

Citizens Urge Council: Eliminate Redundancy in Animal Law for Sensible Cost Reductions



concerned friends of man's best friend

April 22, 2013

As budget cuts loom, county considers shutting animal control's doors to the most vulnerable

The Maryland Dog Federation is a dog owner advocacy group.

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It's an all-too-common occurrence...someone is being foreclosed upon, or evicted, or forced to move out of their home into a smaller apartment. Someone is no longer able to care for themselves, entering an assisted living facility, or is impacted by some other life-altering event.

In the midst of perhaps the most stressful times of a person's life, and despite all efforts to find them their own new home, the dog and cat must be taken to the shelter.



Now imagine getting to the shelter only to find it no longer accepts pets surrendered by their owners!

In order to balance the Prince George's County budget, significant reductions, possibly as much as 20% are expected in FY14 for the Animal Management division, leaving officials scrambling to figure out how to keep even basic services available for citizens and animals in need. One draconian option being considered is to curtail or even completely *stop accepting pets* given up by their owners, one of the most *critical services* any shelter can provide the public.

Cutting *critical* services is not the only way to span the budget gap.



Let's look at ineffective and redundant laws and regulations. One high cost—high redundancy law, the 15-year-old “pit bull” ban has neither kept the public safe nor eliminated the breed from the county. The law, based solely on what a dog looks like, can be repealed because it's redundant. There are better laws, *behavior* specific laws, already in full force and effect, that deal with dogs that are a nuisance or a danger in the community...with regard to a dog's appearance or breed.

Breed specific laws address what a dog looks like -- *not what it does* – and forces the impoundment and killing of hundreds of benign family pets.



The breed specific law (BSL) forces animal control officers to expend time and resources every day dealing with benign family pets. BSL costs the county between \$250,000 and \$500,000 each and every year to enforce. The county can make a huge dent in animal management's deficit without a negative impact in service by repealing this law.

The law fails because it does not deliver the promised results. A ban neither reduces bites nor the number of “targeted dogs” in the community. County data indicates there are MORE “banned dogs” entering the county shelter than when the law took effect. Animal management's Associate Director Rodney Taylor states 80 percent of all the dogs taken as a result of the ban are “good family dogs”:

“The hardest thing we have to do,” testified Mr. Taylor before the Maryland General Assembly, “is to go to someone's house, see their American Pit Bull Terrier laying in the living room watching television with the kids and family...and tak[e] that dog away. A dog that has done nothing wrong, caused no problems, but just because of his breed he has to be removed.”

Laws like this are being repealed all over the country. It's time to repeal ours. We can't afford not to.

