



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 26, 2024

TO: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS)

FROM: Larry Zaragoza, DEnv, Chair *Larry Zaragoza*  
Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC)

SUBJECT: Fairfax County Animal Services Consolidation Proposal in the Proposed FY 2025 Budget

EQAC does not support the current Fairfax County Animal Services Consolidation Proposal and recommends the Board of Supervisors remove this item from the FY 2025 budget proposal. This proposal threatens the county's excellent wildlife services team, which is acknowledged by multiple state and regional agencies for their exceptional work, by separating the wildlife management staff from the Animal Protection Police Officers (APPO). The absence of specifics in the plan leaves many important questions open. The proposed reorganization would have APPOs either convert to regular police officers or convert to Animal Control Officers where they would report to the Director of the Department of Animal Sheltering (DAS).

The proposal was modified following publication of the County Executive's recommended budget to the Board of Supervisors so that, the wildlife management program would remain under the Police Department until the county determines where the wildlife management program will be placed. EQAC has followed and appreciates the work that Dr. Katherine (Katie) Edwards performs as the county's wildlife biologist and we, along with other wildlife advocacy organizations, are concerned that the separation of wildlife management from the APPOs as proposed with the proposal will threaten the effectiveness of the wildlife management program, which works closely with the APPOs to deliver wildlife services.

The proposed reorganization is a modification of the proposal included in the County Executive's FY 2025 Budget that was unknown to most stakeholders until it was discussed in a February 29 meeting. The original proposal would move all wildlife services under the Director of DAS. While multiple questions pertaining to the wildlife management program have been raised in discussions and following review of materials on the proposal website (e.g., should the training provided to APPOs/ACOs be adjusted?), the proposed reorganization does not address these questions and creates new ones. The responses to questions raised do not provide a clear vision of how the wildlife management program will remain unimpacted in relation to this proposed restructure.

The proposal is opposed by multiple environmental groups, various wildlife rehabilitators, and the Southern States Police Benevolent Association (a police union associated with the FCPD). Moreover, the county's wildlife management program, under Dr. Katherine Edwards, and APPO Program, as currently configured under the Police Department, have received high praise from the Virginia Departments and multiple other organizations. For example, the current partnership of the APPO and wildlife management program under the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) received a letter of appreciation from the Department of Wildlife Resources, which states the "operational link between wildlife professionals and sworn wildlife-trained law enforcement officers provides a holistic and effective strategy in maintaining public safety, protection natural resources, ensuring ecological balance, and providing a robust response to the needs of the county's residents regarding a full range of wildlife management opportunities and challenges."<sup>1</sup> See letters attached to this memorandum. Gina Lynch, Chair of the Animal Services Advisory Commission, has communicated clear and strong support for the proposed reorganization. Kathleen MacKinnon, Board Member of the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals NOVA also supports the proposal. Thus, there are parties for and against the proposed reorganization. However, the organizations supporting the reorganization generally have vested interests that advocate for companion and domestic animal issues that may not be in conflict with interests of wildlife conservation.

Dividing wildlife management from the APPOs may benefit shelter services, but threatens the county's outstanding wildlife services team (i.e., wildlife management and the APPOs). The lack of detail on the proposal and evaluation of a permanent recommendation for the placement of wildlife management adds to the uncertainty of this proposed reorganization. The wildlife management staff and APPOs work well under the Police Department. The above concerns with separating the wildlife services team, the opposition to the proposed reorganization by multiple environmental groups and the police union, all support maintaining the current organizational structure. EQAC does not support the proposed Animal Services Consolidation Proposal.

Should the proposal be further pursued, EQAC recommends undertaking a comprehensive analysis on the potential impacts and benefits of the proposed action. This information should be shared with Fairfax County residents through a robust outreach campaign to address public comments regarding the proposal. This analysis with public comment should be captured in a report and presented to the Board to make an informed decision on whether to carry forward with the draft proposal.

