

Caernarvon Township Board of Supervisors

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BERKS COUNTY
MORGANTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA 19543

February 26, 2019

Dear Residents:

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Recently there has been much discussion in the community and Reading Eagle regarding the relationship between municipalities and the Animal Rescue League (ARL). The ARL is a non-profit that provides animal control services to Berks County. Their services include the intake of stray animals, animal cruelty investigations, and veterinary services as well as others. Previous to January 31, 2019, municipalities made annual contributions to ARL for these services. Caernarvon Township's contribution each year ranged between \$100-\$500, amount was to the discretion of the Board of Supervisors and according to budget.

In a letter from September 2018, ARL wrote to inform Townships and boroughs that they would no longer offer animal control services to municipalities unless contracts between them and ARL were agreed to. There were two options available, fee for services or per capita. The fee for service model for Caernarvon Township was an estimated financial cost ranging from \$3,000 to \$8,000. The per capita model was \$2.00 per resident, estimated cost of \$8,000. Importantly, ARL shared that the per capita charge model would only be available for 2019 but going forward a municipality would need to engage in a multi-year fee for service contract.

The desire of Caernarvon Township to seek clarity around these issues is consistent with the commitment to handle every resident's tax dollars responsibly. Unfortunately, where clarity was sought, only more questions and concerns were brought to light. Municipalities identified significant issues with the proposed contract. Among them, ARL had proposed to charge on the basis of zip code where an animal was brought from. However, municipalities may have several zip codes and that zip code may not be where the animal is owned. This could incur costs on a municipality for an animal that was not found or is owned in another township or borough.

Furthermore, ARL has not disclosed important financial information that is required for similar organizations that municipalities contract with. The financial projections made by ARL for each municipality does not include source material. ARL will not respond to situations regarding vicious dogs, which is a requirement for municipalities under state law; this leaves this crucial service to the local police department.

ARL has promised to continue investigation claims of animal abuse without expense to the municipality, which we are grateful for. However, if residents take animals to ARL's shelter, they will be turned away and forwarded to their local municipal building. This transition took place on January 31, 2019.

In order to explore alternative methods to these services, municipalities are participating in a search for another contract with the Berks County Cooperative Purchasing Council. The Board will have final say whether the Township will participate in another contract, but this search will offer more options for municipalities to consider.

Other options for services that you or your community may need can be provided by various local organizations. These include No Nonsense Neutering, which offers to safely neuter wild cats. There are facebook groups, including Berks Dog Search, where lost pets may be posted, which oftentimes have good results. Dogs may also be brought to local shelters, including the Humane Society for a small donation.

This interruption of services is regrettable, and we are thankful for the work that the Animal Rescue League has done on behalf of our community. The path moving forward is not completely clear, but our interest is serving municipal residents in the best ways possible. We will continue to do that as we seek out more alternatives for these services.

Sincerely,
Caernarvon Township Board of Supervisors