

Heather Chapman
Manager, Municipal Law Enforcement Services
Community By-laws and Animal Care & Control
Development and Compliance Services
Licensing and Municipal Law Enforcement Division
City of London,
300 Dufferin Ave.

22 January 2013

RE: RFP 12-28

Dear Heather,

I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the City through review of these responses to the RFP 12-28. I reviewed in detail the submissions from PAWS and UAM, and submitted evaluation forms for each. In addition, I am providing you with a written opinion.

PAWS

The PAWS proposal is visionary but problematic. It is visionary in that it attempts to address many controversial aspects of urban animal care and control; however, it is problematic in that it is not a viable business plan.

The single largest problem is the proposed collaboration amongst a group of existing independent humane groups. Without a binding contract signed by each party irrevocably committing them to a thoroughly detailed agreement, disagreements are highly probable. Furthermore, the risk of these disagreements impacting operations of PAWS is considerable. In my experience, humane associations have a higher than usual incidence of management discord – often to the point of breakdown. Each of the groups named have operated in a highly independent fashion for many years. Failure of the collective will impact operation and viability of PAWS; i.e. failure to maintain consistent standards at each of its locations or in the operation thereof, failure to remain committed to the vision, etc.

In the evaluation I expressed concern about the feasibility of a “No-Kill” policy. As has been evident at shelters that have attempted this, most recently at the Toronto Humane Society, this is an extremely challenging and resource intensive approach to management of abandoned and unwanted animals. The proposed physical and human resources will quickly be overwhelmed. In my opinion this is an unrealistic position for the City to support. More likely to be manageable would be a detailed “low-kill” policy, that addresses up-front the difficult issue of when to euthanize and lays out specific policies in advance – *and that has the contractual buy-in of all affiliated humane associations.*

I also expressed concern about the entire financial plan. In my opinion it is under capitalized and will very quickly use up all its financial resources leaving little or no operating buffer. It relies extensively on tenuous sources such as a very large pool of independent volunteer human associations, fundraising, donations, and cash-flow from the high-volume spay neuter clinic. As such it has insufficient credit available to mitigate the risks. Also, as presented, the clinic has its financials intermingled with the shelter plan. It must be a stand-alone operating unit and cost centre. Additionally I’m skeptical of the projected clinic volumes in light of the existing low-cost options available in and around London – already acknowledged to have the lowest median

veterinary fees in the Province. The PAWS plan assumes full revenue from tag sales, and I am unclear as to whether this is a correct assumption. It does not appear that this is an expected revenue stream in the UAM proposal.

My concerns with the staffing proposal were a sense of being "top-heavy" with insufficient front-line staff to deal directly with animals.

Finally, PAWS has no operational track record that I can look upon to assure myself of their success, and of mitigating risk to the City and to me as a taxpayer. Shelter management is a challenging business whether it is for profit or as a charitable entity. PAWS has proposed a complex and challenging model that requires some demonstrated successful operating history of its component parts (humane collective functioning harmoniously and in financially viable manner, high-volume clinic operating in viable manner) before I can recommend this proposal.

UAM

In contrast the UAM proposal was financially very sound and addressed all aspects of the City's RFP. The City was provided with flexibility (options with defined costs) vs. the all-or-nothing PAWS proposal.

UAM is a going business concern with a proven track record as a viable operating entity. The business has been able to deliver the outcomes expected from the City as per its existing contract. I do not see the existing controversy surrounding ACC as so much a criticism of UAM but as a need to develop new expectations and outcomes defined in a new contract. I am confident that UAM can deliver the revised outcomes associated with the new RFP. They have the capital, the bank credit available, and the human and physical resources in place.

Conclusion

The City developed a RFP for a new and expanded approach to the animal care and control contract. In my opinion, the PAWS proposal is unrealistic, problematic, and risky. The UAM proposal meets the conditions of the RFP, is viable and presents little risk to the City, and is my recommended choice.