Attachment: Letters

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<sup>1</sup> Rebecca K. Gwynn, Deputy Director of Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources to Dr. Katherine Edwards, Fairfax County Police Department Animal Services Division. Letter of Appreciation. October 25, 2023.

cc: Tom Arnold, Deputy County Executive  
Chief Kevin Davis, Chief of Police, FCPD  
Bob Blakley, Deputy Chief of Police, FCPD  
Captain Eric Ivancic, Commander, Animal Services Division, FCPD  
Reasa Currier, Director, DAS  
Dr. Katherine Edwards, Fairfax County Wildlife Biologist, FCPD  
John Morrill, Director, Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination  
EQAC



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Department of Wildlife Resources

Travis Voyles  
Secretary of Natural  
and Historic Resources

Ryan J. Brown  
Executive Director

October 25, 2023

Dr. Katherine Edwards  
Fairfax County Police Department Animal Services Division  
4500 West Ox Road  
Fairfax, VA 22030

Dear Dr. Edwards:

The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) would like to express our appreciation for the ongoing partnership we have with the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) Animal Services Division. Specifically, we would like to recognize you, your associated team of biologists, and the Animal Protection Police colleagues for your exceptional wildlife resource management services. We commend this team for consistently demonstrating effective collaboration, professionalism, and integrity during your frequent coordination with DWR biologists and Conservation Police Officers (CPOs) regarding the wildlife management needs of Fairfax County.

The need for wildlife services and information continues to increase across the Commonwealth, especially in the highly developed urban and suburban areas of northern Virginia. Over the last three years in Fairfax County, *FCPD Animal Services Division personnel responded to an average of over 5,000 calls annually for wildlife services*, a level of response that the DWR cannot replicate on a county level. The FCPD Animal Services Division's operational link between wildlife professionals and sworn wildlife-trained law enforcement officers provides a holistic and effective strategy in maintaining public safety, protecting natural resources, ensuring ecological balance, and providing a robust response to the needs of the County's residents regarding a full range of wildlife management opportunities and challenges.

While DWR is the state authority responsible for wildlife conservation, protection, and management, Virginia's wildlife resources are a shared responsibility that requires strong partnerships to succeed. This strong partnership exists with Fairfax County due to how the FCPD Animal Services Division's trained officers and biologists work hand in hand with DWR staff to accomplish this shared mission of wildlife conservation and public service. The DWR relies on this strong partnership with the FCPD Animal Services Division to deliver these services in Fairfax County:

- Wildlife population management;
- Public and hunter education;
- Wildlife law enforcement;



Dr. Katherine Edwards

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- Advanced wildlife disease outbreak monitoring and implementation of best management practices to decrease zoonotic disease transmission; and
- Management of human-wildlife conflicts, such as:
  - Responding to captive, sick, injured, and nuisance wildlife concerns,
  - Reducing deer-vehicle collisions, and
  - Preventing personal property damage.

Furthermore, the DWR recognizes the outstanding wildlife resource programs implemented by the FCPD Animal Services Division, including its ongoing white-tailed deer management program and its contributions to Virginia's surveillance and management efforts of chronic wasting disease (CWD), a fatal neurological disease affecting deer.

The DWR greatly appreciates and values the consistently high level of commitment of Fairfax County and its FCPD Animal Services Division to wildlife management and its citizens. For the Commonwealth of Virginia, the DWR considers the FCPD Animal Services Division a model for an effective county-level wildlife resource entity. We look forward to continuing this exceptional partnership with the FCPD Animal Services Division in the years to come.

Sincerely,



Rebecca K. Gwynn  
Deputy Director

CC: Jordan Green, District Wildlife Biologist  
Jaime Sajecki, Regional Wildlife Manager  
Jennifer Allen, Assistant Chief, Wildlife Division



# FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY



To: Fairfax County Police Department Animal Protection Police and Wildlife Office

From: Fairfax County Park Authority

Date: June 23, 2022

Subject: Response to Incidents at Lake Accotink

On behalf of the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Animal Protection Police (APP) officers, Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) officers, and wildlife staff who responded and supported the rabid coyote incident at Lake Accotink Park on June 4 and 5, 2022. We were impressed with the expertise, professionalism, and competence of all staff involved and we commend them for a job well done!

The responding APP officers realized the continued threat to public safety and acted quickly and decisively to ensure public safety. This quick action and communication undoubtedly prevented additional injuries to the public. The APP officers contacted FCPA staff to request closing the park. Once closed by FCPA, APP officers secured the park while setting up patrols to search for the sick coyote. APP officers worked closely with FCPA staff during the entire event, ensuring proper communication between agencies. The APP officers continued patrols until dark on Saturday night and were back in the park at first light Sunday morning to secure the site and begin patrols again. The incident was resolved on Sunday by APP and FCPD officers on the scene but could have continued for days if not for their dedication.

