ANIMAL CARE AND SERVICES:
ADDRESSING CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS AND UPDATING SHELTER PROTOCOLS WILL HELP IMPROVE ANIMAL OUTCOMES

A Report from the City Auditor
Issued November 2024
http://www.sanjoseca.gov/auditor

Presenters: Joe Rois, City Auditor

                    Gitanjali Mandrekar, Assistant City Auditor

City Council meeting (December 3, 2024)

Agenda Item 3.3

Background

- Animal Care and Services is a full-service shelter providing services to San José, Cupertino, Saratoga and Milpitas.

- It is operationally divided into Shelter Operations, Medical Services, Field Services and Administration.

- ACS' 2024-25 Adopted Operating Budget totals $15.4 million, which supports 94 positions.

Exhibit 4: Staffing Levels Increased in the Past Two Fiscal Years
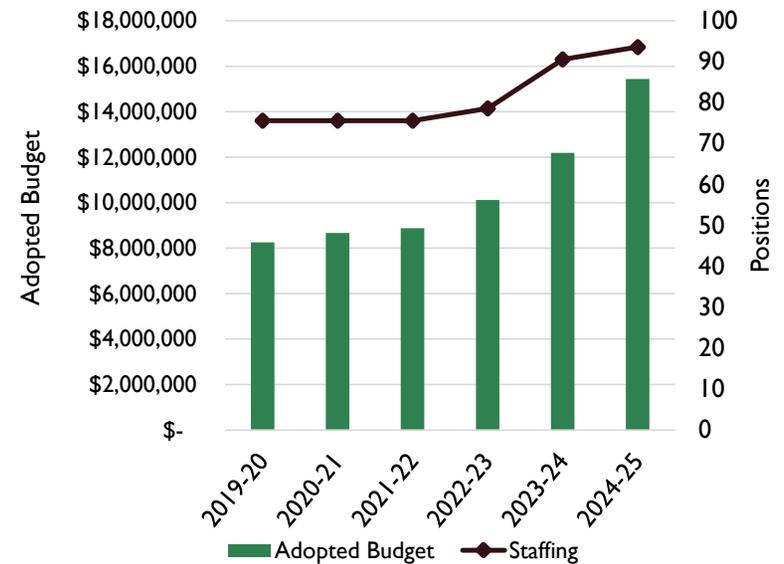
Background (ACS Organization Chart)
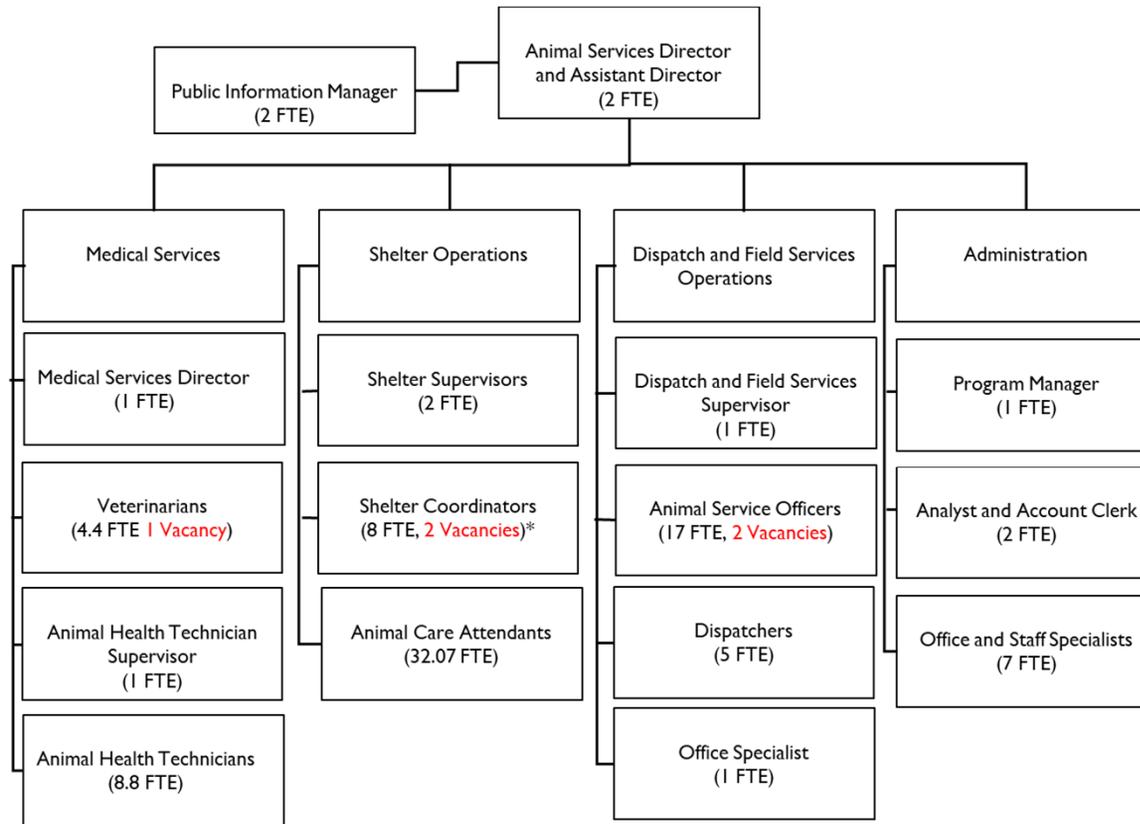
Organization chart as of November 15, 2024.
* Includes 1 Overstrength position

