

Richard Spitler

From: Paul Ingalls [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2015 9:00 AM
To: Richard Spitler; Chris Canning; Gary Kraus; Michael Dunsford; Jim Barnes; Irais Lopez-Ortega
Subject: Animal control services/Tuesday's agenda

Dear Richard and members of the City Council,

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the difficulty of your jobs and thanking you for your service. Those of you who know me will recall that I've expressed this opinion to you personally in the past. In many professions, solving problems is a technical matter. There is essentially one solution, and the challenge is not so much deciding what the solution is as it is working out the mechanics of the solution and putting those mechanics into practice. That's not as true of governance, where multiple solutions are possible and decision makers are frequently called upon to choose among them, even as they realize that none is perfect. It's a difficult job and you have my thanks and admiration for being willing to tackle it.

On Tuesday's council agenda, you will be once again faced with a decision that, in my estimation, requires choosing among imperfect alternatives. There is one choice that has the attraction of appearing safe and logical. There is a second alternative that is more outside the box, perhaps less safe, but which carries with it a lengthy history and, more importantly, a moral obligation on the part of the city.

As you well know, the city of Calistoga has had no animal control services for many years. During all that time, one person has consistently shouldered the duties that, under state law, Calistoga was mandated to provide, although it chose not to do so. While the city shirked its legal obligation, veterinarian Steve Franquelin spent thousands of hours and untold thousands of dollars of his own money providing care to stray and abandoned animals that should have been served by a program paid for by the city.

Several years ago, Dr. Franquelin formed Wine Country Animal Lovers, a non-profit intended to provide medical, adoption and shelter services for animals in Calistoga, as well as to raise philanthropic funds to partially compensate him for the services he heretofore had been providing out of his own pocket. You now have before you a proposal from WCAL and Petaluma Animal Services to provide animal control and sheltering services in Calistoga. That proposal would not only allow the city to fulfill its legal obligation, but would keep tax dollars within the city and would provide significant support for the veterinary practice of a physician to whom the city of Calistoga owes a significant monetary and moral debt.

I would not presume to speak for WCAL, but I believe its principals understand that part of the reason the proposed contract has not been consummated falls on their shoulders. I don't believe that WCAL expects the city to ignore its failure to meet certain reasonable requirements that are wholly its responsibility. It is my understanding, however, that WCAL is not asking for that. Instead, it is seeking a 30-day delay to allow it to meet those obligations, in the hope that a contract with the city can be signed and a truly local solution to the animal control problem can be found. I believe that this is an entirely reasonable request, and I urge you to grant it.

There is, of course, an alternative. After sitting by for more than a decade while a private citizen assumed the city's responsibility, Calistoga could ignore that history and contract with a county agency that has already proved itself incapable or unwilling to provide quality service. Or, it could acknowledge the incalculable service Dr. Franquelin has done for the city and give WCAL an additional 30 days to meet the city's requirements. It is, very simply, a choice between doing the thing that is safe, logical and convenient, or doing the thing that is right. I strongly urge you to do the latter.

Thanks again for all you do for Calistoga and its citizens.

Paul Ingalls

ITEM J-13 Communication Received



March 2, 2015

Honorable Mayor & City Council

Wine Country Animal Lovers is requesting a continuance of your item on the March 3 agenda regarding the City entering into an agreement with Napa County Animal Control for animal control services within Calistoga.

WCAL has been working for many months with staff regarding bringing a proposal to the City for animal control services. Throughout this period, & for many years previously, our group, along with our local veterinarian have provided a safe, secure haven for stray, injured and abandoned animals at no charge to the community. This service will terminate should the City opt to enter into an agreement with Napa County. We believe the community will not be supportive of the City once the true level (or lack thereof) or responsive service from the County is realized and documented. Our eventual goal, and one that we are currently fundraising for is to have a no-kill shelter within the community, funded privately through donations.

We are close to resolving all issues regarding the use permit of Calistoga Pet Clinic and would hate to lose the momentum that has built in our community to protect animals. Petaluma Animal Services Foundation would be a much better choice for animal control services within the community and can provide all services under one roof. Once the use permit issues are resolved with Calistoga Pet Clinic are resolved, members of the community will not have to travel out of town to retrieve lost pets in the vast majority of cases, whereas with a Napa County contract, in all instances, they will have to travel to South Napa area.

We believe that the City is best served by a no-kill animal shelter option, which Petaluma Animal Services Foundation does provide, and Napa County does not. The political fallout of elected leaders making that decision will not benefit anyone. We have spoken to Michelle Ortiz, whose letter to the editor brought this urgency to the Council's attention, and she is in agreement that a thirty day continuance in the interest of doing the correct course of action for the community is appropriate.

Scott Atkinson, Board Member
On behalf of Wine Country Animal Lovers