

TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT

Joint Windsor Town Council, Windsor Redevelopment Successor Agency and Windsor Water District Meeting Date: September 3, 2025

To: Mayor and Councilmembers
From: Irene Camacho-Werby, Town Clerk / Public Information Officer
Kristina Owens, Government Operations Manager
Subject: Town of Windsor Responses to the June 17, 2025, Sonoma County Grand Jury
Investigation Report: *Animal Services in Sonoma County: Separate and Not Equal*

Recommendation to Council:

Approve the Town of Windsor responses to the June 17, 2025, Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury Investment Report: *Animal Services in Sonoma County: Separate and Not Equal* and authorize the Town Manager to submit all approved responses to the Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury on behalf of the Town and Town Council.

Strategic Plan Element:

The recommended action supports the goal of Organizational Effectiveness. Goal Statement: Achieve a high performing organization by nurturing an engaged workforce committed to a shared vision of public service.

Background:

The Civil Grand Jury is a historic institution and serves an important role in our society. It is sometimes referred to as the "watchdog" of the community. It functions as an arm of the judicial branch of government and operates under the authority of the Sonoma County Superior Court. Under State law the Civil Grand Jury is an independent institution that oversees the legislative and administrative departments that make up county, city, and special district governments. The Civil Grand Jury has the power to investigate them to ensure that they are efficient, honest, fair and dedicated to serving the public and individual citizens.

The 19 Grand Jury members are selected annually from applications submitted by County residents to serve a one-year term. The CGJ conducts investigations based on citizen complaints and on its own initiative. The CGJ has the authority to inspect and audit the financial expenditures of county and city departments and special districts to ensure the public funds are properly accounted for and legally spent, inquire into the performance of any county, city, or special district public official or employee. Each Civil Grand Jury Recommendation must be responded to with a specific format governed by California Penal Code section 933.05(b).

Discussion:

On June 17, 2025, the Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury released the report "Animal Services in Sonoma County: Separate and Not Equal", (Attachment 2). This report requires a response from the several County jurisdictions, including the Town of Windsor (Town) and has 90 days to provide a response to the areas specified in their letter to the Town.

A citizen complaint prompted the 2024-2025 Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) to investigate the Petaluma-

based North Bay Animal Services (NBAS). This led to a broader study of county-wide animal services. Following a Grand Jury investigation into NBAS the Grand Jury strongly recommends that county and city governments and their non-governmental partners renew efforts to coordinate and standardize animal services throughout Sonoma County and adopt an effective system of oversight. Grand Jury findings and recommendations:

FINDINGS

F1. Failure by the county and its nine cities to adopt recommendations in the 2012 DHS Animal Services Report has left Sonoma County animal service agencies operating without shared standards, communication channels, data sharing or oversight.

F2. Services provided to the four Sonoma County cities by North Bay Animal Services are non-compliant either with state laws or industry standards for the care of shelter animals as specified in its contracts.

F3. A lack of coordination between SCAS and NBAS is an obstacle to a fully coordinated implementation of the county-wide disaster response plan for animal evacuations.

F4. Insufficient funding and staffing make it difficult for some agencies to provide effective training for staff and volunteers.

F5. Insufficient funding and staffing make it difficult for agencies to maintain websites and social media content required for effective public relations.

F6. Having multiple different fee structures for animal licenses and services is confusing to the public and complicates billing and collection of license fees and fines.

F7. Failure to achieve high levels of licensing in all government jurisdictions and provide access to shared information undermines mandated rabies control, makes it more difficult to return lost pets, and results in a loss of revenue.

F8. Based on SCAS data, uniform adoption of online licensing management through DocuPet (or a comparable vendor) would increase county-wide licensing rates and enhance compliance with state law.

F9. Failure to promote the benefits and legal requirement to license dogs, and failing consistently to send license renewal reminders, contribute to low license compliance and loss of revenue.

F10. Making centralized training resources available could enhance performance of animal services employees and volunteers.

F11. Insufficient oversight either by the cities or by the organization's board of directors has allowed NBAS to be non-compliant with state law and the terms of its contracts by: failing to effectively manage licensing and renewals; failing to offer legally mandated rabies vaccination clinics; failing to perform legally mandated spay/neuter of animals prior to placement; failing to consistently submit bite reports to the county health officer (through SCAS); failing to maintain the Petaluma animal shelter in compliance with industry standards; and failing to collect accurate data and provide reports that demonstrate compliance with contract terms.

F12. A lack of responsiveness to phone calls has eroded public confidence in the ability of NBAS to respond in a timely manner to calls for service or follow-up.

F13. While NBAS is responsible for general maintenance of the shelter, the City of Petaluma is not exercising due diligence with regard to facilities maintenance and repair, which may include an adequate ventilation system based upon the Grand Jury's observations during its visits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. By November 1, 2025, the Board of Supervisors will direct DHS to establish an Animal Services Task Force comprising county, city, and shelter representatives to revisit the 2012 DHS Animal Services Report and recommend a governance structure for animal services that will: 1) provide county-wide oversight to ensure compliance with State Law; 2) standardize fees and engage a common licensing vendor to enhance public health and safety, licensing rates and revenue, and; 3) achieve economic efficiencies through shared resources. (F1, F3, F4-F6 and F9-F10)

R2. By January 1, 2026, each of Sonoma County's 9 cities will delegate one or more representatives to participate in the county-wide Animal Services Task Force convened by DHS. (F1)

R3. By January 1, 2026, the director or supervisor of SCAS, HSSC, RPAS, and NBAS will commit to participating in the county-wide Animal Services Task Force. (F1)

R4. By May 1, 2026, the Board of Supervisors will direct DHS to launch a county-wide public information campaign in cooperation with the cities to explain the legal imperative and benefits of licensing pets. The campaign will commence no later than July 1, 2026. (F7-F9)

R5. By November 1, 2025, each city contracting with North Bay Animal Services will inspect and evaluate the shelter condition, and evaluate the shelter operation and animal control services, to determine whether NBAS is complying with legal mandates and other terms of its contract. (F2, F11-F12)

R6. By September 30, 2025, each of the cities that contracts with NBAS will require quarterly reports that include data and performance criteria sufficient to evaluate compliance with its contract and all relevant laws. (F2, F11)

R7. By November 1, 2025, the Petaluma City Council will direct staff to implement a facilities assessment of the city-owned shelter and submit a report of findings related to the adequacy of the HVAC system and any improvements that may be required for the health and safety of animals and humans. (F13)

R8. By June 1, 2026, the City of Petaluma will correct any identified ventilation and/or other defects that put animal and/or human health and safety at risk. (F13)

The responses requested from the Windsor Town Council are for sections: R1-R2, R4-6, F1-F3, and F6-F11. The Town's responses are shown in Attachment 1.

If approved, the Town Manager will submit the Town's responses to the Grand Jury on behalf of the Town and Council.

Fiscal Impact:

The recommended action will not result in any fiscal impact.

Environmental Review:

The recommended action does not constitute a “project” within the meaning of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15378 and requires no environmental review.

Attachment(s):

1. Response and Summary to Civil Grand Jury Report
2. Civil Grand Jury Report, Animal Services in Sonoma County
- 13.2 PowerPoint (Distributed 2025-09-03)

Prepared by:

Irene Camacho-Werby, Town Clerk
Kristina Owens, Government Operations Manager

Approved by:

Jon Davis
Town Manager