASA immediately revised policies and procedures to achieve the shelter's first-ever No Kill status. In its first full year operating the shelter, and every year since, EASA has achieved a Save Rate of 96% - 97%.

The Evanston Animal Shelter is an open admission, city shelter that takes in all strays and surrenders from the City of Evanston regardless of age, health or temperament. The shelter also takes in animals in need from surrounding areas as space allows.

Evanston Animal Shelter Mission

EASA created the shelter's mission to serve as a guide for its path forward.

The Evanston Animal Shelter and Adoption Center is committed to providing compassionate and humane care for Evanston's abandoned, abused and relinquished animals and finding them homes through rehabilitation, foster care, adoption, and rescue organizations. We aim to further serve the community as a proactive resource for education, counseling and support.

Contract with the City of Evanston

EASA's only contract for service is with the City of Evanston. The City owns the facility and EASA operates the shelter on behalf of the City. The City provides a grant of \$65,000 per year that is the primary funding source for the two full time employees. In addition the city provides \$35,000 per year as reimbursement for various supplies such as animal food, cat litter and some vaccination materials. The Evanston Animal Shelter Association provides the funding for most of the shelter operations. Our annual budget of \$300,000 covers the direct care of the animals and the administrative costs of operating the shelter.

We accept animals from the Evanston Animal Warden, Evanston Police Officers and citizens who find a stray. We also accept owner relinquished animals from the community.

Current Facility Limitations

We currently operate within a small facility of approximately 3800 square feet. The facility was originally built as a city pound for dogs only, not designed to be a modern day animal shelter. It lacks many of the basic features required for best practices in sheltering. Here are some of the

most glaring insufficiencies of our building that would be addressed by a new facility. We welcome the opportunity to partner with Cook County to correct these deficiencies.

- **We do not have a separate intake area.** People walk in the front door, through the lobby, with stray dogs and cats. Animals that are brought in overnight by the police are placed directly into a dog kennel or cat cage with the general population.
- **We do not have an isolation area for dogs or cats.** Animals that are clearly symptomatic on intake are taken directly to a veterinarian, however they have already been in the main area of the building. Upon returning from the veterinarian, however, there is no way to truly isolate them from healthy animals unless we can place them directly in a foster home. Likewise animals that become symptomatic while in the shelter cannot be isolated.
 - Despite this shortcoming, because we have strict protocols for handling sick animals we have managed to avoid any truly serious medical issues. There has been one bout of canine influenza that quarantined our kennel for approximately 30 days. We have taken in a few cats with ringworm but, by adhering to our protocols, have been able to contain the disease to patient zero. Even if we place sick animals in a separate room there is only one HVAC system for the entire building. We know how to do this right - we just don't have the ability to provide the necessary separation in the current environment.
- **We have one small adoption room that is shared by both dog and cat adopters.** This room can be used by only one family at a time. If we have multiple adopters, the dog adopters must meet the dog outside and other cat adopters must meet the cats in one of our bathrooms or they have to wait. This does not create the warm and welcoming experience we would desire.
- **There are no windows in the building.** Natural sunlight is not available to the animals, especially the cats.
- **There is no space for in-house medical procedures.** Very little veterinary care can be accomplished within the shelter. We have a small team of veterinarians who come to the shelter to vaccinate kittens. Most of our routine medical care must be done by transporting animals to local veterinary offices, dramatically increasing our medical expenses.

Current Best Practices

Despite the physical deficiencies of the facility, we strive to implement best practices in every aspect of our operation.

Once animals are in the shelter, they receive a standard protocol of medical care. Dogs receive a rabies vaccination, DHPP, flu shot, heartworm test and fecal exam. Cats receive a rabies vaccination, FVRCP, FIV/FELV test, and fecal. Senior animals receive a senior blood panel and

any animals that are symptomatic receive immediate veterinary care. Any unaltered animals are spayed or neutered. Stray animals are subject to a seven day stray hold. They receive the standard vaccinations and their emergency medical needs are met during that period, but spay/neuter surgery is not performed until day eight. All animals are microchipped prior to adoption.