Background

Audit direction included multiple areas of concern related to shelter operations, including:

- A comparison with industry standards for animal care and veterinary services

- Reporting of shelter data and metrics

- Relationships with rescue groups and volunteers

- Licensing and vaccinations

- Facility design

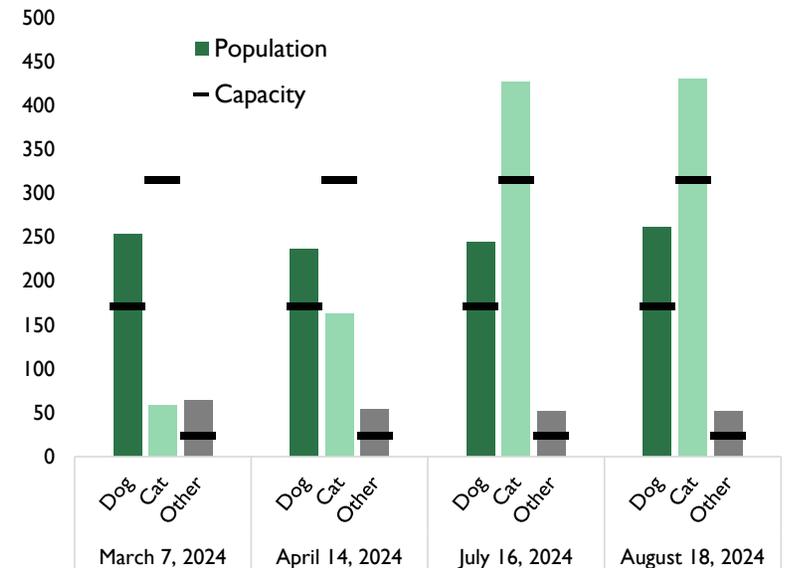- Services provided to neighboring jurisdictions

Finding I: The San José Animal Shelter Is Over Capacity and Needs a Long-Term Strategy to Address the Demand for Shelter Space

- Point-in-time counts in July and August showed that there were nearly 700 animals on site—while shelter capacity was roughly 500 animals.

- Average length of stay has increased in recent years.

- Due to capacity constraints, ACS lacks space to prevent disease spread and promote animal welfare.

Exhibit 7: ACS On-Site Animal Population Frequently Exceeded Housing Capacity

Finding I: The San José Animal Shelter Is Over Capacity and Needs a Long-Term Strategy to Address the Demand for Shelter Space

- The shelter should develop a multi-pronged strategy to address the supply and demand for shelter space.

- ACS should continue to expand population management efforts, including:

  o diverting kittens from intake,

  o increasing opportunities for adoption and rescue, and

  o expanding spay and neuter services.

