

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 10, 2015

TO: Honorable Members of the Milwaukee Common Council

FROM: Department of Neighborhood Services

RE: Trap, Neuter and Release Pilot Program

The purpose of this correspondence is to report to results of an evaluation of the Feral Cat Pilot Program and make recommendations regarding the program as required in Milwaukee Code of Ordinances Ch. 78-20.

In March of 2010, the Common Council authorized the implementation of a pilot project for feral cats which had a duration of five years. The Wisconsin Humane Society (WHS) was the sole applicant to become the program sponsor; DNS began discussions with WHS and the Milwaukee Area Domestic Animal Control Commission to establish program rules and requirements. This has become a very positive and productive relationship. Separate communication about this program from WHS is attached.

Over the life of the program, there have been 118 applications. Currently there are 49 inactive and 69 active sites. Of the 49 inactive sites, 28 came to the attention of the Department of Neighborhood Services as objectionable to the public (who requested hearings).

Of the 28 hearings, 24 resulted in denial and 4 were approved. The most common reason for denial was the right of a tax-paying citizen to enjoy the use of their property outweighed benefit to the community by the privilege hosting a cat colony. Sometimes significant opposition by neighbors was noted for issues of feces, spraying/smell, fear of interaction with children and pets, bird and other wildlife damage and simply not desiring cats on their property.

There was one known incident of an animal bite during 2014 which occurred at a permitted feral cat site; one of the cats charged off the front porch at the site in

an unprovoked manner and attacked a dog and its walker on the front sidewalk, causing injury to both the dog and human.

The Wisconsin Humane Society has worked with the Department of Neighborhood Services to remove participants who failed to meet their programmatic obligations (usually for not submitting required reports or allowing feeding activity to cause disruption to neighbors). The program site monitoring per the Memorandum of Understanding between DNS and WHS has been key to keeping protecting neighbor concerns.

WHS indicates that ordinance drawbacks include the notification to neighbors in a 200 foot radius of a proposed site as problematic. DNS believes that notification in the process is critical to have engaged, accepting communities. Simply stated, neighbors should have input into what impacts their lives and homes.

The Department of Neighborhood Services maintains WHS' recommendations to eliminate the controls of the program and revert to simply releasing spayed/neutered cats would:

- Increase the likelihood of negative interactions among neighbors.
- Increase the complaints to Aldermanic offices and DNS about roaming and lounging cats as well as spraying/smell caused by cats onto private property.
- Increased damage to wildlife including song birds.
- Encourage illegal feeding of the cats which will lead to the increase of rat populations.
- Increase the threat to public health and safety by not having continually updated rabies vaccines.
- Increase cost of enforcement of the domestic animal control ordinance on the City's already limited funding.

DNS recommends that the Common Council either 1.) authorize the program to continue in its current form with all the appropriate controls to protect neighbor and community interests or 2.) allow the current pilot Feral Cat Colony ordinance to sunset on May 19, 2015 and direct DNS and the Legislative Reference Bureau to revert the enabling legislation back to its original pre-March 19, 2010 configuration.