When we took over shelter operations everything had been done on paper, which was inefficient and oftentimes inaccurate. We immediately converted to an automated system. We implemented Shelterluv as our shelter operating software, allowing us to streamline intake and outcome processes, track medical care and provide automated reporting. We recently added a new CRM (customer relationship management) software package called Neon to serve as a donor database. It also has a module that allows us to onboard volunteers more efficiently and track their hours.

We have two full time employees and approximately 175 active volunteers. Our Canine Director (paid position) is responsible for everything related to the dogs and our Feline Director (non-paid position) is responsible for everything related to the cats. We have two shifts of volunteers per day who provide care and enrichment for the animals, clean and disinfect the kennels/cages and clean and sanitize the shelter common areas. In order to promote consistency in the way volunteers perform their duties **Standard Operating Procedures** have been created, which are both displayed at the shelter and provided in hard copy to new volunteers as part of their training process. (Copies are attached to this document).

Kennel Safety and Enrichment for Dogs

Because we rely heavily on volunteers to care for the dogs, we have developed a designation and certification system to ensure proper and safe handling and enrichment.

The Canine Director observes a dog's behavior and assigns the appropriate designation. Each dog has a handling and enrichment plan with specific instructions clearly displayed in the kennel area. The certification program for volunteers includes study materials, hands-on training, written and practical tests. Volunteers start as trainees and are only allowed to clean and observe. They may choose to gain higher certification levels with increased responsibilities. This formal structure promotes consistent and safe handling of the dogs.

Typical kennel enrichment activities include two to three long walks per day per dog, play group sessions as appropriate, and training activities for mental stimulation. While in their kennels dogs are given appropriate bedding and chew toys.

Of course, the best form of kennel enrichment is to move the dogs quickly through the process and place them in adopted homes as soon as possible. Once the dogs are available (stray hold is over), medically cleared and spayed or neutered, they are placed on our website and on Petfinder. We use social media extensively (Facebook and Instagram) and we network with

other rescue organizations to transfer dogs that we feel will be hard to place through our own process.

Cage Safety and Enrichment for Cats

Our cat designation and certification program was developed in conjunction with an animal behaviorist. It is similar to the dog program in that cats are designated based upon a standard series of activities. Each cat's handling plan is designed accordingly. Volunteers go through a certification program to achieve those designations as well.

We have established various enrichment activities tailored to each designation. For instance, there is a set of activities that can be used to engage the cat while in the cage without opening the door. These activities are designed to allow the volunteer to safely interact with a frightened cat until it becomes comfortable with its surroundings. For cats that are more easily handled, they can be removed from the cage and taken to the adoption room, office or bathroom where socialization continues with play and handling. In addition, each cat has a scratching pad, an appropriate bed, and appropriate toys in its cage.

Like dogs, cats receive vaccinations and any necessary medical care during their stray hold and are spayed or neutered after the stray hold period. Cats are also marketed on our website, Petfinder and social media.

Statistics

Here are the average intake/outcome numbers for the past 4 years:

Intake Type	Cats	% of Total	Dogs	% of Total
Strays	132	48%	182	61%
Surrenders & Returns	93	34%	94	32%
Custodial	4	1%	9	3%
Born in our Care	8	3%	6	2%
Transfers in from Partners	11	4%	7	2%
Wildlife/Trapped Cats	30	11%	0	0%
Total	277	100%	296	100%

Outcome Type	Cat	% of Total	Dog	% of Total
Return to Owner	16	6%	139	48%
Adoption	203	75%	129	45%
Transfers to Partners	10	4%	10	3%
Died of Natural Causes	9	3%	1	0%
Euthanasia	8	3%	8	3%
Released Cats	25	9%	0	0%
Total	271	100%	287	100%

Plans for the new facility would increase cat cage capacity from 30 to 52 and change the cage structure from 100% in-cage housing to an environment that contains 20 cages and 4 open cat rooms. The use of open cat rooms would vastly improve the quality of life for cats while they are in the shelter. 32% of our current intake comes from owner relinquishments with many of these being older cats or cats with behavioral issues. Some of these cats might be difficult to immediately transition into an open cat environment and would be kept in cages as appropriate.

