

To the Honorable Mayor and Members of the Sebastopol City Council,

Thank you for the work you are doing on behalf of our City. I recognize how challenging these times are, and I appreciate the Council's thoughtful stewardship of public resources.

With the significant cost difference between the two bids for animal services, I understand why the lower bid is compelling. At the same time, because animal services directly influence both public safety and community health, I hope the Council will consider feasibility and service capacity in addition to price.

From my perspective as a resident of Sebastopol, and a local veterinarian, the scope outlined in the RFP is appropriate but also substantial: animal control response and presence, sheltering, veterinary care, licensing, community outreach, and emergency and disaster response. While cost savings is always important and attractive, the reality is that even a single vaccine outreach clinic can cost thousands of dollars, and a single severe medical case, like hit-by-car animals that animal control responds to - can easily exceed \$10,000. Any provider — Sonoma County Animal Services (SCAS) or North Bay Animal Services (NBAS) — deserves adequate funding to realistically meet the needs of the City.

Critical details that the Council should consider prior to a contract selection:

- Animal Control Vehicles have code requirements, and are required to have heat and A/C. Each bidder's compliance with animal service vehicle codes must be confirmed before selecting a contract. Inadequate heat or air conditioning in our climate is an animal welfare issue that creates unnecessary suffering, risk, and liability.
- The Humane Society and SCAS both have veterinarians on site and on staff. NBAS model for providing veterinary care (on-site or referring to outside hospitals) and associated costs should be explored to make sure necessary veterinary care can be provided within the contract cost.
- Animal control officer certification under California ACO training requirements should be confirmed. This training ensures appropriate ACO practices.
- Licensing systems should be reviewed thoroughly. Is a licensing system deployed, available online, in person, mail-in, and in the field?
- Unincorporated Sebastopol is served by SCAS. Having the City and surrounding rural Sebastopol in two different service models understandably creates confusion for residents about where to get help, get a license, bring a hurt animal, find a lost animal, or report a safety concern. Either adopting the same model, or having a thorough communication/education plan for residents will be important to prevent additional frustration.
- Traveling to Petaluma to drop injured or stray animals, or reclaim lost animals may create an inequity of service for those with transportation or mobility barriers. A plan for transportation support if NBAS is selected may need to be considered.
- My understanding is that NBAS does not cover all the cities stated in the report. My understanding is that their contract with Clearlake was ended, SCAS covers the City of

Healdsburg, and Cotati does their own animal services through the Police Dept. The report accuracy should be confirmed.

- Response times for emergencies, safety hazards and disasters should be considered. SCAS officers have an existing beat that includes Sebastopol, I am unsure about NBAS field proximity.
- I believe SCAS has countywide authority over rabies control, quarantines, and disease surveillance. Understanding NBAS role and abilities to implement would be helpful.
- SCAS is an established disaster-response authority for Sonoma County, has been appointed incident command for the last several wildfire and flood disasters, and has coordinated with the Humane Society in wildfire and flood events. If NBAS is selected, a disaster coordination plan would be important.
- The enforcement history of each agency should be examined. Reviewing whether cases have been submitted to the District Attorney's office or citations have been processed by the Superior Court points to enforcement or lack thereof. This will help identify the agencies abilities and expertise to meet the scope of the RFP.

These points are important to flush out before a commitment is made, especially in light of recent formal concerns. I sincerely appreciate the hard and meaningful work NBAS, SCAS, and the Humane Society do.

Regardless of whom the City selects, I strongly urge that accountability and service oversight be part of the contract to ensure that expectations are met. Especially in light of the grand jury report, knowingly insufficient services leading to dog bites or disease creates liability for the City. A strong contract protects both the City and the public.

Before awarding the contract based primarily on cost, I respectfully request that the Council:

- **Interview bidders** to understand how each will fulfill the full scope of services. I suggest that the council interview all parties to get a sense of who they are and what else is brought to the table rather than making a decision based solely on money.
- **Speak with other cities currently served by each provider** to better understand operational outcomes, response times, and community experience.
- **Include measurable quality-control tracking** in the contract to monitor if services are delivered as presented in the proposal.
- **Include an owner-surrender process in the contract**, so residents in crisis (eviction, domestic violence, medical crisis, etc) are not forced to abandon pets unsafely.
- **Consider additional contract options:** There may be a possibility to negotiate with either party to meet both fiscal needs and community needs.

Thank you again for your service to our community. I am grateful for your leadership.

Respectfully,

Dr. Sarah Reidenbach

Sebastopol Resident | Local Veterinarian