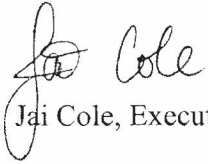
We also extend our sincere appreciation to the Wildlife Office and FCPD for their support during and after the incident, especially in dealing with the media. The story made headlines in the region and involved many media requests.

The FCPA is incredibly grateful to the FCPD, APP, and the Wildlife Office for their continued support, expertise, and partnership. This partnership supports our mission of serving citizens of Fairfax County and sets the standard for public service. We give a special recognition to the FCPD officer who was bitten while searching for and dispatching the sick animal and hope for a full recovery of his injury.



We commend the APP and FCPD officers involved in this incident for their outstanding performance and service to the citizens of Fairfax County and we are grateful to have such dedicated partners by our side.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jai Cole". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jai" and last name "Cole" clearly distinguishable.

Jai Cole, Executive Director,

Cc:

FCPA PIO

FCPA Director's Office

FCPA Park Operations Division

FCPD PIO

FCPA Natural Resources Branch



Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors  
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 552  
Fairfax, VA 22035

January 29, 2024

Dear Chairman McKay

We write as Virginia's only organization dedicated solely to the rescue and conservation of Virginia's native bats. We started in Fairfax County in 2001 and spent 15 years advocating for and rehabilitating bats in Annandale, first under the aegis of Bat World Sanctuary, and then as an independent organization, The Save Lucy Campaign. We've personally watched a colony of little brown bats completely vanish from a Fairfax County park after the arrival of white nose syndrome. I've addressed congress on the need to protect our disappearing suburban bats. I've educated thousands of Fairfax County residents on bat conservation and coexistence through partnerships with Fairfax County Park Authority, local public and private schools, and other NGOs. But the most important and meaningful partners in bat conservation and public safety have been those we've built with the Fairfax County Health Department and the Fairfax County Animal Protection Police. Though our headquarters moved to the Shenandoah Valley in 2016, we are still a presence in Fairfax through our rehabilitator and board member Kim O'Keefe in Burke and an educator and board member in Alexandria, so those relationships continue.

I cannot begin to estimate how many people and bats have been kept from harm by the Animal Protection Police. Approximately 50% of the bats entering our Burke facility come through Fairfax APPO intervention, which does not account for bats we never see because they are sent for rabies testing to ensure public safety or are euthanized immediately because of grievous injuries. Fairfax APPO are the only entity in the county that can safely enter homes to retrieve wayward bats and make a determination as to whether a bat needs to be tested for rabies, can be safely released, needs to be transferred to a rehabilitator, or be relieved from suffering. What will happen when that resource is no longer available? How many people will be exposed to rabies because no one is available to remove bats from homes other than expensive private "pest control"? How many imperiled bats will die because the public doesn't have the resources to transport wildlife to rehabilitators, and volunteer rehabilitators have no ability to go retrieve every wild animal in need? How many bats will suffer before they make their way to an entity that can release them from suffering or be tossed outside to slowly starve or succumb to injury? The police department cannot "dispatch" bats with firearms nor can they safely contain live bats for rabies testing, whereas APPOs can appropriately and humanely medically euthanize to either stop suffering or preserve for testing. We have spent years working closely with APPOs to provide in-person training and support to ensure the public and bats are handled appropriately. The county animal shelter is neither trained nor equipped to do what our APPOs have done admirably for years. The public and our native bats deserve no less.

Wildlife rehabilitation only exists by the good graces of the public, volunteer rehabilitators, and the assistance of public agencies. Kicking one leg out of that tripod will cause the entire structure to collapse, leaving the citizens of Fairfax with nowhere to turn for wildlife issues. Please do not eliminate the Fairfax County Animal Protection Police. The public needs them and our wildlife needs them.

Sincerely,  
Leslie Sturges, President  
Kim O'Keefe, Fairfax Rehabilitator and Board Member  
BCRV

VirginiaBats.org [REDACTED], Mount Solon VA 22843 [REDACTED]



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

*Joseph W. Guthrie*  
*Commissioner*

## Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

PO Box 1163, Richmond, Virginia 23218

[www.vdacs.virginia.gov](http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov)

The Honorable Jeffrey McKay  
Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors  
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 530  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035

