

# LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

## **On the Positive Side: Proposed ordinance revision work session has issues**

**By Frank Bryce**

**Special to the Sun-News**

This past Monday, the Las Cruces City Council again took up discussion of a proposed revision of the city's animal control ordinance with the community cat program of "trap, neuter, return" essentially taking center stage. Despite being provided documentation of more than 400 similar programs across the nation, the millions of dollars being made available from leading animal welfare corporations to fund these efforts, and the willingness of our community animal welfare organizations to tackle the issue, the discussion seemed to drone on and on.

A few options were offered to change the revision as proposed, none of which truly involved the private community resources as developed and offered in the original revision. All seemed to involve convoluted, costly taxpayer-subsidized extensions of ineffective current city efforts with labor intensive responsibility being laid on the city administration and animal control.

Advocates for the adoption of the original revision spoke eloquently for its adoption, rationally about the problems with funding, staffing and probable lack of results of the suggested options by those councilors who oppose the original revision, and asked sincerely for the council's consideration of implementing the revision. The revision does not change the existing responsibility of the animal control department and does not add any costs to the city animal control program. Changing the first draft of the ordinance as proposed does do irreparable harm to the opportunity for community resources and efforts and probably will result in the inability for the community organizations to interact effectively with city administration, animal control department, and those city residents who are involved with numbers of outside cats. The following open letter is a positive statement by the vice president of SNAP and a member of the Community Cat Management Team which has been diligently working on this program:

Mr. Mayor and City Councillors: I have attended several meetings where discussion of funding for TNR is a topic. The Community Cat Management Team which supports TNR is not asking the city for funding.

But funding for TNR is threatened by the City Council's failure to decriminalize TNR. Grants for TNR are not awarded to non-profits or municipal shelters if TNR is a criminal activity in the community. Establishing a pilot project is not an answer. Grantors want to see long term community commitment for the projects they fund. They do not want to risk that a TNR program they invest in might be shut down before it has an opportunity to demonstrate success.

Unless the City of Las Cruces lifts the ban on TNR, no grants can be secured by the organizations that want to assist in solving the free-roaming cat issue in the city.

Please help us be part of the solution by allowing TNR in the City of Las Cruces.

As an aside, I have not found an organization that awards grants for private catteries.

Sincerely, Suzanne M. Bramlett, Vice-President, Spay Neuter Action Program, member, Community Cat Management Team

*Frank Bryce is President of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico. Interested guest authors can call 575-523-8020.*