



# Memorandum

**TO:** RULES & OPEN  
GOVERNMENT  
COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Mayor Matt Mahan  
Vice Mayor Rosemary Kamei  
Councilmember Omar Torres  
Councilmember Peter Ortiz  
Councilmember Bien Doan

**SUBJECT:** AUDIT OF SAN JOSE  
ANIMAL CARE AND  
SERVICES

**DATE:** October 5, 2023

**APPROVED:**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Direct the City Auditor to prioritize an audit of San José Animal Care and Services (SJACS). This audit should cover the following areas:

1. A comparison of SJACS operations against industry standards for:
  - a. Staffing and protocols for animal care and veterinary services, paying special attention to protocols for infectious and transmittable diseases.
  - b. Engagement with and utilization of volunteers and rescue groups, including onboarding, training processes, and transferring animals to rescue partners.
  - c. Key shelter metrics such as lengths of stay, live release and euthanasia rates, condition of animals on intake, the number of animals turned away at intake, the number of animals transferred to rescue partners, and other outcome details.
  - d. Availability of services to the public for stray animal intake, spay/neuter programs, TNR (trap, neuter, and release), programs, and adoption services.
  - e. Staffing and protocols for facility maintenance, cleaning, and record keeping.
2. Opportunities to improve compliance with animal licensing through an equity lens, maximize the number of vaccinated pets, and whether residents' ability to pay affects these outcomes.
3. Levels of service provided against agreements with neighboring jurisdictions.
4. Evaluate how the existing Shelter/Rescue Working Group can review available data and inform strategies to improve shelter operations and maximize live outcomes.
5. Dashboards shared with the public on shelter operations; the most relevant metrics, how regularly they're updated, and methods of data collection.
6. Community outreach regarding SJACS services.

7. Progress toward implementing the 2022 Maddie's Fund "Shelter Consult" observations and recommendations.
8. Progress toward implementing the 2022 Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters from the Association of Shelter Veterinarians.
9. Evaluate whether the shelter design is meeting the needs of animals and the community.

## **DISCUSSION**

We thank our dedicated SJACS staff, volunteers, and rescue partners who care for the thousands of animals that come through our animal shelter each year. Paid or not, their work is physically and emotionally demanding, as they provide critical care for some of our community's most fragile, injured, sick, neglected, or abused animals. Like many animal shelters in crisis across the nation, SJACS staff and volunteers are tending to a record-high number of animals, with more animals entering the shelter and staying longer, and more animals requiring acute medical treatment. This is in part due to that fact that Americans adopted animals at record rates in 2020, and far too often, are bringing them back to the shelter as their lifestyles change with the end of the pandemic.

Fortunately, after years of staffing challenges at SJACS – including and especially veterinary staffing – we believe we're finally starting to turn a corner, filling our last full-time veterinarian position in September. Through the FY 2023-2024 budget, we also funded an additional 12 positions at the shelter to provide overnight animal care, support shelter operations, improve customer service, augment the licensing program, and increase medical services.

SJACS has not been audited for quite some time. Given that the shelter is caring for a record number of animals and community concerns have been raised about shelter operations, an objective assessment of SJACS can hopefully help bring about what staff, volunteers, rescue groups and the community all want: the shelter to be the best that it can be and provide the best care possible to the animals we serve. Therefore, the City Auditor should prioritize an audit of SJACS in the coming months while giving careful consideration to minimizing any impact on shelter operations and not over-burdening our already-taxed staff who are responding to a crisis.

*The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member's staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer's staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member's staff.*