



**Barrington PAW**  
Partnership for Animal Welfare  
[www.barringtonpaw.org](http://www.barringtonpaw.org)

To: Barrington Committee on Appropriations

From: Barrington Partnership for Animal Welfare

Re: Proposed cut to Animal Control Budget in FY 2018/2019 municipal budget

Date: April 6, 2018

Committee Members,

On behalf of the board, volunteers and resident supporters of the Barrington Partnership for Animal Welfare I am writing to respectfully request that you reevaluate the proposed \$5,000 - 36% reduction in the Town's animal control budget (0190.) The slated cut is specifically to the "Veterinary Services" line item. We believe this cut is erroneously proposed without a full understanding of why these funds are allocated and how they are used. While termed "veterinary services," this line, in addition to providing necessary emergency and routine care to stray animals found in town, covers boarding costs at approved facilities. These boarding costs are needed because the town of Barrington has chosen to not maintain a shelter facility as is done in nearly every other Rhode Island municipality. Were the town to have a shelter instead of paying these costs you would be considering a much, much higher number in this budget line item.

You may not be aware that as recently as 2005 the town of Barrington had the highest rate of animal euthanasia in the State of Rhode Island. This was not a statistic to be proud of. In fact the rate (more than 90%) was so alarming it received coverage in the Providence Journal and national animal welfare publications. Efforts over the past decade by both town employees and volunteers have been tireless as we worked to change systems, policies and practices to ensure that the town provided the type of safety net and outcomes Barrington residents expect for animals in need. The funds allocated to this effort are negligible in the context of the total town budget but this proposed cut is a virtual slap in the face to all of the many efforts that have come before. These dollars may seem insignificant in the context of the many tens of millions up for consideration but they are far from insignificant to the lives that they would have saved.

We are aware that for the years immediately preceding the preparation of the 2018-2019 budget this line was typically somewhat underspent. These years were, however, complete anomalies and are not at all indicative of the typical costs of caring for lost and stray animals in town. Just as in any given year the town could be fortunate and experience much less crime or calls for police assistance than are typical, or there could be many less fires or calls for rescue than normal or expected, so too can the need to respond to animal emergencies or the numbers of strays in care in any given year be cyclical in nature. In reality, the animal control budget has historically fallen quite short of truly accounting for all animal related expenses and needs

in town. For more than three decades municipal efforts have been augmented by the dedicated efforts of volunteers and by private fundraising. Since 2007 Barrington PAW has been the non-profit organization that has played this role. During the past 11 years we have directly raised and directed more than \$120,000 to supplement the town budget. This has come in the form of private donations, foundation grants, corporate donations, bequests and fundraising event proceeds. In addition, we have provided thousands of hours of volunteer service. I have been the person on the other end of the phone in the middle of the night when our dedicated animal control officer was at an emergency veterinary hospital trying to decide whether the right decision was to authorize a life be saved or that they stay within budget. I would implore you to not make these situations and decisions even more common and difficult.

Our lower stray numbers in recent years are a direct result of more stringent state laws regarding spay / neuter but are also a result of very concerted efforts to proactively address animal issues in town. A reduced budget will impact future efforts and could easily then result in greater problems and higher costs in the future. It is an insignificant savings that could have countless unintended consequences. Just in the past 11 years of Barrington PAW involvement we have assisted with four significant hoarding situations in town. One such situation can spend the budget in one week, never mind one year. We have dealt with these in the past by blending municipal and private efforts and funds, working collaboratively towards solutions. But, quite frankly, it is nearly impossible to rally private support in the absence of a demonstrated municipal commitment.

There is much more information I could offer and many more reasons I could provide for why this is a misguided decision. If you have any questions. If you would like any additional information. If you would like to talk and learn more about Barrington PAW. If you want to learn more about the history of animal care and control in town including volunteer efforts, more about current challenges or funding priorities, really anything at all, you are welcome to call or e-mail me! Please know that I and other volunteers would also be more than happy to come and speak with you directly at any committee meeting. I can be reached at 401-524-7742 or at [cindy@barringtonpaw.org](mailto:cindy@barringtonpaw.org). I also invite you to join the Barrington PAW community on Facebook (search for Barrington Partnership for Animal Welfare or @barrpaw.) On Twitter? Follow our President @barringtonpaw or follow our resident cats @catjunction.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I feel confident that upon reflection the committee will make the right decision and will not put forth this currently proposed cut as part of its budget recommendation. It does little to balance the budget but stands to do so much unintended harm.

Regards,

*Cindy Larson, President*

*Barrington Partnership for Animal Welfare*

Cc: James Cunha, Town Manager

