



# City of Morgan Hill

## Legislation Text

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File #: 15-830, Version: 1

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## **CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

### **MEETING DATE: DECEMBER 16, 2015**

PREPARED BY: Shane Palsgrove, Captain/Police Department  
APPROVED BY: City Manager

## **SPAY AND NEUTER PROGRAM**

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. Accept report, and
2. Provide direction for participation in the Santa Clara County Spay and Neuter Program for Fiscal Year 16/17 budget development.

### **COUNCIL PRIORITIES, GOALS & STRATEGIES:**

#### **Ongoing Priorities**

Enhancing public safety  
Protecting the environment  
Maintaining fiscal responsibility

#### **FY 14/15 Focus Areas**

Community Engagement Effectiveness

### **REPORT NARRATIVE:**

At its meeting of November 18, 2015, Council heard a request during public comment asking the City to participate in Santa Clara County's Spay and Neuter Program. Subsequently, Council Member Librers requested to have this item on the agenda for Council discussion. The Police Department has prepared a report regarding Santa Clara County's Spay and Neuter Program ("Program") for cats. Staff has extensively researched the Program and the pros and cons of the City participating in the Program.

### **Program Guidelines and Background**

The County of Santa Clara currently provides a subsidy for the spaying/neutering of cats. The Program pays \$30 per cat and the "guardian/Morgan Hill resident" pays a \$25 co-pay to have a cat spayed/neutered at designated private veterinary clinics located throughout the County. There is one Morgan Hill veterinary clinic who participates in the Program. In FY14-15, the County paid \$6,330 to

have 211 Morgan Hill feral cats spayed/neutered. Many of these cats were brought in from non-profit organizations or feral cat advocates in Morgan Hill that trap, spay/neuter and release feral cats in the City limits. These groups or individuals capture a large quantity of cats that are taken to veterinarians to be spayed/neutered and then released back to their original location.

Participation by cities in the Program is optional. Cities choosing to participate in the Program pay \$45 per cat and the local “resident/guardian” pays a \$10 co-pay; as compared to \$25 if the city is not a participant.

Cities can participate without restriction or place a monetary limit on its contribution to participate in the Program. Program restrictions can also include a limit on the number of times a local “guardian/resident” can use the Program’s services. It should be noted that restrictions require oversight by city staff to conduct an audit of the veterinary services and the County’s records. In a restricted scenario, the Program would first exhaust all of the funds from the contributing city toward the spay/neutering costs prior to using County funds.

Therefore, if Morgan Hill contributed \$9,495 for the 211 cats in FY 14/15, the County would realize a savings of \$6,330 as they no longer have to contribute to the sterilization cost until the City’s funds were exhausted. While there is a \$15 savings to residents for each stray cat taken to be spayed/neutered, a participating city pays \$15 more than the County’s contribution.

The non-profit organizations would realize a benefit if the City were to participate in the Program with the reduction of operational costs. Based on the number of cats spayed/neutered in FY14/15, the non-profits would have realized a savings of \$3,165.

Below is a chart that reflects the number of times Morgan Hill residents took stray cats to be spayed/neutered at both private veterinary clinics and the San Martin Animal Shelter using the County program subsidy over the last nine years.

FY	Gilroy	Morgan Hill
FY16	187	57
FY15	351	211
FY14	333	314
FY13	620	131
FY12	639	118
FY11	403	84
FY10	480	133
FY9	658	175
FY8	357	197
FY7	296	397
FY6	184	212
total	4508	2029

Source: Chelsey Prow, Interim Supervisor/Santa Clara County San Martin Animal Shelter.

An alternative that is free to Morgan Hill residents is the San Martin Animal Shelter which provides a free spay/neutering service as time permits. During FY14/15, the Shelter provided free spay/neutering services to 130 cats. It is important to note that the shelter does however turn residents away during peak demand periods.

### **Participation of Other Cities**

There are three out of fifteen cities in the County currently participating in the program: Gilroy, Mountain View and Sunnyvale.

Gilroy, population of approximately 52,000, allocates \$20,000 funds annually for this program from its Administration Services Department budget. They also have an analyst who audits the program.

Mountain View, population of approximately 75,000, allocates \$2,000 annually for program participation from the Police Department's budget.

Sunnyvale, population of approximately 150,000, allocates \$4,000 per year for this program from its Public Safety Department's budget. Sunnyvale plans to conduct a review of the program at the end of the year to evaluate the program's success and consider future participation.

Furthermore, the Police Department is evaluating a potential ordinance to prohibit the feeding of feral cats because this may cause environmental issues including, but not limited to, littering, attracting wildlife into populated areas, and pollution of lands and waterways. Staff will continue to evaluate and then decide if it will make a recommendation for Council consideration.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:      Involve**

Staff met with Ms. Geddes in May, June, and July 2015 to discuss Morgan Hill's current situation regarding feral cats. Captain Palsgrove offered to work with Ms. Geddes to research the feasibility of Morgan Hill's participation in the Spay and Neuter Program. Captain Palsgrove remained in touch with Ms. Geddes during the months of May, June, July, and August to share information and research regarding the Spay and Neuter Program. Staff has also requested to meet with Ms. Geddes to share this staff report prior to the Council meeting.

Staff researched the Program and participating agencies, including contact with Gilroy, Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara County Animal Control, Santa Clara County Department of Agriculture and Environmental Management records and local participating veterinarian businesses as part of the research process.

### **ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:**

1. The City continues to not participate in the Program.

2. Provide direction for staff to return with a limited participation program to be implemented this fiscal year (a budget amendment would be required).
3. Participate fully without any restrictions or cap on number of cats eligible beginning either this fiscal year or FY 16/17 (a budget amendment would be required if implemented this fiscal year).

**PRIOR CITY COUNCIL AND COMMISSION ACTIONS:**

Council discussed this item at its mid-year workshop. Subsequently, Council directed staff to report on this topic after a request during public comment at recent meetings.

**FISCAL AND RESOURCE IMPACT:**

The fiscal impact depends on the option Council selects, if any. Based on the historical volume of cats referred to the veterinarian, Morgan Hill's full participation in the Program would impact the Police Department operating budget by approximately \$9,500 annually based on an estimate received in FY14-15. This item is not budgeted in FY 15/16 budget.

**CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act):**

Project, Description of CEQA requirements

This project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3) (General Rule Exemption), which describes the General Rule that CEQA only applies to projects which "have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment."

**LINKS/ATTACHMENTS:**

None