



CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH

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STAFF REPORT

Agenda Date: 6/17/2025

TO:

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

THROUGH:

Talyn Mirzakhanian, City Manager

FROM:

Libby Bretthauer, Acting Finance Director
Toni Page, Revenue Services Supervisor

SUBJECT:

Consideration of Introduction and First Reading of an Ordinance to Amend Municipal Code Chapters 5.01 and 5.04 Related to Dog Licensing (No Budget Impact) (Acting Finance Director Bretthauer).

INTRODUCE ORDINANCE NO. 25-0006

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council consider adopting Ordinance No. 25-0006 amending the current Manhattan Beach Municipal Codes (MBMC) Chapters 5.01 (Animals - Pound: Dogs) and 5.04 (Licensing of Dogs) to:

- A) Update the frequency of dog license renewals from a fixed September to September term to align with each dog's rabies vaccination expiration date (MBMC 5.01);
- B) Establish a life-time dog tag to replace the current requirement of issuing a new dog tag annually upon renewal of the animal license and update language to reflect "license fee" for consistency (MBMC 5.01); and
- C) Require veterinarians practicing within the City to issue a rabies vaccination certificate to the pet owner and provide a duplicate copy to the Animal License Authority (MBMC 5.04).

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The fiscal impact of amending Title 4 - Chapter 5 of the City's Municipal Code relating to dog licensing is unknown at this time, however, through these code amendments, the City anticipates a higher rate of compliance in obtaining animal licenses from pet owners within the community. Specifically, MBMC 5.01 (dog license renewal date) would encourage more participation in obtaining an animal license as the renewal date would align with the dog's

vaccination date. Additionally, amending MBMC 5.04 (requiring vet clinics to provide vaccination records to the City) would also increase compliance, as the City would begin obtaining records on vaccinated dogs residing within the City to cross-reference with our list of licensed pets. Together, these code amendments would likely encourage more participation and compliance, thereby increasing animal license revenues in the General Fund.

BACKGROUND:

The City requires any person within the City who has, keeps, maintains, or harbors any dog over four months old or older for a period of 30 days to obtain an annual dog license. The importance of dog licensing encompasses a range of community benefits including:

1. Public health and safety (proof of rabies vaccination prevents the spread of rabies and other diseases);
2. Dog identification and reunification (a licensed dog is more likely to be returned to its owner if lost and the license tag acts as a form of ID);
3. Revenue for animal services (licensing fees help fund animal control, vaccination programs, and pet education efforts); and
4. Responsible ownership (Licensing encourages responsible pet ownership and accountability for their dogs' behavior and well-being).

Under the current municipal code, all dog licenses are renewed annually during the month of September. This one-size fits all schedule does not align with the rabies vaccination cycles, which vary depending on when the vaccination is administered and the type of vaccine used (i.e. a 1-year or 3-year vaccine frequency).

Additionally, the City does not currently have codified language that requires veterinarians to submit rabies vaccination information directly to the City. This lack of centralized reporting hinders the City's ability to maintain an accurate record of vaccinated dogs and ensure compliance with licensing requirements.

DISCUSSION:

Chapter 5.01 (Animals - Pound: Dogs) and 5.04 (Licensing of Dogs) of the City's Municipal Code provides both the regulation and issuance of licenses by the Animal License Authority. The proposed changes to the Chapter are described as follows:

A) License Renewal Alignment with Rabies Vaccination Expiration:

Aligning dog license renewal dates with the rabies vaccination expiration date will improve efficiency by matching the licensing cycle to the dog's immunization schedule. It will also reduce confusion for pet owners, as they will renew their dog's license around the same time as the rabies booster. This update will also streamline administrative processing, customer communication and data management for the City. The changes to the municipal code will allow the annual animal license renewal fee to be paid within 30 days after the anniversary date. This section will be amended as follows:

5.01.150 - License fees

A. In order to accommodate the public of the City and to expedite the issuance of licenses required by this chapter, the Animal Licensing Authority is hereby authorized, subject to the general authority of the Poundmaster, to issue any license required by this chapter at the

office of the Animal Licensing Authority.

B. Every person owning, harboring, or controlling any dog within the City shall procure an annual license for the keeping and maintaining of such dog and shall pay to the Animal Licensing Authority or contractor employed by the City to enforce and carry into effect the provisions of this chapter, a license fee as established by Council under separate resolution; provided, however, that except as provided by this Section it shall not be necessary to procure a license or pay a license fee for any dog under the age of (4) months.

C. Proof of current and valid rabies vaccination for each dog to be licensed must be presented to the Animal Licensing Authority for a license to be issued. Each dog license shall be valid for one year from the date of issuance, except that a license shall no longer be valid if a current rabies vaccination certificate is not on file with the City. The dog license must be renewed annually for each dog. The license fee for such annual license shall be paid within thirty days after moving into the City, or within thirty days after acquiring ownership or control of the dog, and annually thereafter within 30 days of the anniversary date of the initial payment of the license fee.”

This change will address recurring feedback from pet owners on their dissatisfaction with the licensing period not aligning with their dog’s rabies vaccination schedule, which often prompts concern of vaccinating too early and risk of over-vaccinating their dog. Due to these concerns, residents have foregone renewing their animal license on time and risking a citation from Animal Control Officers and/or incurring late fees. In most cases, residents would obtain the license after the dog was eligible for a rabies booster vaccination, however, there are many instances in which residents would not renew at all for the licensing year due to the inconvenience.