Dear Mr. McKay,

I am writing in support of the Fairfax Animal Protection Police who have been essential in the protection and welfare of animals. I regularly aid with animal cruelty investigations by performing forensic necropsies and assisting animal control with various other testing. A forensic necropsy is an autopsy performed on animals to assist law enforcement and the courts identify the cause of death, better understand a disease process, and/or document abnormalities or injuries in potential animal abuse cases. I have performed these duties for the Warrenton Regional Animal Health Laboratory for the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) for almost 13 years. During that time, I have worked with law enforcement and civilian run animal protection agencies in central and northern Virginia, Washington D.C., Maryland, and West Virginia. Although I cannot speak to which system is best for individual counties, I can attest to the professionalism, compassion, dedication, and extensive experience and knowledge of the Fairfax Animal Protection officers. They are some of the best individuals I have worked with as the Veterinary Diagnostician at the Warrenton Regional Animal Health Laboratory. They have investigated and been an integral part in the successful prosecution of numerous cases including pet store investigations, hoarding cases, neglect cases and various violent cases against animals.

Proper investigations and prosecution of these cases are not only necessary for the protection of animals, but also essential in protecting people from similar acts of violence and abuse. It has repeatedly been demonstrated that there is a direct link between animal cruelty and violence and neglect toward other humans. It is not unusual to discover child abuse, domestic violence, and/or elder abuse associated with animal cruelty. On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, the FBI began tracking cases of animal cruelty in the Bureau's National Incident-Based Reporting System reiterating the importance of this link. This action placed acts of cruelty against animals as felony crimes similar to arson, burglary, assault and homicide. I have repeatedly witnessed the compassion of Fairfax Animal Protection officers when handling situations of animal cruelty where human assistance may also be needed. Many neighboring Fairfax counties are civilian animal protection agencies. In my experience, these agencies have submitted far fewer cases for investigation at my laboratory than those that are run by law-enforcement agencies. I have great concerns that a change from a law enforcement animal protection agency to civilian animal protection agency would result in decreased investigations and



subsequently, not only will animal abuse go unprosecuted, child abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse and other associated crimes will more likely be overlooked. I believe the training, knowledge and experience that officers have in dealing with such cases is vital to properly identifying and taking appropriate action regarding animal welfare and the possible human component to animal abuse cases.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any of my statements, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jaime Weisman, DVM, MS

  
Warrenton Regional Animal Health Lab

February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024

The Chair and members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.  
Board of Supervisors  
Fairfax County Government Center  
1200 Government Center Parkway,  
Fairfax, VA 22035

Dear Chairman McKay and Members of the Board of Supervisors  
Supervisor James Walkinshaw, Braddock  
Supervisor James Bierman, Dranesville  
Supervisor Rodney Lusk, Franconia  
Supervisor Walter Acorn, Hunter Mill  
Supervisor Andrew Jiminez, Mason  
Supervisor Daniel Storck, Mount Vernon  
Supervisor Dalia Palchik, Providence  
Supervisor Pat Herrity, Springfield  
Supervisor Kathy Smith, Sully

We are writing to you after recently becoming aware of the proposal to consolidate Fairfax County Animal Protection Police Officers (APPO) under the authority of the Fairfax County Department of Animal Sheltering<sup>1</sup> and wish to express our opposition to this proposal. The proposal demonstrates a lack of knowledge of the local rehabilitation community and, in referencing the Arlington County as an example and their State partners, the proposal shows either disregard or ignorance regarding Fairfax County's wildlife rehabilitation network and the work it does.

For purposes of standing, this letter has been signed by licensed wildlife rehabilitators, our respective charitable organizations and individuals familiar with our work and that of the Fairfax County Animal Protection Police. We include a wide network of rehabilitators, caregivers and transporters, all licensed by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and with expertise in the rehabilitation of a wide variety of Virginian wildlife species. Regardless of the county we work in, our network ensures that wildlife from Fairfax County that is injured or orphaned can be treated, rehabilitated and then released back into the wild. We therefore work directly or indirectly with the Fairfax APPO, and they are necessary for us to provide humane treatment for the sick or injured wildlife in Fairfax County, and to effectively manage their interactions with other animals, livestock and people.

