



Memorandum

To: Mayor Nelson and Members of the City Council

From: Daniel R. Buchholtz, MMC, Administrator, Clerk/Treasurer

Date: November 6, 2024

Subject: Humane Pet Store Ordinance

At the July 15, 2024, work session, Councilmember Dircks proposed an ordinance to prohibit pet stores from selling cats or dogs within city limits. Councilmember Dircks advocated for the prohibition, while Mayor Nelson expressed strong opposition. After significant discussion, the City Council agreed to revisit the ordinance at a future work session to allow further debate and invite public input.

On October 24, staff informed the City Council that this issue would be on the agenda for the Council's November 18 work session. This meeting will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to present their views, allowing the City Council to consider input from both supporters and opponents of the ordinance.

There are a number of potential pros and cons associated with the humane pet store ordinance:

Pros

1. *Proactive Approach:* Adopting the ordinance now establishes a regulatory framework before any pet store might open, setting expectations and standards for animal welfare in advance.
2. *Public Health and Safety:* The ordinance would help prevent any future pet store from sourcing pets from potentially unethical or unhealthy sources, aligning with public health and safety objectives.
3. *Encourages Adoptions:* Promoting partnerships with animal shelters or rescue organizations aligns with the city's goals of supporting animal welfare and can increase adoption rates if a pet store does open.
4. *Reduced Risk of Puppy/Kitten Mills:* With no pet store present, establishing this ordinance now reduces the likelihood of any future store supporting unethical breeding practices, setting a high welfare standard from the outset.
5. *Improved Animal Welfare:* This ordinance would foster an environment focused on humane treatment and adoption rather than commercial sales, promoting community values.
6. *Transparency and Readiness:* The Certificate of Source requirement sets clear guidelines for any future pet store, ensuring the city is ready with enforceable standards that provide transparency for prospective pet owners.

Cons

1. *Potential Economic Disincentive:* Since no pet stores currently exist, this ordinance might discourage pet stores from opening within city limits, potentially impacting future economic growth or retail diversity.
2. *Risk of Increased Unregulated Sales:* Without a regulated pet store option, residents may turn to unregulated or illegal sources to purchase pets. This not only raises concerns about animal welfare but also exposes potential buyers to health and safety risks, as animals from unregulated sources may carry diseases or have unknown behavioral issues. Additionally, transactions with black-market sellers can pose personal safety risks for buyers.
3. *Risk of Unregulated Sales:* Residents may turn to unregulated or illegal sources (such as online marketplaces or “black market” sellers) to acquire pets, which may expose them to unscrupulous breeders or unhealthy animals.
4. *More Effective as Statewide Legislation:* Regulating pet store sales at a local level may be less effective than a statewide law. A state-law would create uniform standards, potentially reducing the need for each city to establish its own regulations and addressing black-market concerns more comprehensively across all communities.
5. *Enforcement Challenges:* If a pet store was to locate in Spring Lake Park, enforcing compliance could strain city resources, particularly if stores attempt to circumvent the ordinance.

Included with this memo are the following:

1. Original staff memo from July 2024 introducing this issue.
2. E-mail from Aaron Zellhoefer to Councilmember Dircks requesting the City Council act on the proposed ordinance.
3. The ordinance adopted by the City of Coon Rapids
4. Minutes from the July 15, 2024 City Council work session

If you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 763-784-6491.