**City of Clearlake**
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November 19, 2026

Honorable Michael S. Lunas
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, County of Lake
675 Lakeport Boulevard
Lakeport, CA 95453

**RE: 2025-26 Grand Jury Report - "Clearlake Animal Services — New Leash on Life"**

Dear Judge Lunas:

On behalf of the Clearlake City Council, please accept the following response to the findings and recommendations in the 2025–2026 Lake County Civil Grand Jury Final Report concerning animal services in the City of Clearlake. The Council appreciates the Grand Jury's attention to animal welfare and shares its interest in effective, humane, and sustainable animal care and control services.

In February 2026, Clearlake Animal Association (CAA) began providing animal care and control services under contract with the City. CAA is responsible for day-to-day shelter operations, while the City maintains contractual oversight and coordination.

Although the Grand Jury has specifically requested that the City Council respond to Recommendations R1, R2, R6, R7, and R8, the Council has elected to provide responses to all eight findings contained in the report. The Council believes that addressing each finding will provide a more complete understanding of the City's position, clarify the respective responsibilities of the City and CAA, and provide additional context regarding efforts already underway to improve animal services in Clearlake.

## RESPONSES TO FINDING

### Finding F1 — Funding for Animal Services

Response: Disagrees partially.

The Council recognizes that additional funding could support expanded animal services, as it could for many other important municipal programs. However, the City must balance animal services funding against essential public safety, infrastructure, and other municipal responsibilities.

The City does not currently have additional discretionary funding available for animal services without reducing other essential services. The Council believes continued cooperation and resource sharing among CAA, the City, regional nonprofit organizations, and other partners offer the most

practical opportunity for sustainable improvements. Funding needs will continue to be considered through established budgetary and contracting processes.

**Finding F2 — Written Policies and Procedures**
Response: Disagrees partially.

The Council recognizes the importance of written policies and procedures. Under the City's contractual arrangement, CAA is responsible for establishing and maintaining policies governing day-to-day operations, consistent with applicable law and contractual requirements.

CAA has provided the City with a Standard Operating Procedures Manual, effective September 2026, addressing shelter operations, animal care, sanitation, employee safety, animal handling, and related matters. The finding therefore requires clarification regarding the respective responsibilities of the City and CAA and the written procedures now in place.

**Finding F3 — Spay and Neuter Resources**
Response: Agrees.

Access to affordable spay and neuter services is important to reducing animal overpopulation and supporting responsible pet ownership. Veterinary availability and financial resources remain significant challenges. The Council supports collaboration among CAA, veterinary providers, nonprofits, and regional partners to expand access where practical, particularly through partnerships and outside funding.

**Finding F4 — Vaccination and Microchip Clinics**
Response: Agrees.

Accessible vaccination and microchipping services protect animal health, promote responsible ownership, and help reunite lost animals with their owners. The Council supports CAA's efforts to work with veterinary providers and community organizations to identify opportunities for these services, subject to available resources and provider capacity.

**Finding F5 — Oversight of Animal Services**
Response: Disagrees partially.

The Council recognizes the importance of appropriate oversight, accountability, and transparency. The City has established multiple mechanisms for monitoring CAA's performance, including leadership meetings, site visits, operational reporting requirements, and a formal annual performance evaluation process.

The City Manager and Police Chief meet monthly with CAA's Director to discuss operational matters, address concerns, and coordinate assistance. The Police Lieutenant assigned to oversee the contract conducts monthly shelter visits for direct, on-site coordination. The City Manager and Police Chief also periodically visit the facility.

The service agreement establishes an annual performance evaluation involving the Mayor, City Manager, and an independent industry representative, with results presented to the City Council. The Council values public input but believes the existing contractual oversight structure provides an appropriate framework without creating an additional advisory oversight board.

**Finding F6 — Cal/OSHA Compliance**
Response: Disagrees partially.

The Council recognizes the importance of safe working conditions and compliance with workplace safety requirements. The Council wishes to clarify the status of the Cal/OSHA inspection and the respective responsibilities of the City and CAA.

Cal/OSHA completed its inspection of the shelter in June 2026 and issued three General citations to CAA, the employer of record. The citations concerned a written Injury and Illness Prevention Program, workplace sanitation, and a written Hazard Communication Program. The citation packet identifies the sanitation violation as corrected during the inspection.

Cal/OSHA Senior Industrial Hygienist David Hornung subsequently confirmed that the inspection was conducted with CAA as the employer of record, the citations were issued to CAA, and no response or further action was required from the City regarding that inspection.

The City understands that the identified deficiencies have since been resolved by CAA. CAA has also provided the City with a Standard Operating Procedures Manual, effective September 2026, containing employee safety and hazard communication provisions. The City's service contract requires CAA to comply with applicable Cal/OSHA requirements. The City remains committed to cooperating with CAA on shelter safety matters consistent with its contractual responsibilities.

1.1 Finding F7 — Shelter Maintenance
Response: Agrees.

The Council recognizes the importance of maintaining the shelter and its equipment in a safe, sanitary, and functional condition. Under the service agreement, CAA performs routine maintenance and minor facility repairs and reports maintenance issues requiring additional attention. The City and CAA coordinate on facility needs through regular meetings and site visits.