Our understanding of the need for cat placement from Cook County is that most of the cats are from hoarder situations or evictions. During our time at the Evanston Animal Shelter we have handled three hoarder situations. In February of 2015 we took in 20 cats from a local cat shelter where all of the cats had to be relocated after the caregiver died. In June of 2015 we took in 68 cats from a local hoarder. This included mothers with kittens and pregnant cats. Fortunately we were able to manage the intake over a few weeks. Still, this was a major undertaking in our constrained facility. In February of 2017 we took in 18 cats from a hoarder situation. Cats from these situations are unlike those that come from a more traditional home environment. They have special medical needs and require specifically designed handling in order to help them transition on their journey toward normal pet life. These cats do not fit statistically into desired turnaround times from intake to adoption. That said, the transition is possible and we have many success stories from these situations.

On the dog side, nearly 50% of the incoming dogs are strays that are returned to their owners. They are typically with us three days or less. We receive approximately 150 dogs per year that

need to be rehomed that remain in the shelter. The plans for the new facility would essentially double our kennel space, which would allow us to take in an additional 150 dogs.

We understand that many of the dogs from Cook County involve hoarding situations. Since we do not have experience with hoarder situations involving dogs, we would seek guidance on the best practices for handling these special needs animals.

We would also build the ability to handle rabies observation cases into our planning. We have had a few rabies observations in our current space. The biggest issue is ensuring veterinary staff availability every day (including weekends) and we could contract for that as needed. We would not necessarily designate specific cages or a specific room to this category of dogs. There is no medical need for complete separation and safe handling can be achieved without physical separation.

We do have some animals that are in our custody for an extended period of time. There are several reasons for this. Because we do not perform pediatric spay/neuters we place puppies and kittens in foster-to-adopt homes until their spay/neuter surgeries at 6 months. These young animals are reported as in custody, though they are not on site in the shelter. In addition, we have a program called Forever Fosters where we place senior or special needs animals in a hospice foster situation. We agree to cover the medical costs for the lifetime of the animal so they can live their final months or years in a comfortable home. This program often allows senior animals (especially cats) to live out their lives with a senior citizen who might not otherwise be able to afford a pet. It is a win/win situation but it does extend our length of stay numbers. We also take in a number of animals with medical or behavioral issues that require a longer time in custody, however in most cases they are in foster homes for much of their custodial period.

For these reasons, an analysis of our average length of stay must look at the days on site and not just the days in custody. That said, 58% of our animals are in custody for 20 days or less and only 15% are in custody beyond three months (120 days). If you look at the days on site, this past year, 52% of our animals were on site for 7 days or less and only 8% of our animals were on site more than 120 days. It is important to note, that these are not continuous days on site but rather the total. An animal could be on site during initial intake, sent to a foster home for a period of time and returned to the shelter for final adoption.

As indicated, we use foster homes extensively. During 2019 we had 169 foster homes hosting one or more animals for some period of time. Those wonderful foster families hosted a total of 343 animals. In some cases, like our Forever Foster homes, the animal may have stayed in the foster home for the entire year. In other cases it might have been a dog only spending the weekend with a family for a Field Trip.

Approximately 30% of our foster homes are volunteers or former volunteers. The rest come from all walks of life and range from college students to seniors. Just as with potential adopters,

potential fosters are carefully vetted. They first complete a detailed survey and are then screened by our foster care coordinators. Based upon a foster’s home environment and handling ability, an appropriate animal is placed as soon as it becomes available. In most cases we provide everything that the foster needs to care for the animal. In addition to essential supplies this includes covering the cost of medical and training expenses. However, some fosters, are willing to provide the basics while the animal is in their care. This amazing network of people has enabled us to provide quality care for our animal population, which would not be possible if they had to stay in our small shelter for the duration of their time with us. In fact, we would not be able to handle the volume of animals we take in without them.