Based on our collective experience, we believe that the Fairfax County Police Department has created, through its Animal Protection Police Unit, an effective and necessary force for good. They are integral to the work we do, and we oppose any change that would damage or disrupt the existing good functioning of this unit. Furthermore, and should the proposal be implemented, it will act to increase the power and staff numbers under the control of the Fairfax County Shelter's Director, without offering any additional benefits or appropriate oversight. The Fairfax County Animal Shelter is Fairfax County's only open-access, municipal shelter and its operating expenses are funded by Fairfax County tax payers. We do not support the consolidation of power that is evident in this proposal, the lack of consideration given to wildlife, nor its approach to fixing something which isn't broken.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/animalshelter/fairfax-county-animal-services-consolidation-proposal>

The following lists our concerns regarding the proposal being brought by the Department of Animal Sheltering (DAS) for the consolidation of animal care and control functions under DAS, which we are happy to discuss in further detail with you:

1. The necessity and impact of this proposal, based on the excellent capabilities and necessary scope of the current system.
2. The implications for animal welfare, particularly the welfare of Fairfax County wildlife.
3. The implications for oversight, liability and accountability.
4. The lack of transparency in the process and engagement with relevant stakeholders.
5. The unnecessary negative impact it will have on the current Animal Protection Police Officers.

**The work the Fairfax Animal Protection Police do with wildlife is significant:**

Some of the data provided in the consolidated proposal presentation to the Board of Supervisors Safety and Security Committee Meeting of Jan. 30, 2024 is inconsistent with data provided by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services \*VDACS website, Animal Custody Records which show that-

in 2021<sup>2</sup> the APPO interacted with 2168 wildlife species and brought 551 of them to rehabilitators in Fairfax County. They released a further 224 back into the wild, and had to euthanize 1393, or 64%. Of these, 43% were euthanized via firearm. In this same year they interacted with 3177 dogs, cats, other companion animals, equine, livestock and poultry species of which 80% were either rehomed or adopted.

In 2022<sup>3</sup> the APPO interacted with 1448 wildlife species and brought 348 to wildlife rehabilitators, released 236 back into the wild and had to euthanize 864, or 60% of them. Of these, 46% were euthanized via firearm. In the same year they interacted with 3727 dogs, cats, other companion animals, equine, livestock and poultry species of which 85% were either rehomed or adopted.

In 2023<sup>4</sup> the APPO interacted with 1200 wildlife species and brought 111 to wildlife rehabilitators, released 359 back into the wild and had to euthanize 790, or 60% of them. In the same year they interacted with 4515 dogs, cats, other companion animals, equine, livestock and poultry species of which 85% were either rehomed or adopted.

In other words, a significant proportion of the work of the APPO is with wildlife, and a significant proportion of that work requires them to euthanize wildlife. The remainder they return to the wild or give to wildlife rehabilitators. Without the APPO, these wildlife animals would also die. By contrast, the data provided by the Shelter Director in her presentation on Dec 30<sup>th</sup> stated only six wildlife cases were handled by animal services in 2023. Overall, the data provided on January 30<sup>th</sup> to the Board of Supervisors Safety and Security Committee Meeting is problematic in support of the proposed Department of Animal Sheltering (DAS) and Control Services Consolidation<sup>5</sup> presentation. For example,

- Of the calls received that were “animal related calls for service” (Pg 4) – it is not clear where these calls were received (the Shelter or the APPO?), what they related to (wildlife/pets/livestock), or what the outcome of each call was. Why was this important context omitted?

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<sup>2</sup> [Animal Custody Records \(virginia.gov\)](https://arr.vdacs.virginia.gov/PublicReports/ViewReport?SysFacNo=250&Calendar_Year=2021) 2021

<sup>3</sup> [Animal Custody Records \(virginia.gov\)](https://arr.vdacs.virginia.gov/PublicReports/ViewReport?SysFacNo=250&Calendar_Year=2022) 2022

<sup>4</sup> [https://arr.vdacs.virginia.gov/PublicReports/ViewReport?SysFacNo=250&Calendar\\_Year=2023](https://arr.vdacs.virginia.gov/PublicReports/ViewReport?SysFacNo=250&Calendar_Year=2023)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/board-supervisors-safety-and-security-committee-meeting-jan-30-2024>

- While the number of 'cases requiring search warrants', is also provided in the presentation, it is not clear how many search warrants were required in each case – often there are multiple.
- In the pie chart, the 'Courtesy Boarding' category suggests the Shelter is providing boarding for peoples' pets, Where do these animals come from? Are they the ones which have brought in by the APPO when an animal needs temporary housing pending the outcome of an investigation into cruelty or neglect, or if a pet is involved in a traffic accident and its owners have been brought to hospital? In police terminology, these data are, by contrast, referred to as 'seized animals'.
- On page 5 of the presentation the number 'animals saved' is stated as being 93%. This percentage is calculated using the total number of animals provided in the pie chart on Page 6, which is 4068. On the VDACS website the total is 4478, and if one includes horses, livestock and poultry, the total rises to 4515. This drops the percent 'animals saved' down to 85%.
- Why does the terminology used in the presentation not correspond with the terminology used when these data are initially collected, or the terminology used on the VDACS reports? This lack of consistency makes the interpretation of the data presented on January 30<sup>th</sup> difficult to properly compare, and it provides a different interpretation of what these data may mean in practice.
- Why are the numbers different, and what happened to the 410 animals (not including horses, livestock and poultry) that were apparently brought into the shelter in 2023 but not included in the total provided in the pie chart?
- Why were the APPO themselves not present at the meeting on January 30<sup>th</sup> to provide their data so that these numbers could be compared, and those in the presentation be given greater clarity and context in the process?