Recommendations:

→ Determine current shelter capacity and assess whether additional kennel space is required.

→ Reassess the kitten nursery to divert kittens from the shelter.

→ Formalize pathway planning in the shelter and increase opportunities for adoptions, rescue, and spay and neuter services.

MG0   Chart needs to be changed
Mandrekar, Gitanjali, 2024-10-27T23:35:59.053

OE1   It seems like a word is missing in the first bullet
Obi, Ebelechukwu, 2024-10-28T20:34:01.668

Finding 2: Improvements in Animal Care Protocols and Recordkeeping Will Enhance Shelter Operations

- The ACS Manual does not align with actual shelter practices or ASV Guidelines around disease management and some daily care activities.

- Recordkeeping at the shelter was not always complete, making it difficult for supervisors to assess whether animals' daily needs are being met.

- Updated procedures to track and access supplies can improve inventory management.

Recommendations:

→ Update the ACS Manual to reflect ASV Guidelines in various operational areas within the shelter.

→ Provide ongoing training on shelter protocols, recordkeeping, and inventory management.

→ Define supervisory responsibilities over shelter operations.

Finding 3: Additional Disaggregation of Metrics and Better Data Management Can Enhance Transparency of Shelter Operations

- Additional disaggregation of reported outcomes and other metrics can provide information about what may be driving trends in shelter outcomes.

- Better data management can improve data reliability and transparency for shelter operations.

Recommendations:

→ Provide additional disaggregated reporting on length of stay and shelter outcomes.

→ Update data management protocols, including assigning staff to manage data quality processes.

Finding 4: San José Animal Care and Services Can Enhance Its Engagement Efforts With Rescue Groups to Improve Animal Outcomes

- Since FY 2018-19, the number of animals rescued by rescue groups has significantly declined.

- In an auditor-conducted survey of rescue groups:
  - 40% reported having capacity constraints
  - Only 40% rated their overall experience with ACS as good or excellent
  - 44% reported receiving sufficient information to make rescue decisions

Recommendations:

→ Designate a single point of contact to coordinate with rescue groups.

→ Update communications to rescue groups to include complete and accurate information.

→ Develop guidelines for the use of gift and Guardian Angel Program (GAP) funds.

- 78 percent of respondents to an auditor-conducted volunteer survey would recommend volunteering at ACS.

- Volunteers have 45 days to complete lengthy training requirements.

- The current volunteer management software does not meet the shelter's needs around tracking hours and scheduling shifts.

Recommendations:

→ Assess and update training requirements and make non-essential trainings optional.

→ Consider options for alternative volunteer management software solutions.

- In March 2024, almost 60 percent of active licenses exceeded the term of the animal's rabies certificate.

- The process for issuing new licenses and renewals takes significant amount of administrative staff time.

- Other jurisdictions provide some low-cost medical services to underserved communities not currently available in San José.

Recommendations:

→ Consider contracting out the administration of licensing.

→ Align future license terms with rabies vaccination expiration dates.

→ Increase availability of low-cost medical services in the context of overall budget considerations.

Finding 7: San José Animal Care and Services Has Begun Implementing Maddie's Fund Recommendations, but Work Still Remains

- San José has made progress towards implementing some of the recommendations.

- In some cases, recommendations may be outdated or not in line with current ASV guidelines or ACS practices.

Recommendations:

→ Prioritize remaining relevant recommendations and designate an individual to monitor and track them moving forward.

- For Priority 2 and 3 service calls, the agreements provide for a higher level of service than for San José residents.

- Revenue calculations for the Cupertino and Saratoga agreements included cost elements that were not factored in the Milpitas agreement.

- Tracking activity and costs can ensure consistency in future agreements and ensure they reflect the level of services provided.

Recommendations:

→ Consider aligning San José performance goals with contract jurisdictions.

→ Track activity and costs to determine if revenues reflect levels of services provided.

Conclusion

This report has 39 recommendations to improve services and care for animals at San José Animal Care and Services

We would like to thank the Animal Care and Services Division of the Department of Public Works. The audit report is available at www.sanjoseca.gov/auditor

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