We would be remiss if we didn’t discuss euthanasia. Socially Conscious Sheltering requires that we have to make difficult decisions that are in the best interest of the animal and the community. At the Evanston Animal Shelter we do everything we can to give every animal the best possible chance at a good life. But sometimes either a serious medical condition or a behavioral issue requires us to humanely euthanize an animal. Here are the details of our euthanasia numbers:

	2016	2017	2018	2018
Cats Euthanized for Medical Reasons	7	7	6	10
Dogs Euthanized for Medical Reasons	4	4	6	4
Dogs Euthanized for Behavioral Reasons	2	4	4	5
Total	13	15	16	19

Working with the Chicagoland Rescue Community

We transfer out very few of our animals to other rescues. In 2019 we transferred out only 10 cats and 10 dogs, most of which were returned to the rescue partner from where they were originally adopted. In fact, most often we transfer in desperate animals from other rescues or from areas supported by organizations that we know are stretched beyond capacity. For example, in 2018 we received a call from the Animal Welfare League because they were overrun with very young kittens and struggling to care for them. We travelled there and returned with 40 kittens, which were immediately placed in foster homes. Sadly, 10 of them were in such bad shape on intake that they didn't survive. However, the other 30 were saved. In 2019, 20% of our intake came from outside of our service area (12% from Chicago and 8% from other surrounding areas). While our contractual obligations require us to take in all strays and surrenders from the City of Evanston, our shelter diversion programs, (described below) have helped us decrease our intake numbers. This allows us to use the resulting cage and kennel space to work with other organizations to serve the broader community.

We feel it is important to be a part of the local rescue community. Our Executive Director serves on the Steering Committee for the Chicagoland Lifesaving Coalition. We are a Homeward Bound Partner at Chicago Animal Care and Control. Our lack of ISO capability at the shelter, however, limits our ability to pull animals from CACC to primarily situations where they can be placed immediately into foster homes.

While we have not had to rely on local rescues in the past, we would call upon our network of rescue partners to assist with major hoarding cases or at times when we were at capacity.

Staffing

We are mainly a volunteer run organization. We have two full time staff who are funded primarily by a grant from the City of Evanston. Natan Lipton-Lubet is the office manager and also oversees the morning cat crews. He has been employed by the shelter for nearly 4 ½ years (since EASA took over shelter operations). Tanya Ohanian is the canine director and oversees everything related to dogs. She has been employed at the shelter since June of 2017. Both individuals were volunteers prior to their employment.

Several key positions are staffed by long term volunteers who are also board members. Vicky Pasenko serves as the executive director of the shelter. Ms. Pasenko has volunteered at the shelter for 14 years and recently retired from her corporate job and is able to focus on the shelter full time. Nancy Maize is the feline director. Ms. Maize has been at the shelter for 5 ½ years and also recently retired, devoting full time to the shelter. Leslie O'Brad serves as feline foster coordinator. Kameron Bratt serves as canine foster coordinator. Bill Patti is the treasurer and is responsible for general financial oversight, including record keeping and reporting. He works closely with our accounting firm and their auditors to ensure we are following GAAP

standards. Brenda Irwin recently joined the board and serves as the IT director. Along with Mr. Patti she is managing the configuration and implementation of the new CRM software.

There are approximately 175 volunteers who staff 14 shifts per week. Each cat shift is supervised by a volunteer cage captain and each dog shift is supervised by a volunteer kennel captain. The cage captains report to the feline director and the kennel captains report to the canine director. These positions are held by senior volunteers. Every volunteer goes through a training program and achieves certification levels required in order to be eligible to handle specific animals safely. This is a formal program with educational material, shadowing, coaching and testing prior to advancement.

Following is the breakdown of tenure of our volunteers who actively work at least one shift per week:

Tenure	Percentage of Volunteer Team
Greater than 10 years	4%
5 to 10 years	22%
2 to 5 years	34%
1 to 2 years	14%
Less than one year	26%

To accomplish this project we would need to increase our staff. We would contract with a veterinarian (or two) to allow for onsite veterinary care for 4 hours per day 5 days a week and weekend coverage as needed. The weekend coverage would allow for rabies observations as required.

We would also add at least two staff members to our team. Both would be part time positions working from 8 am to Noon. One would oversee the volunteers in the kennel in the mornings and the other would oversee the morning cat volunteers. These two individuals would report to the canine and feline directors respectively. Integral to our planning would be the identification of funding opportunities and action plans for each of these positions.

Community Programs

One of the realities of operating an open admission animal shelter is that almost every animal transaction has a human component as well. Whether it is the person who suffered a house fire and faces losing their pets because they are temporarily homeless, or the person who has a terminal illness and must relinquish their pets because they can no longer care for them, or the

family who just adopted a cute pair of kittens that will brighten their life - the decisions we make and the care we provide our animals impacts humans too. We believe the best place for a pet is the loving home where they already live, so we have implemented a number of shelter diversion programs to help people keep their pets.