**This proposal will have a significant impact on the careers and livelihood of APPO's, on existing structures of management and the distribution of power. Any numbers provided in support of this proposal should therefore be correct, contextualized/properly described, and not cherrypicked.**

By contrast, it is clear from the VDACS data that Fairfax Animal Protection Police work with more than pets and their owners, and there are considerable crossover needs relating to their ability to police and their ability to manage and control animals. For this reason, the APPO are extensively trained, including training in the relevant animal welfare laws. In addition to wildlife, they work with livestock that are kept on both farms and by residents. The consolidation proposal fails to address both wildlife and livestock needs, including livestock-wildlife interactions and wildlife-people conflicts, nor recognizes the importance of the training APPO's receive. Importantly and because of their training, as both sworn officers with knowledge of the law as well as training in animal handling, welfare and law, liability risks associated with the work they do are mitigated. The training being recommended for ACO's in the proposal is significantly less comprehensive than is currently required for a sworn officer. We fail to understand the benefits of replacing well trained APPO's with lesser trained ACO's, and the liability risk this gives rise to when they work with livestock, wildlife or potentially dangerous animals/pets/people.

Page 7 of the proposal presentation states that *"ACO's have full enforcement power for...Issuing summons, obtaining search and arrest warrants, investigating animal cruelty and neglect, investigating animal fighting, and investigating animal bites."* This gives civilian ACO's the power and authority of police officers without their training, oversight or accountability. For publicly funded sheltering, this is deeply troubling. What is the rationale for this, and why is this even necessary considering we already have properly trained and sworn officers, the Animal Protection Police? And will these investigative powers be extended to include wildlife rehabilitation, or will this be left with the current authorities for approval and oversight?

**Fairfax Animal Protection Police provide the following important wildlife services:**

**Wildlife rescue, release and humane euthanasia:** The APPOs rescue wildlife that are reported to them, or which they find in the course of their patrols, and which if trapped or stuck, they can free and release back into the wild. If injured or orphaned, they bring them to a rehabilitator. If needed, they can also humanely euthanize those which are in pain and suffering and for which there is no chance of recovery such as deer injured by traffic. They can do this because as police officers they are authorized to carry a firearm, and they can carry controlled chemical substances used for humane euthanasia in their vehicles. Importantly, they can euthanize on the spot, so that the animal does not have to suffer for any longer than is necessary – as would be the case if they required transportation to a vet or had to wait for another unit to turn up. The data for 2000, 2021 and 2023 show that 43%, 43% and 46% of wildlife respectively were euthanized by firearm. The proposal will not permit Animal Control Officers (ACO) to carry a firearm or controlled substances for euthanasia, and thus the suffering of the injured or diseased animal will be prolonged.

**Wildlife removal for members of the public:** Fairfax APPO are trained to remove/release wildlife species from homes and private property, where they may cause property damage etc. In fact, Fairfax APPO are the only entity in the county that can safely enter homes to retrieve wildlife and make a determination as to whether that animal needs to be tested for rabies, can be safely released, needs to be transferred to a rehabilitator, or be immediately relieved from suffering. The people living in Fairfax County both support and need this service, and pest management services are not a viable substitute because apart from anything else, they are expensive. Without the APPO many animals may be left to suffer outside to slowly starve or succumb to injury. In addition, the wildlife in Fairfax County is very diverse and includes species such as Coyote and Black Bears, and encounters with dangerous or rabid animals extend beyond those which occur with pets. An APPO's experience, training and ability to chemically euthanize or use a firearm appropriately, effectively and on the spot is also important for safeguarding members of the public. The shelter therefore needs the APPOs when the animals are wild, or when the situation is unpredictable or dangerous. Suggesting that these situations can be met by less trained and unarmed civilian Animal Control Officers fails to consider their safety and wellbeing.