B) Establish life-time tag for dogs and update language to reflect “license fee” for consistency:

Over the years, the City has explored streamlining the animal license program by eliminating the annual dog tag that is ordered, sorted, and mailed to customers on an annual basis and replacing it with a life-time dog tag. The benefits of establishing a life-time dog-tag provide reduced administrative workload each year, and reduced production and mailing costs in the long term. These sections will be amended as follows:

“5.01.190 - Delivery of tags and receipts to dog owner.

The City Animal Licensing Authority, upon the payment of the **license fee** required by Section 5.01.150 of this chapter, shall deliver to the owner or person having control or charge of any dog within the City an appropriate tag for which such license has been paid and shall also deliver to such person a signed receipt for such sum of money as shall have been paid as **license fee**. The dog tag shall be issued as a life-time tag that shall remain valid for as long as the dog’s owner or person having the care, control, or custody of the dog has a valid dog license for that dog from the City.”

“5.01.200 - Tags to be attached to dog.

The owner or person having the care, control, or custody of any dog upon which a **license fee** shall have been paid shall securely fasten the tag upon a suitable collar and securely fasten the collar with the tag attached thereto, upon the dog. A dog "harness" or other device may be substituted in lieu of the collar if so desired."

C) Mandatory Rabies Vaccination Reporting for Veterinarians:

To ensure accurate tracking of rabies vaccinations and license compliance, it is proposed that the City requires all veterinarians practicing within City limits to adhere to the following:

"5.04.030 - Vaccination certificate.

Every person practicing veterinary medicine in the City who vaccinates a dog with rabies vaccine shall issue to the person keeping, harboring, or having such dog a certificate which is signed by the veterinarian and which states thereon the name and description of said dog, the date of such vaccination, and type of vaccine used, and the veterinarian shall send a duplicate copy thereof to the Animal Licensing Authority."

Adopting the above language in MBMC section 5.04.030 ensures consistent documentation and reporting, supports public health efforts and facilitates enforcement of licensing and vaccination compliance.

Veterinarians are the primary source of rabies vaccination data. Requiring them to send a copy of each rabies certificate to the City will close the existing reporting gap, create a more reliable database of vaccinated animals, and help identify unlicensed pets. These updates align with practices adopted by other jurisdictions aiming to modernize animal licensing processes. Based on initial research, there are approximately 64 cities, plus the unincorporated areas, of Los Angeles County that require veterinarians to submit copies of the rabies certificates to the Animal Control Authority. Conversely, there are only 25 cities (including Manhattan Beach) that do not have this reporting requirement. For reference, various cities who currently have this language in their municipal code include Beverly Hills, Culver City, El Segundo, Hermosa Beach, Los Angeles, Malibu, Palos Verdes Estates, Rolling Hills Estates and Torrance.

Vendor Solutions/Software to Accomplish Goals of the Code Amendments

Staff is currently focused on executing a vendor agreement (within the City Manager's approval authority) to ensure the new cycle of animal license renewals can commence in September 2025 and align with the code amendments set forth in MBMC 5.01.

There has been a need to acquire a replacement animal license software due to the phasing out of the existing Eden/Tyler Technologies software that has been in place since 2007. The outdated Eden system will no longer be supported and phased out/obsolete in the future. With animal licensing being the last program still utilizing the older Eden system, acquiring a new animal license software would allow the City to phase out the antiquated Eden system entirely.

Staff issued a request for quotations (RFQ) to explore new animal license software solutions with an objective of modernizing animal license processes and aligning the licensing cycle to the rabies immunization schedule. Based on preliminary evaluations, the preferred vendor is

able to offer the following enhancements to the animal license program:

- A user-friendly online portal to renew animal licenses
- Additional options to renew by mail or phone
- Printing and mailing of renewal notices and other notices, along with online payment processing services, which reduces the clerical load on City Staff and streamlines the overall process during peak renewal season
- A no-cost lost pet service that operates 24/7
- Personalized, life-time dog tags that can be customized based on customer preference of size, shape and design
- An opportunity for the City of Manhattan Beach to collect donations and designate local animal organization(s) to receive the funds.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Future outreach efforts will communicate the Municipal Code changes and impacts to affected residents and veterinarian offices.

Future outreach to Pet Owners: In an effort to inform residents on the updated animal license process, staff will coordinate targeted outreach in the upcoming months prior to implementing the new animal license software in September 2025. This outreach will communicate the impacts of the Municipal Code changes and inform customers on the service enhancements through the new customer payment portal, providing instructions on how to renew and more. Staff will also provide regular website updates, emails and mailed notices to the current animal license holders in the City.

Future outreach to Veterinarian Offices: Staff will coordinate additional outreach to all local veterinarians with mailed and emailed notifications describing the new mandatory rabies vaccination reporting requirements along with establishing reporting frequencies.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The City has reviewed the proposed activity for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that the activity is not a “Project” as defined under Section 15378 of the State CEQA Guidelines because it consists of an administrative activity of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment. Therefore, pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines the activity is not subject to CEQA. Thus, no environmental review is necessary.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney has reviewed this report and determined that no additional legal analysis is necessary.

ATTACHMENT:

1. Ordinance No. 25-0006