



STAFF REPORT

10/14/2026

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Celina Jimenez, Director of Economic Development

PREPARED BY: Mary Rodriguez, Grants Manager

SUBJECT: Authorize a Sponsorship Agreement with the Animal Samaritans in the Amount of \$20,000 for Free Pet Sterilization Services for City of Coachella Residents

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Establish a voucher-based partnership with Animal Samaritans to provide free pet sterilization services for dogs and cats owned by City of Coachella residents. The City's \$20,000 sponsorship is expected to fund approximately 90 procedures. Animal Samaritans has offered approximately \$10,000 in additional services, which could support about 45 more procedures and bring the total estimated program value to \$30,000.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

1. City Council consider authorizing a sponsorship agreement with the Animal Samaritans in the amount of \$20,000 for free pet sterilization services for City of Coachella residents; and
2. Authorize an appropriation of \$20,000 from unallocated General Fund reserves to the appropriate expenditure account; and
3. Authorize the City Manager to execute the agreement and any non-substantive amendments, subject to approval as to form by the City Attorney.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Approval will result in a General Fund expenditure not to exceed \$20,000. An appropriation from unallocated General Fund reserves will be required. Based on Animal Samaritans' estimated average program cost of approximately \$223 per procedure, the City contribution is expected to serve about 90 animals.

Animal Samaritans has offered approximately \$10,000 in additional services, with an estimated value of about 45 procedures. The combined estimated program value is therefore \$30,000 and approximately 135 procedures. The final number may vary based on the animals served and the terms established in the agreement; the City's obligation will remain capped at \$20,000.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the September 9, 2026 City Council meeting, Animal Samaritans presented a proposal to partner with the City on free spay and neuter services for Coachella residents. Following the presentation and Council discussion, the City Council directed staff to return with a \$20,000 funding item for consideration. Council members expressed particular interest in improving access for owners of large dogs, which may be difficult to accommodate through some mobile clinic programs.

The proposed program would use City-issued or City-verified vouchers rather than limit residents to a single clinic date. After residency is confirmed, residents would schedule directly with Animal Samaritans on an available appointment date. The model is intended to reduce cost and scheduling barriers while providing access to clinic-based follow-up care. Staff recommends approval, subject to an agreement that defines eligibility, covered services, documentation, reporting, and the organization's \$10,000 service contribution.

BACKGROUND:

Animal Samaritans is a nonprofit animal welfare organization that has served the Coachella Valley since 1978. Its services include nonprofit veterinary care, spay and neuter procedures, vaccinations, microchipping, animal rescue, adoption, humane education, and pet therapy programs.

During its presentation, Animal Samaritans explained that private-market spay and neuter costs can vary substantially by species, sex, size, and medical needs. The organization cited costs ranging from approximately \$400 for a male cat to as much as \$1,500 for a large female dog. Animal Samaritans estimated its average program cost at approximately \$223 per procedure, including veterinary staff, supplies, and medication.

The City has previously supported free or reduced-cost spay and neuter services. A sponsorship in 2024 supported five mobile clinics and 146 surgeries. The Animal Samaritans proposal would use a different service model: eligible residents would receive vouchers and schedule appointments directly with a clinic rather than attend only on designated mobile clinic dates.

Animal Samaritans presented its proposal as Item 5 under Proclamations and Presentations at the September 9, 2026 City Council meeting. Council discussed the cost of veterinary care, the need for services that can accommodate larger dogs, licensing costs for unaltered animals, and the separate issue of community cat populations. Council then directed staff to bring back an item with a proposed \$20,000 City contribution and recognition of Animal Samaritans' offered \$10,000 contribution in services.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

Service model. The program would provide no-cost spay and neuter services for owned dogs and cats of Coachella residents. Animal Samaritans stated that its clinics can serve dogs of all sizes and breeds, although certain flat-faced breeds may be scheduled during cooler weather for safety. Residents would not be limited to one clinic date and could schedule directly with Animal Samaritans after receiving an approved voucher.

Included care. Animal Samaritans stated that the procedure includes veterinary staffing, surgical supplies, medication, post-operative pain medication, and a protective cone when needed. The organization also provides free rechecks for concerns related to recovery and indicated that microchipping may be provided when needed. The final agreement should identify every service included in the voucher so residents and staff have a clear, consistent understanding of the benefit.

Eligibility and administration. The City would verify residency before issuing or approving a voucher. Acceptable documents may include a government-issued identification card, current utility bill, credit card statement, or rental or lease agreement showing a Coachella address. Animal Samaritans indicated that comparable programs may allow up to four animals per household when consistent with local limits. The final agreement should establish the household limit, voucher expiration period, appointment process, and procedures for lost or unused vouchers.

Accountability. Because the program will use public funds, the agreement should cap the City's obligation at \$20,000 and require uniquely numbered vouchers or an equivalent tracking method. Animal Samaritans should submit invoices and a final report showing the number of vouchers issued and redeemed, the number of dogs and cats served, City residency verification, the value of services provided, and documentation of the organization's \$10,000 contribution. The agreement should also state how unused City funds will be handled.

Program benefits and limits. The proposal is intended to reduce the financial barrier to spaying and neutering, expand access for large dogs and other pets that may not be served by some mobile clinics, and give residents access to post-operative follow-up. Spaying and neutering can also help reduce unwanted litters and may lower animal licensing costs for residents. As presented, the voucher program is intended for owned pets and would not by itself establish a trap-neuter-return program for unowned community cats.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the staff recommendation.
2. Approve a different sponsorship amount or modify the proposed program terms and direct staff to revise the agreement accordingly.
3. Do not approve the sponsorship request.
4. Direct staff to obtain additional information or negotiate different terms and return to the City Council at a future meeting.

RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE(S):

Alternative No. 1.