**Disease Monitoring and Benefiting Virginia's Natural Resources:** The APPO monitor disease in wildlife species. Diseases include chronic wasting disease in deer, or rabies for example. As boots- on- the- ground, the APPO are well placed to note instances of animal disease or causes of death, and they report their findings to the Wildlife Management Specialist who is integrated into the APPO team, and who in turn liaises with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources to support the State and national animal and disease monitoring and control services.

We understand that the proposal also seeks to consolidate this wildlife service and bring the Wildlife Management Specialist under the DAS, which we oppose as unnecessary. The Wildlife Management Specialists and the APPO are a fully integrated unit and work with wildlife management programs involving other authorities including the Park Authority and Fairfax Police Force, such as the Fairfax County Deer Management Plan and the Deer and Canada Geese Management Programs. These relationships are well established and work well, and to tear them apart is neither appropriate, cost effective, nor efficient.

**The Fairfax County Deer Management Plan (DMP):** This program has been in place for decades and is a well thought out and well managed systematic program which is designed to benefit the county's natural resources. The DMP is an agreement between Fairfax County Police and the Fairfax County Park Authority. For this reason, the Police Department dedicates the time of one Wildlife Management Specialist and one Animal Protection Police Supervisor, with two full-time Assistant Wildlife Biologist positions and two seasonal assistants additionally assigned to support



field tasks as needed to implement the Deer Management Plan. This agreement ensures that members of the public who are recruited are trained and licensed by Fairfax County officers. Archery continues to be the most cost-effective and successful method of herd management, representing 94% of the total program harvest last season. Volunteers are individually screened (background check, licensure, hunter safety education) and qualified for accuracy to participate by the Fairfax County Police Department and Fairfax County insures these volunteers under its general liability policy. The activities in the field are supported and overseen by APPOs. The proposal fails to address the needs of the Deer Management Plan in any concrete manner, or the financial and other costs associated with changing what is already in place and working well, or how it will seek to manage the exiting roles and relationships that are required to implement it.

Consolidation of the APPOs under DAS is bad for wildlife, the public, and the county:

The importance of the Fairfax Animal Protection Police to wildlife rescue, release and the immediate and humane rescue of animals which are in pain and suffering cannot be underestimated. In fulfilling their duties, Fairfax APPOs have established strong and beneficial relationships with local veterinary services, and with the network of licensed rehabilitators in Fairfax County. They do this because they would prefer to give an animal a chance at life rather than euthanize it. They also retrieve wildlife from members of the public and are therefore an important part of the Fairfax Community Policing Policy – a friendly face which epitomizes the helpful interactions the police can have with their local community. For example, members of the public call them every time there is a storm, because when the trees fall the number of orphaned babies and injured animals increases exponentially, and Fairfax APPOs collect and bring these baby animals to rehabilitators. If these animals are irreparably injured, in pain and suffering, we can ask the APPO to humanely euthanize them for us. When there is an animal bleeding to death internally from poison or has blood coming from its nose and ears from a head injury, when its leg is broken and the bone may be sticking out, or a rabbit has been degloved by a dog whose fangs have buried deep into its muscle and left a hole, waiting to bring it to a vet is not an option. The APPOs euthanize these animals humanely. They use the same drugs a vet uses, in their secure van, and we can attest to both their kindness and heartbreak in this. Yes, an unarmed ACO can be trained to euthanize an animal in a shelter, per the proposal. But that is not the same as bringing an animal in pain, which might bite and claw, to a licensed rehabber in the hope that it can be saved, and then access the controlled substances in their van and end its misery on the spot when saving it is not possible.

Regardless of how other States and counties choose to manage their sheltering and wildlife needs, Fairfax County has developed an efficient, effective and humane system that takes into consideration not only the needs of pet owners, but the needs of the general public and the broader animal and wildlife species of Fairfax County as well. The APPOs are critically important to this system, and as sworn officers are also accountable for their actions.

It could be argued that there is an inherent conflict of interest between the role of a municipal, open access shelter which seeks to minimize euthanasia, and the role of protecting the public from dangerous animals, or for that matter, animals from dangerous people. This hybrid overlapping system addresses it effectively and well. By proposing the replacement of something which works well, this proposal is attempting to fix a system which isn't broken, without adequate justification for doing so, without offering any guaranteed or realistic additional benefits or advantages and will likely have negative consequences to both wildlife and the Fairfax County Animal Protection Police Officers who work to protect them.