Shelter Diversion Programs

We maintain a **Food Pantry** where we provide dog food, cat food and cat litter for those who struggle to feed their pets. The food is donated by people in the community and we simply store it and pay it forward. We also distribute donated collars, harnesses, leashes, beds and other supplies when available.

Our **Custodial Program** is designed to provide care when people find themselves facing an extended hospital stay, or a short term housing crisis resulting from things such as domestic violence, foreclosure, or a fire. These situations often result in the relinquishment of their pets. But through the Custodial Program we provide care for up to six weeks to allow families time to recover from an illness or secure living arrangements that will include their pets. While the animals are in our care we bring their shots up to date, provide spay/neuter surgery, and address any medical issues they might have – **all free of charge**. If possible, the animals are placed in foster care to avoid the stress of an extended stay in the shelter. Over the past four years 48 animals have stayed in our custodial care for a total of 2,195 days. The reunions with their families are priceless.

Our **Senior Safety Net Program** recognizes that seniors on a fixed income may struggle with the financial strain of medical care for their companion pet. Sometimes a common illness, such as an ear infection, eye infection, or the need for thyroid medication can stretch a senior's budget beyond their means causing them to choose between watching their animals suffer or surrendering their beloved pets. This program pays up to \$500 per animal per year to cover non-catastrophic illness when the pet owner is 63 years or older.

Annually EASA hosts a **More Than A Shelter Clinic** where we provide free rabies vaccinations and microchipping for companion pets. The ideal outcome for animals entering our shelter as lost strays is to be returned to their homes. The best and quickest way to facilitate this is for the animals to be microchipped and have a current rabies vaccination.

Our **Forever Foster** program places senior animals or those with special medical needs into hospice foster homes where they can live out their lives in a loving environment. We cover all medical costs and provide food if necessary while the foster homes provide the love.

Engaging Young People

We believe that involving young people in shelter activities builds confidence, develops empathy for shelter animals, forges future animal advocates and teaches responsible pet ownership, while also building a pipeline of future volunteers and a large base of adult supporters as their parents become involved as well.

We welcome high school students to volunteer as a way to broaden themselves as individuals, give back to the community and fulfill service requirements. Currently there are more than two dozen high school students volunteering on regular shifts at the shelter. We also offer two

programs for younger people. The **Rescue Reader** program allows children ages 4 and up, along with a parent or guardian, to come to the shelter two Saturdays a month to read to the animals. Our **Junior Volunteers** meet once a month in the summer to learn more about compassion and care for companion animals. Unfortunately both of these programs are very restricted because of the lack of space in the shelter causing us to turn away many young people. In a larger facility we would expand these programs to meet the pent up demand for participation.

As an organization we are very active in the community. We have a presence at many local events such as the Custer Street Fair, the 4th of July Parade, outdoor concerts, and Northwestern University events. Volunteers take our animals to offsite events, almost weekly, to promote the shelter and our animals. We recently received a \$1000 award from the Evanston Chamber of Commerce recognizing not-for-profit organizations for their service to the community.

Project Considerations

We recognize that this project would bring significant changes to our facility and would require an extensive review of current operations. Five years ago when EASA assumed responsibility for the shelter we consulted with ASPCA Field Services to help develop our sheltering practices. We are a young organization and we endeavor to continue to grow by working with industry experts and other sheltering organizations for their input and guidance.

Below are factors we would include as components of our analysis and change management process:

What are our key strengths?

- EASA has a strong record of maintaining “no kill” status despite being an open admission shelter that takes in all animals regardless of age, health or temperament. This includes high risk neonatal kittens and pregnant animals. .
- We have operated within the physical confines of a very small, outdated facility and have refused to allow that to be an excuse. We have managed in this environment by creative use of shelter diversion programs, extensive use of a foster home network and strict adherence to shelter protocols.
- We have a strong culture of transparency. Our statistics are published on our website for public visibility. Our volunteers are informed of successes and provided details when an animal is euthanized. This has resulted in an atmosphere of confidence and trust.
- We have a solid core of volunteers and fosters. More than 55% of our volunteers have been at the shelter for more than two years, with another 4% having been at the shelter for more than a decade. We have many long term and returning foster families.

