

Strategic Enforcement Plan

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 1, 1998

Updated: January, 2004

PURPOSE

This plan was drafted pursuant to the 1998 Seattle City Council Budget Statement of Legislative Intent in which one (1) additional Animal Shelter Field Enforcement Officer (ACO II) was added to Seattle Animal Shelter's budget for the purpose of providing additional enforcement and education in Seattle's parks. The purpose of such a plan is to set policy guidelines and outline Seattle Animal Shelter's approach towards enforcement and educational activities in Seattle's parks and neighborhoods. The proposed 1998 budget included two (2) additional Animal Shelter Field Enforcement Officers (for a total of 4 Officers) for this purpose but decrements were needed to help fund Medic One for 1998. In 1999, the second ACO II was funded and that person was hired mid-year.

Due to budget reductions sustained in 2003, the enforcement staff allocated to providing enforcement support in Seattle parks was reduced by 50%. There are currently two Officers allocated for this purpose.

BACKGROUND

Seattle Animal Shelter's mission is: "To provide a safe, healthy and caring environment where animals and people can co-exist." To fulfill this mission, Animal Shelter's staff provides the following: 1) enforces animal related ordinances fairly and equitably; 2) identifies and licenses as many pets as possible through an aggressive pet licensing program; 3) educates the public regarding responsible pet ownership; 4) cares for the City's stray and unwanted animals; 5) adopts as many animals as possible to suitable homes; and 6) administers a low-cost spay and neuter program.

Seattle Animal Shelter was created in 1972. At that time, enforcement staff provided 24-hour coverage and consisted of approximately twenty (20) Animal Shelter Field Enforcement Officers utilizing eleven (11) trucks. Currently, the Animal Shelter Enforcement Unit is comprised of twelve (12) Animal Shelter Field Enforcement Officers utilizing six (6) trucks and two (2) other vehicles. Two Enforcement Officers (98 hours/week) are assigned as radio dispatchers with one person dispatching full-time and rotating the remaining dispatching duties among the other Animal Shelter Field Enforcement Officers to assure this vital communication link is staffed 7 days a week.

The Enforcement Unit operates 14 hours a day, 7:10 a.m. to 8:45 p.m., seven days per week. During non-business hours, citizens are directed to call 911 to report life-threatening situations involving humans or animals. Duties of an Animal Shelter Field Enforcement Officer include: enforcing animal control ordinances (leash law, cruelty violations, scoop laws, animal noise, vicious animals); picking up stray, sick and injured animals; trapping nuisance animals; educating the public regarding responsible pet ownership; enforcing pet licensing laws and selling pet licenses; investigating animal bites and placing bite animals under quarantine; serving court summons and search warrants; testifying in court; writing reports; and assisting SPD, Fire, the Health Dept., Washington State Wildlife and other governmental agencies as needed. Duties also include enforcement of that portion of the Seattle Municipal Code governing animal nuisances in Seattle parks such as the leash law and scoop law.

Animal Shelter Field Enforcement Officers receive approximately 20,000 complaints or requests for service annually. Over the course of the last several years, Animal Shelter Officers have taken on the added responsibility of picking up injured and assisting with nuisance wildlife and responding to calls for assistance with sick, injured, deceased or beached marine mammals because Federal and/or State agencies either no longer provide these services or could not meet the citizen's demand for service in a timely manner. With amendments to the Seattle Municipal Code pertaining to parks and the creation of

off-leash areas in Seattle in 1996 (permanently in 1997), Animal Shelter Field Enforcement Officers are now expected to vigorously patrol all parks to ensure appropriate use of both the Off-Leash and On-Leash Areas.

🌀 **METHODOLOGY IN DEVELOPING AN ENFORCEMENT PLAN**

- Interviewed Animal Shelter Officers to obtain feedback.
- Monitored Officers' activity in the field focusing specifically on neighborhoods and parks most in need .
- Met with community groups at Off-Leash Area meetings to learn what their concerns were concerning the park areas designated for off-leash use; attended neighborhood meetings to discuss animal-related problems occurring in their particular community and to work together with groups in addressing specific needs and problems.
- Investigated historical data.
- Related priorities to responsibilities and requirements.

