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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council"](#)

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Subject: Update - engagement with Animal Shelter volunteers re communication channels

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Good afternoon Mayor & Council,

I am writing to share the following update from Maria Pontikis and Corrie Okell regarding the outcome of their recent meeting with the Animal Shelter volunteers.

As you are aware, our dedicated volunteers with Animal Services have expressed a growing concern about the continued absence of an active City-run social media presence specifically for the Shelter. We met with the volunteers on Wednesday, May 21 to open a conversation about this matter and to explore potential solutions.

We are aligned with the volunteers' perspective that we need to increase visibility of the animals, promote adoptable animals, share success stories, and enhance overall public awareness about the Shelter and important work being done.

In the meeting, we reflected that while social media is one key medium to reach the public and we are committed to promoting animals on our main social channels, we will use a multi-channel approach to increase awareness, and importantly reach demographics that are not actively on social media. We are confident these tactics will increase the profile of animals with the hope they will be placed in long-term, loving homes.

This approach, which was shared with the volunteers, will include:

- Twice-monthly social media posts on Facebook and Instagram featuring adoptable animals, where the cadence could increase over time.
- Summertime media pitching of "adoptable dog" stories to media outlets such as morning shows and lifestyle publications.
- Semi-regular "showcases" promoting the animals more actively on social, with a modest targeted paid spend behind these efforts.
- The City also will explore posterage and printed collateral in community centres and libraries and the potential for in-kind bus shelter ad placement.

Notably, this plan does not include a standalone City-run/branded Animal Services social media account. The City's policy only permits trained staff to establish, grow and maintain City social media channels. This is to ensure cohesion with the City's overarching social media strategy, and industry and accessibility standards, along with allowing for community management support. While we understand the interest from a range of departments to establish new niche social media presences, this would be precedent setting and not sustainable within current resources and demands. We stand firm in this position, though we acknowledge volunteers continue to actively rally for this to you directly and through media.

We're committed to holding a fall meeting to continue the important discussions around strengthening our volunteer program. This will also serve as a valuable opportunity to maintain momentum and keep volunteer engagement strong across all levels.

In the meantime, we're actively working on hiring both a new manager and a Vancouver Animal Shelter



volunteer coordinator. These positions are central to the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of our efforts, and we're prioritizing thoughtful hiring to ensure the right fit.

Additionally, a significant portion of our ongoing work is focused on improving our volunteer management practices—an area we recognized as a major theme in our conversation. We're aiming to bring more structure, support, and recognition to the volunteer experience, which we believe will lead to stronger outcomes for everyone involved.

Of note, the volunteers brought legal counsel to the May 21 meeting without informing us in advance. We still proceeded with the meeting, in good faith. After the meeting, we were informed by the volunteers that legal action is not off the table and we are currently consulting City legal counsel. The volunteers also have reflected this position in recent media stories.

Should you have questions about the above or require additional information, please reach out to Corrie Okell or Maria Pontikis directly.

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x m k y m (Musqueam), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and s lilw ta (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.