What are the project's major opportunities?

- We will use the time during construction to review and revise current procedures to adapt to the new facility. We will consult with professionals to ensure continued best practices in the new environment.
- We will leverage operating efficiencies afforded us in a new, modern facility.
- Having a space dedicated to medical procedures will allow us to contract with an onsite veterinarian (or two) rather than transporting animals to the veterinarian's office for routine medical care.
- We will create a less stressful, more enriched environment for our animals and a better experience for adopters. (Showing cats for adoption in a bathroom is not the best experience a potential adopter could have). Both of these positive outcomes will help us find forever homes for our animals more quickly.
- Larger capacity and improved outflow will allow us to expand our footprint and more significantly impact the Cook County/Chicagoland area.
- We will expand current onsite community programs such as Rescue Readers and Junior Volunteers while offering new outreach programs such as educational seminars on responsible pet ownership and dog obedience and training classes.

What are some of the project's challenges?

- We need to develop actions plans for increased funding.
- We must ensure that a contractual agreement with Cook County allows us to cap intake at capacity. Best Practices and Socially Conscious Sheltering dictate the avoidance of overcrowding in the shelter.
- We will need to review our contract with the City of Evanston and amend accordingly in order to ensure equitable charges for Evanston and Cook County.
- We need to maintain our culture as we grow. We have seen other organizations struggle with this as they moved into new facilities.

Conclusion

In June of 2015, a small group of shelter volunteers formed the Evanston Animal Shelter Association to work with the City of Evanston to transform the municipal shelter from a high kill facility that was euthanizing nearly 50% of its dogs. Our contract followed a bitter, very public battle between the City and the previous organization that left many citizens thinking the shelter had been closed entirely and others confused about our mission.

We had a huge task before us. EASA was a brand new organization with little to no experience operating an animal shelter. But we were passionate about saving animal lives and determined to succeed. Upon taking over operations we immediately revised policies and procedures to achieve the shelter's first-ever No Kill status.

Our guiding principles are based upon the tenants of Socially Conscious Sheltering. We give every animal the best possible chance at a good life and when required we humanely euthanize with dignity for the life that couldn't be saved. We recognize that animal sheltering has a strong

human component and serve the community through outreach programs, counseling and education. We pledge to always be transparent to our volunteers and the community.

EASA has a proven track record of being able to think outside the box, having expanded the footprint of our tiny facility far beyond anyone's expectations. We would welcome this opportunity to enlarge, upgrade and modernize our physical structure and be able to offer our services to more animals and an expanded human community.

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Larry Suffredin
Commissioner – 13th District
Cook County Board of Commissioners

Committee Chair
Legislation and Intergovernmental
Relations Committee

Committee Member
Criminal Justice
Emergency Management and
Regional Security
Finance
Sub-Committee on Litigation
Health and Hospitals
Human Relations
Pension
Transportation
Veterans
Workforce, Housing and Community
Development
Zoning and Building

February 3, 2020

Dr. Thomas Wake
Administrator
Cook County Animal and Rabies Control
10220 South 76th Ave.
Bridgeview, IL 60455

Re: Evanston Animal Shelter “A Home for Cook County’s Animals” application

Dear Dr. Wake

I want to express my support for Evanston Animal Shelter’s application for “A Home for Cook County’s Animals” to help shelter Cook County’s stray animals.

The Evanston Animal Shelter and Adoption Center provides compassionate and humane care to Evanston’s abandoned, abused and relinquished animals and works to find them homes. Between 2016 and 2019, the Evanston Animal Shelter has taken care of over 2290 animals while posting a “Live Release Rate” of 97%.

As the Cook County Commissioner for District 13, I support the intent of the Evanston Animal Shelter in obtaining grant funding to house Cook County’s animals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry Suffredin".

Larry Suffredin
Cook County Commissioner, 13th District

The 13th District includes the following communities
49th & 50th Wards of the City of Chicago, the City of Evanston and the Villages of Glencoe, Glenview, Kenilworth,
Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Niles, Skokie, Wilmette, and Winnetka



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