In short, we do not support this proposal. It is unnecessary, and it fails to reflect the important role the Fairfax Animal Protection Police play in the community, in rescuing and releasing Fairfax County wildlife back into the wild and in providing humane euthanasia for those which cannot be released due to their injuries. We also believe this

February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024

proposal will negatively impact the control and spread of disease in wildlife populations in Fairfax County and across the state of Virginia, as well as the effective control of the deer population, which have no natural predators in this county.

Sincerely,

Wildlife rehabilitation organizations and rehabilitators of Fairfax County & North Virginia



LOUISA HARTILL  
*Louisa Hartill*  
REWILD  
*Finest Schults*  
JANET SCHULTS

Rewildnova.org



Olivia LaBalboa



Aeroanimalrescue.org



Larke Sturges, President  
Kim O'Keefe, Fairfax Rehabilitator and Board Member  
BCRV

Virginiabats.org



Name: Tom Blackburn  
Chair, Advocacy committee  
Audubon Society of Northern Virginia  
11100 Wildlife Center drive  
Reston VA 20190

Audubonva.org

Rachael Brown



22102

Clare Thorp



Zip: 22039

Claudia Greves



Zip: 22712

Laura Villa



Zip: 20110

Jill Spohn

Name (please Print): Jill A Spohn  
Signature: *Jill A Spohn*  
Zip code or organization: 20194 ASNY VNRB

Zip: 20194

Kristina Anderson

Flora's Refuge & Resource



Zip 22015



Sharon Brander:  
Please also give Anne's membership  
numbers to article which one in the  
50 number in May  
Jennifer

**Fw: Support of the Consolidation of Animal Services under the Shelter**

GI

gina.lynch@verizon.net <gina.lynch@verizon.net>  
▶ Tue, 12 Mar 2024 5:15:13 PM -0400 • INBOX

📧 To "Larry Zaragoza" <lj.zaragoza@zoho.com>

Tags 🏷

Security 🔒 TLS [Learn more](#)

📖 🔗

Larry - so nice talking with you this afternoon - totally agree - we need to stick to facts and remove the highly charged emotions concerning the consolidation. I wanted to share with you the Animal Services Advisory Commission position to the board. The best days are ahead for animals in Fairfax - we're so fortunate to have so many seniors in leadership that are focused on humane, progressive animal welfare - and moving another step forward to being the very best in the Nation!!! We already are acknowledged by the national organizations as being great - now we'll be even greater!!!

Please feel free to contact me any time (since we're practically neighbors).

Gina

----- Forwarded Message -----  
**From:** [gina.lynch@verizon.net](mailto:gina.lynch@verizon.net) <[gina.lynch@verizon.net](mailto:gina.lynch@verizon.net)>  
**To:** Clerk To the BOS <[clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:clerktothebos@fairfaxcounty.gov)>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 25, 2024 at 09:35:20 AM EST  
**Subject:** Support of the Consolidation of Animal Services under the Shelter

Dear Supervisor McKay and members of the Board of Supervisors:

The Animal Services Advisory Commission **strongly** supports the consolidation of all animal services under the Fairfax Animal Shelter.

For many years the Commission has closely monitored the support provided by the Fairfax Animal Shelter to the community on a myriad of animal issues. We have seen the transformation of our shelter into a Resource Center that today serves the local community each and every day. The needs of the community are now being addressed using the best approaches available through a variety of unique programs and multiple levels of assistance. Our shelter is engaged in the same level of industry-wide and exceptional programs adopted by animal welfare agencies throughout the United States. The shelter's continual improvements in addressing the specific needs of the community have been phenomenal. The deliberate efforts of the staff to instill a helpful, welcoming, and problem-solving attitude have made the shelter a trusted, highly appreciated, and invaluable part of our animal friendly County. Karen Diviney, the previous Director, made significant and substantial operational improvements at the animal shelter culminating in a model of excellence. Our current Director, Reasa Currier, has brought the shelter to the next level; further enhancing the critical holistic service model employed in all progressive, community-based animal service agencies. Her expertise working at the national level on animal projects and knowledge of other animal shelters and organizations in the Commonwealth is truly spectacular. We **enthusiastically** look forward to new and improved animal services that will be provided to our families and their pets in the years ahead.

Thank you, as always, for your continual support of the Animal Shelter.

Respectfully,

Gina Marie Lynch

Chair