



ITEM REPORT CITY COUNCIL

Agenda Date: 10/6/2026
Agenda Section: Agenda Item

Department Origination: Police

Agenda Item: Discussion on City Ordinance Requiring Dog License

Approval Required: No Action Required

BACKGROUND

At the August 18, 2026, council meeting, Council Member Tabbatt asked for council support to remove the licensing requirements listed in the dog ordinance. The council consensus was to support Council Member Tabbatt's request.

Chapter 5, Section 5-3-2 and 5-3-3 currently require that every dog over six months of age be licensed annually—including fee payment, city-issued tag, and proof of rabies vaccination.

The specific licensing language is as follows:

5-3-2: LICENSE REQUIRED:

A. Required: No person shall own, keep, harbor or have custody of any dog over six (6) months of age without first obtaining a license therefor from the city clerk or his agent and attaching the license tag issued to said dog.

B. Applications: Applications for license shall be made on forms prescribed by the city clerk, which form shall set forth:

1. The name and address of the owner;
2. The name and address of the person making application, if other than the owner; and
3. The breed, sex, and age of the dog for which a license is sought.

C. Issuance: No license shall be issued to any person other than the owner except upon the written request of the owner. (Ord. 28, 10-18-1977)

5-3-3: REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSE:

A. Term: License shall be valid for a period of one year, commencing January 1 and expiring December 31 of the year of issuance. (Ord. 28.3, 3-21-1989)

B. Fee:

1. Annual Fee: Except as hereinafter provided, a license shall be issued only upon payment of an annual fee as set from time to time by the city council for each dog payable to the city clerk.

2. Proration: A license may be issued during the calendar year, but there shall be no proration of the annual fee which shall be due in full at any time such license is issued.

C. Rabies Vaccination:

1. Certificate Required: Every application for a license shall be accompanied by a certificate from a qualified veterinarian showing that the dog to be licensed has been given a vaccination against rabies within the time hereinafter specified.
2. Current Vaccination: No license shall be granted for a dog which has not been vaccinated against rabies as provided in this subsection on such a date that not more than three (3) years will have elapsed from the date of such vaccination to the time of the expiration of the license to be issued.
3. Qualified Veterinarian: Vaccination shall be performed only by a doctor qualified to practice veterinary medicine in the state in which the dog is vaccinated. (Ord. 28.3, 3-21-1989; amd. 2002 Code)

Over the last 7 years, the city has issued approximately 858 dog licenses (7-year average is approximately 122 per year.) It appears that the number of licenses is decreasing each year and not all residents are following the city ordinance and licensing their dogs.

Year	# of Dog Tags Issued
2020	143
2021	132
2022	126
2023	127
2024	132
2025	116
2026	82
Total	858

The administrative burden, low compliance rates, and minimal revenue generated raises questions about its continued effectiveness.

With having a dog license requirement in the ordinance, City Staff must dedicate approximately 5 to 10 minutes to process one dog license application. This time could be spent focusing in other areas that need more attention.

There are two main purposes of having a dog license requirement; immediate owner identification and ensuring dogs are up to date on rabies vaccinations. It should be noted that there is no Minnesota State Law requiring rabies vaccinations.

With a dog having a visible city dog tag, it can help Animal Control and Law Enforcement identify an owner which can prevent bringing the dog to an animal shelter. However, there are other means of identifying lost and found dogs such as microchips, social media animal pages, and social media posts made by owners, animal shelters, and the police department.

Animal Control and the Police Department are not checking for rabies vaccinations unless investigating a dog bite incident. If a dog bite occurs and the dog does not have the rabies vaccinations, Animal Control may seize the dog or allow the owner to quarantine the dog for 10 days. If the owner produces current rabies vaccinations for the dog, then the owner may be allowed to quarantine the dog themselves.

The Minnesota Department of Health reports from 2003 to 2024, 1,124 of 50,862 animals tested in Minnesota were positive for rabies. Only 0.2 % (30/14,685) dogs tested positive for rabies.

Since 2020, Animal Control and or Baxter Police Officers have issued less than 10 citations for unlicensed dogs.

There are many cities in Minnesota that don't require dog licensing. Some of the cities are Scandia, Ramsey, Anoka, Orono, Elk River, Oak Grove, North St. Paul, Mound, and Crystal.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Over the last 7 years, the city has issued approximately 858 dog licenses (average is approximately 122/year.) Licensing fees are \$7.00 per dog license. Below is a table showing how many licenses have been issued since 2020 along with the yearly revenue. The revenue in the table is the gross revenue amount and does not reflect staff time to process a dog license application along with the price of the dog tag.

Year	# of Dog Tags Issued	Yearly Revenue
2020	143	\$1,001
2021	132	\$924
2022	126	\$882
2023	127	\$889
2024	132	\$924
2025	116	\$812
2026	82	\$574
Total	858	\$6006

As of 2026, the city pays \$123.00 for 300 dog tags. This equates to approximately \$0.41 per dog tag.

Current Staff Wages: \$31.00 (approximate)

Time per License: 5 minutes

Calculation: $\$31 \times (5 / 60) + \$0.41$ (tag)

Cost to Process one Dog License = \$2.99

Current Staff Wages: \$31.00 (approximate)

Time per License: 10 minutes

Calculation: $\$31 \times (10 / 60) + \$0.41$ (tag)

Cost to Process on Dog License = \$5.57

Remaining Revenue per License (5-minute processing time): \$7.00 minus \$2.99 = \$4.01

Remaining Revenue per License (10-minute processing time): \$7.00 minus \$5.57 = \$1.43

Total Yearly Revenue (approximate) based off the 7-year average of licenses issued (122/year) = **\$364 to \$489**

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

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COUNCIL ACTION REQUESTED

Consensus from Council to move forward with updating the dog ordinance to remove the dog licensing requirement.