

Lisa Clausen

From: Public Council Inbox
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2011 5:08 PM
To: 'Joya Goodhue-Hilbert'
Subject: RE: concern for Burien Animal Control

Thank you for your message to the Burien City Council. It will be included in the Correspondence for the Record for the next Council meeting.

Lisa Clausen
City Manager's Office

From: Joya Goodhue-Hilbert [mailto:hillhue@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, April 05, 2011 2:24 PM
To: Public Council Inbox
Subject: concern for Burien Animal Control

Dear City Council members,

I am writing to express my concern about the fate of Burien's homeless pets, and the future of the Burien Animal Control agency. I have volunteered at PAWS and worked there as a Volunteer Coordinator, and I have volunteered at Seattle Animal Shelter and at the SFSPCA. I have seen the daily workings of various shelter organizations and have known and worked with their staff personally. I am extremely dismayed at the system that has been in place over the past 9 months under Dr. Leslie Kasper's operation, and am shocked she was given the contract by the Burien City Council to begin with. It undermines the credibility of the City Council to choose a suitable sheltering organization for Burien's lost and homeless pets. I am glad this situation is being remedied, and as the city considers the next move for the welfare of its' residents pets, I truly hope it hears its resident's concerns about finding a positive solution.

Sherry Meyers seems qualified to operate as Animal Placement Coordinator, but neither Michael J. Snyder Sr. or Guy Knepp appear to be qualified for their proposed roles. Anyone involved in a shelter needs more than an "Intro to Animal Control" course on their resume. Have any of them worked or volunteered at an actual city shelter, or even been inside one? Do they have the qualifications to be hired in these roles in another city? Look at the job requirements at the Seattle Animal Shelter for these respective positions. Talk to Don Jordan about a referral for a director, or Annette Laico at PAWS. Burien is trying to reinvent the wheel when the city has no experience with said wheel. It isn't that hard to do this right. We are not the first city to run an animal shelter.

Is there a volunteer program planned as part of Burien Animal Control? A foster program? A veterinary fund and referral network? A spay/neuter program? A feral cat program? A plan to isolate and TREAT sick animals (not euthanize them) away from the healthy population? An adoption outreach program? A referral network for chronically ill or geriatric pets?

Running a shelter involves the need for all these programs and more, with qualified staff/volunteers to implement and run them. The city of Burien needs to be held accountable for providing a qualified group who can answer these needs. So far, Burien has shown itself to know not one thing about running a shelter, or how to vet (no pun intended) candidates for the contract (track records, etc). We need PROVEN SUCCESS with animal sheltering best practices. This is not some backwater town. We are part of a major metro area. We

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should expect the BEST, and the best certainly is available to us. We don't need Burien residents or local business owners in order to do a good job, we need sheltering specialists with BACKGROUND in SHELTERING and animal welfare. Burien needs an animal behavior specialist to determine whether and animal is capable of being rehabilitated or is truly fractious so we don't kill pets at our shelter who are simply scared or stressed. At the same time, Burien needs someone who will be the compassionate soul to provide humane end of life treatment to those truly untreatable, terminally ill animals; someone experienced with proper procedures and with coping with the emotional aspects of the task. It's an entirely different realm from being a veterinarian, or a dog trainer, or a Posh Puppy grooming salon owner, or a breeder, in fact breeding goes against the philosophy behind spay/neuter altogether, and the problem of pet overpopulation.

Burien should find someone familiar with or from No Kill King County: <http://www.nokillkingcounty.org/> and someone who has been to conferences held by No Kill Advocacy: <http://www.nokilladvocacycenter.org/> to develop a state of the art, forward thinking, model shelter. There are plenty of local, existing models to work from, but I believe Burien can and should be ahead of the King County curve with a kinder, gentler way to protect pets. We should do better than PAWS, or Seattle Humane. We should do at least as well as Seattle Animal Shelter.

But, it appears that some local business people continue to view the Burien Animal Control contract as a lottery windfall to supplement their income. These are not people concerned or experienced with the welfare of our vulnerable lost and homeless pets. These are people concerned with self advancement. It is a sickening prospect that there are those who will try to profit off the misfortune of vulnerable animals. The fate of vulnerable homeless pets is not a ticket to financial salvation. The contract as the city offers it is not enough to cover the cost of sheltering animals responsibly with all the best practices in the field, let alone bring in extra take home income.

As a passionate animal welfare advocate and activist and resident of Burien, I expect City Council to provide the residents of Burien with a humane, safe, progressive homeless pet advocacy coalition. We all want to know our own pets would be safe if they ever got lost, and that we would know where to find them and that they would be treated well in the meantime. I also want to know that strays and other homeless animals will be healthy, and find a safe and humane life for themselves after an encounter with animal services, and that they will not end up "euthanized"/killed.

Burien pet owners are forced to trust the best judgment of City Council. I hope you will prove that this trust is founded and deserved.

Regards,

Joya Goodhue-Hilbert