During the first year of CAA's operation, the City has provided a number of facility upgrades and assisted with cleanup and maintenance work. The shelter includes aging infrastructure, and additional needs must be considered in light of operational priorities, available funding, and the City's other essential service obligations.

**Finding F8 — Police Response to Reported Crimes**
Response: Disagrees partially.

The Clearlake Police Department responds to reported crimes at the shelter under established departmental procedures, as it does throughout the City.

Regarding the missing-dog incident referenced in the report, a CAA representative contacted a police lieutenant and indicated it was unclear whether the dog had escaped or been stolen. The lieutenant directed the representative to contact patrol to initiate a formal police report; the representative indicated she would do so. A subsequent review of computer-aided dispatch records found no associated request for police service. The available records therefore do not establish that a formal request for a patrol response was subsequently made.

The Council supports continued coordination between the Police Department and CAA to ensure suspected criminal activity is appropriately reported and addressed.

## RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendation R1 — Animal Services Funding and Annual Cost-of-Living Adjustments

Response: Will not be implemented.

The Council recognizes that additional funding could support animal services, but the City does not currently have discretionary resources to increase the animal services budget without reducing other essential municipal services.

The existing service agreement does not provide automatic annual cost-of-living adjustments. Changes to compensation or contractual terms are subject to the City's established contracting and budgetary processes.

The Council believes that improved coordination, cooperation, and resource sharing among CAA, the City, regional nonprofit organizations, and other partners offer the most practical path to long-term improvement. While the Council appreciates the Grand Jury's recommendations, decisions regarding contractual terms and future funding commitments remain the responsibility of the City Council.

### Recommendation R2 — Written Policies and Procedures

Response: Has been implemented.

Under the City's contractual arrangement, CAA is responsible for developing and maintaining operational policies and procedures. CAA has established and provided the City with its Standard Operating Procedures Manual, effective September 2026, addressing animal intake and care, sanitation, animal handling, employee safety, field operations, and other aspects of shelter management.

The City will continue its contractual oversight while CAA remains responsible for implementing and maintaining its operating procedures.

### Recommendation R6 — Cal/OSHA Compliance

Response: Will not be implemented by the City as recommended because the cited corrective obligations are the responsibility of CAA.

The Council agrees that Cal/OSHA compliance is essential. The service agreement expressly requires CAA, as the contracted operator, to observe applicable Cal/OSHA requirements.

Cal/OSHA completed its inspection in June 2026 and issued three General citations to CAA. One violation was corrected during the inspection, while the remaining two concerned written workplace safety programs. Cal/OSHA subsequently confirmed that CAA was the employer of record and that no response or further action was required from the City regarding the inspection.

The City understands that CAA has resolved the identified deficiencies. CAA's September 2026 Standard Operating Procedures Manual includes employee safety, incident reporting, chemical safety, and hazard communication provisions.

The City will continue to cooperate with CAA on matters within its contractual responsibilities. However, the Council does not believe the City should be characterized as responsible for correcting citations issued to a separate employer when Cal/OSHA has expressly advised that no further City action is required regarding this inspection.

**Recommendation R7 — Animal Shelter Maintenance**
Response: Has been implemented.

The Council agrees that regular maintenance is important to a safe, sanitary, and functional shelter. Under the service agreement, CAA is responsible for routine maintenance, minor repairs, and reporting maintenance issues. CAA's operating procedures also address daily cleaning, sanitation, and identification and reporting of unsafe conditions.

The City Manager and Police Chief meet monthly with CAA's Director to discuss operations and coordinate assistance. The Police Lieutenant overseeing the animal services contract conducts monthly on-site visits, and the City Manager and Police Chief also visit periodically.

During the first year of CAA's operation, the City has provided a number of facility upgrades and assisted with cleanup and maintenance work. The shelter has aging infrastructure, and future maintenance and improvement needs must be evaluated against operational priorities, available funding, and other essential City obligations.

The City will continue coordinating with CAA to identify and address maintenance needs as resources permit. Additional facility expenditures remain subject to established budgetary and approval processes. The Council believes the existing contractual arrangement, regular coordination, and work already undertaken provide an appropriate framework for ongoing shelter maintenance.

**Recommendation R8 — Police Response to Crimes at the Shelter**
Response: Has been implemented.

The Clearlake Police Department responds to reported criminal incidents at the shelter in accordance with established departmental procedures.

In the missing-dog incident referenced by the Grand Jury, a CAA representative contacted a police lieutenant. Because it was unclear whether the animal had escaped or been stolen, the lieutenant instructed the representative to contact patrol to initiate a police report. A subsequent review of computer-aided dispatch records did not identify an associated request for police service; the available records do not establish that a formal patrol response was subsequently requested.

The City Council supports the Department's continued commitment to responding to reported criminal activity at the shelter and coordinating with CAA to ensure suspected crimes are appropriately reported and investigated.

**CONCLUSION**

The Council appreciates the Grand Jury's interest in improving animal services in Clearlake and recognizes the importance of humane care, public safety, responsible management, and fiscal accountability. The City remains committed to working cooperatively with CAA and community and regional partners to strengthen services within available resources. The Council believes the existing contractual framework, ongoing oversight, and continued collaboration provide a sound foundation for addressing the needs identified in the report.

Sincerely,

Dirk Slooten
Mayor