🌀 **DUTIES AND PRIORITIES**

In determining enforcement priorities, several factors are taken into consideration such as public safety, animal safety and available personnel resources. The following is a list of some of those services provided by enforcement staff which are considered priorities:

- **Vicious & Dangerous Animal/Bites:** Immediately responding to reports that an animal has either bitten a person or is menacing the public.
- **Animal Cruelty:** Checking on the health and well being of animals reportedly being neglected or physically abused.
- **Responding to Requests for Service:** Assisting other agencies in impounding or identifying the location of dangerous or vicious animals; enforcing animal-related ordinances; investigating complaints (leash law, noise, scoop etc.), impounding stray and surrendered animals, picking up dead animals from public and private property; and providing customer assistance and service.
- **Park Patrols:** Promote the importance of the leash law, scoop law and pet licensing through a combination of enforcement and education.
- **Patrolling for Stray Animals:** Impounding stray animals before they can become a threat to the public or to themselves on city street or parks.
- **Writing Citations and Testifying in Court:** Officers will write infraction notices to owners of animals which they observe in violation of animal-related ordinances; record what they witnessed, and testify in court when subpoenaed.
- **Public Education:** Taking a proactive approach in teaching and encouraging responsible pet ownership by setting up informational booths at parks and community events; making presentations at schools, neighborhood centers and other highly-visible community groups; disseminating humane education information through pamphlets, brochures, as well as print and visual media.
- **Pet Identification:** Sell pet licenses to the animal-owning citizens of Seattle; facilitate the pet license acquisition process.

🌀 **ENFORCEMENT TACTICS**

The **Communications Team** is comprised of two (2) full time Officers (approximately 96 FTE hours/week) and is responsible for maintaining communications with both the Neighborhood and Parks Team; monitoring the emergency line between Seattle Police Department and Animal Shelter ; coordinating Seattle Police Department response; tracking and monitoring the Officers ' locations and initiating action that promotes Officer safety. In addition, the Communications Team also takes requests for service and complaints from the public via telephone during normal office hours, evenings, weekends and holidays; helps keep statistics regarding the Officer's daily activities, etc.

The **Neighborhood Team** is comprised of eight-(8) full time Officers assigned to work in five geographical areas of Seattle (Northwest, Northeast, Central, Southeast, and Southwest). This team is responsible for picking up stray, surrendered, vicious and dead animals; investigating animal bites, nuisance animals and other animal related complaints; promoting pet identification through pet license sales; providing support for other agencies and other related duties as needed. This team will also coordinate efforts with the Parks Patrol Team by conducting emphasis patrols or "sweeps" of larger, more heavily used parks for animal code violators at least weekly.

The **Parks Patrol Team** is comprised of two-(2) full time Officers and they are assigned to provide enforcement and education exclusively in Seattle parks. Daily duties include patrolling parks to promote compliance of all animal-related ordinances by:

- Utilizing bicycles as appropriate.
- Using unmarked city vehicles, Parks Dept. vehicles, or other vehicles that may be at their disposal.
- Performing periodic sweeps with the Neighborhood Team in parks that generate frequent complaints or is known to have a high number of off-leash violators.
- Use of Officers in modified uniforms.
- Providing educational information by periodically setting up information booths at parks and special events with shelter volunteers.

The two **Enforcement Supervisors** will continue to provide support both in the shelter and field by being on staff and available seven days a week.

DEPLOYMENT METHODS

Neighborhood Team: This team will be deployed in different geographical areas on a daily basis based on need and the available staffing resources for a given day. The Neighborhood Team is expected to increase their visibility in neighborhoods by completing investigative reports and related paperwork in different neighborhood parks within their jurisdiction, often parks that are within close proximity. When requested to do so, the Officer assigned to a particular geographical area will meet the Parks Patrol Team to conduct an emphasis patrol(s) of larger, more heavily used parks in that area. If the Officer assigned to a given area for the day is unable work in that area due to courtroom appearances, sick leave, vacation, etc., other members of the Neighborhood Team will cover that geographical area as needed or overtime will be assigned to meet the demand for service. Only in emergency situations or unforeseen circumstances will members of the Parks Patrol Team be reassigned to assist the Neighborhood Team.

Parks Patrol Team: Members of this team will be deployed on a daily basis to concentrate on larger, more heavily used parks in a given geographical area or those parks determined by citizens or the Parks Department to be most in need of enforcement. Working within Union guidelines, Officers will be sporadically deployed in the early morning hours or late evening hours outside of Animal Shelter's normal operating hours as a method to contact violators that take advantage of the fact that Animal Shelter does not operate 24 hours a day. Such deployment will occur as needed. The Parks Team will utilize marked and unmarked City vehicles, Parks Department vehicles, and mountain bicycles and may occasionally conduct enforcement activities while in civilian clothing. The Parks Patrol Team will also assist the Neighborhood Team in conducting "sweeps" of problem neighborhoods for loose dogs and leash law violators.

🌀 ENFORCEMENT GUIDELINES

Animal Shelter Officers maintain a Special Police Commission issued through the Seattle Police Department which enables them to enforce all animal related ordinances within the City of Seattle. Citations are not only a basic tool of enforcement to gain compliance but also serves as an educational tool as well. While Officers must use discretion in deciding whether a violator is issued an infraction notice or a warning, several factors must be taken into consideration by the Officer in making this decision.

