



# City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

## Office of the City Manager

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G. Chris Brown  
City Attorney

TO: Eric Campbell, City Manager  
FROM: Wesley Russ, Assistant City Attorney  
DATE: March 23, 2018  
RE: Consider action on Anicira proposal at the “detailed stage” for provision of animal services for the City of Harrisonburg.

**Summary:** The City has received a PPEA proposal from Anicira to provide animal services to the City in accordance with the requirements of Section 3.2-6546 of the Code of Virginia. Staff have completed the detailed stage of review.

**Background:** Virginia law requires every locality to maintain or cause to be maintained a public animal shelter. Va. Code Ann. § 3.2-6546. For many years, the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County have contracted with the Rockingham-Harrisonburg SPCA (RHSPCA) to operate our public animal shelters. The City continues to pay debt service for the construction of the current RHSPCA facility, which would continue regardless of which organization the City contracts with for its public animal shelter.

**Key Issues:** The organization the City selects must have sufficient capacity to handle the City’s typical annual intake of 283 dogs and 474 cats.<sup>1</sup> The RHSPCA animal shelter has capacity for 85 dogs and 79 cats; additionally, if necessary, they have the equipment and space available to set up 20 crates that can hold either cats or dogs as necessary. Anicira’s proposed animal shelter has capacity for 15 dogs and 45 cats; Anicira’s proposal also offers a large network of over 100 foster home providers.

Staff have concerns regarding Anicira’s proposed capacity. Anicira’s foster home network means the shelter’s complete capacity is greater than that of just its facility; however, by law, the City’s public animal shelter must house stray animals for a mandated holding period, as well as all animals on rabies quarantine for 10 days and all animals subject to a court hold, which typically last between two weeks and three months. Staff are concerned that instances could arise where the number of animals, particularly dogs, that legally must remain at the shelter facility would leave little capacity for additional animals. Although Anicira has indicated they do not believe they would require managed intake policies limiting the number and types of animals the shelter would admit and discouraging animal surrenders by making the surrender process cumbersome, generally, shelters in Virginia with low euthanasia rates to have both higher capacity and managed intake policies. Staff worry that given the limited capacity and open shelter operational model, Anicira may be overwhelmed by the volume of animals, particularly if interest in their foster program network subsides in the future.

Anicira’s proposal indicates they would request less funding from the City than RHSPCA currently receives; however, there is no guarantee that this requested funding amount would not increase in the future. As Anicira has limited experience operating a public animal shelter, it’s plausible that there are unforeseen costs associated with the operation that will lead to requests for increased funding in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> These figures represent the average annual intake from 2013 to 2017.

Finally, staff believe there is value and security in continuing to partner with the County for a shared public animal shelter. If the City pulls out of its existing arrangement with the County and RHSPCA, there is no guarantee that the City would be able to reenter that arrangement in the event Anicira is unable to fulfill its contractual duties to Council's satisfaction. RHSPCA has fulfilled its contractual obligations in operating the public animal shelter for many years. Although the euthanasia rate at the SPCA is disappointing, staff believe continuing to contract with the SPCA presents less financial risk, and are confident that the SPCA's operational model ensures it will continue to have sufficient capacity to adequately serve the City.

**Environmental Impact:** N/A

**Fiscal Impact:** Anicira's PPEA Proposal funding request is \$213,000. For FY2018, Harrisonburg contributed \$282,379 to the Rockingham-Harrisonburg SPCA.

**Prior Actions:** N/A

**Alternatives:**

- (a) Formally end consideration of Anicira's proposal;
- (b) Accept Anicira's proposal and direct staff to begin negotiation of a contract.

**Community Engagement:** N/A

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends the City forego accepting Anicira's PPEA proposal and continue to contract with the Rockingham-Harrisonburg SPCA. Staff further recommends that City Council consider amending the contract with the SPCA to include benchmarks and goals for the SPCA's performance, as well as quarterly progress reports, including:

- Increases in the size of the SPCA's foster network
- Increased transfers to other animal shelters
- Increases in the number of animals adopted out of the SPCA shelter

**Attachments:** 1. None

**Review:**

*The initiating Department Director will place in Legistar, in sequence of transmittal, the names of each department that must initial their review in order for this item to be placed on the City Council agenda. The completion of review only addresses the readiness of the issue for Council consideration. This does not address the recommendation for approval or denial of the issue.*

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