The following are some general guidelines to be used by both the Neighborhood Team and the Park Patrol Team to ensure that enforcement activities are conducted in a manner that is fair and equitable to all citizens.

A **Citation** shall be issued for violations including, but not limited to leash law violation when the violator:

- Is aware of, but willingly violates the law.
- Is in or near a park that contains an off-area.
- Has previously been issued a warning, citation or parks exclusion notice for an animal related violation.
- Fails to demonstrate even minimum pet ownership responsibility and is in violation of other animal control ordinances (e.g., no pet license, no scoop equipment, no current rabies vaccination, no evident control over the animal).
- Gives false information to the Officer.
- Allows the animal to:
 - bite or behave dangerously, aggressively or in a menacing fashion.
 - behave unruly; jump up on people.
 - fail to respond to owner's commands.
 - chase fish/wildlife; enter or destroy fish/wildlife habitat.
 - destroy public and/or private property.
 - be off-leash in or near a playground, wading pool, beach, athletic field or any park area where there is a concentration of children, or on or near a trail or any park area where people are walking, running, picnicking or engaging in other recreational activities where an off-leash dog would be considered by a reasonable person to be disruptive.

A **Park Exclusion Notice** shall be issued in addition to a citation when the violator:

- Has received three or more animal related citations in the parks within a twelve-(12) month period.
- Has received an Official Notice of Potentially Dangerous Animal for an incident that occurred in a City Park.
- Is uncooperative or belligerent and the Seattle Police Department must be summoned to assist the Animal Shelter Officer.
- A Warning may be issued, at the discretion of the Officer, if the following conditions are met and the violator:
 - Is not aware of the law (smaller "pocket" parks tend not to be posted with leash law signage) or tried earnestly not to violate.
 - Has not previously received animal control code violation warnings, citations or parks exclusion notices for animal related violations.
 - Has scoop equipment and a valid pet license with the license displayed on the animal.

- Has not allowed the animal bite or behave dangerously, aggressively or in a menacing fashion.

🌀PUBLIC EDUCATION

Gaining voluntary compliance is the goal of any effective enforcement program. In order to achieve this, the public must be knowledgeable not only of ordinances but of the consequences of noncompliance as well. Both the Neighborhood Team and Park Patrol Team will disseminate information regarding Animal Shelter by:

- Meeting and talking with groups and organizations (e.g. COLA, neighborhood community councils, special animal-interest groups, other governmental agencies, etc.) and cooperating with them in their animal-related endeavors.
- Meeting with representatives of the Parks Department and COLA on a quarterly basis or as needed.
- Solicit more active involvement from COLA and/or other special interest groups in assisting with disseminating information regarding the leash law and responsible pet ownership.
- Staffing informational booths at parks and community fairs; distributing informational brochures and selling pet licenses.
- Maintaining contact through coordination with groups such as the Neighborhood Action Team or Block Watch programs to keep abreast of neighborhoods where animal control activity is most in need.
- Developing and distributing more informative brochures regarding animal control enforcement and off-leash areas.

🌀PERFORMANCE MEASURES

One of Animal Shelter 's top priorities is to attempt to reduce animal related violations in Seattle City Parks and achieve an increase in voluntary compliance. This goal will be achieved by coordination with the Parks Department, vigorous enforcement in City parks, public education, and positive reinforcement for responsible pet owners who abide by the law. In order to determine the effectiveness of this enforcement plan, the following measures will be taken and/or considered:

Qualitative

- Quarterly or as needed, meet with COLA, UNCOLA, Park stewards and personnel, Citizen Service Bureau, and other interested parties for their feedback on the effectiveness of Animal Shelter's Park Enforcement program; report results to them and solicit ideas on what, if any, changes should be made to improve the program and report back to Council with written feedback.
- Animal Shelter will continue to work with the Seattle Parks Department and Seattle Police Department on high-attendance activities scheduled to take place in City parks during the year so that ACO's are available to provide enforcement services.
- Animal Shelter supervisors will examine Officer's daily activity closely to ensure that time and resources are being used efficiently.

Quantitative

As requested, Animal Shelter will submit the following statistics and information to the Mayor's Office, City Council or other executive staff:

- the individual parks patrolled

- number of patrols made in each of the parks
- number of citations and warnings issued
- number of reported dog bites in parks
- number of loose animals impounded in parks
- number of pet licenses sold

The Seattle Animal Shelter is located in the Interbay neighborhood of Seattle between Magnolia and Ballard on 15th West - one mile south of the Ballard Bridge.
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