



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

PALOMA AGUIRRE
First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

MONICA MONTGOMERY STEPPE
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: December 9, 2025

04

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

RATIFY ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS FROM THE ELIZABETH S. SMALLFELT REVOCABLE TRUST AND JOAN WALSH-SZOTT (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

County of San Diego Administrative Code Article III, Section 66 Acceptance of Gifts and Board of Supervisors Policy A-112, Acceptance and Use of Gifts and Donations, enable the acceptance of gifts and donations by the administrative head of each department in the County, subject to approval by the Board of Supervisors.

Between May and October 2025, the County of San Diego's Department of Animal Services (DAS) received two generous cash donations: \$170,000 from the Elizabeth S. Smallfelt Revocable Trust and \$35,000 from Joan Walsh-Szott. Of the \$170,000 donated by the Smallfelt Revocable Trust, \$100,000 will be deposited into the Medical Expense "Spirit" Trust Fund and used to purchase an ultrasound machine with associated software and a surgical laser. This equipment will assist in medical procedures, reducing recovery time and increasing the department's ability to provide care for animals. The remaining \$70,000 from the Smallfelt donation and the full \$35,000 from Joan Walsh-Szott will be deposited into the department's Public Education Trust Fund to fund mobile outreach events offering spay/neuter services, vaccinations, and microchipping, with the funding estimated to provide more than 800 of each of these services in underserved communities, significantly expanding access to preventative veterinary care. These donations support and promote the department's mission to protect the health, safety, and welfare of people and animals throughout the region.

Today's action requests the Board of Supervisors (Board) to ratify the acceptance of a \$170,000 donation from the Elizabeth S. Smallfelt Revocable Trust and a \$35,000 donation from Joan Walsh-Szott and authorizes the Chair to sign letters of appreciation on behalf of the Board. Additionally, the item requests to establish appropriations of \$100,000 in the Department of Animal Services, Capital Assets Equipment, to purchase an ultrasound machine with associated software and a surgical laser based on these donations.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

SUBJECT: RATIFY ACCEPTANCE OF DONATIONS FROM THE ELIZABETH S. SMALLFELT REVOCABLE TRUST AND JOAN WALSH-SZOTT
(DISTRICTS: ALL)

1. In accordance with County of San Diego Administrative Code Article III, Section 66 and Board Policy A-112, ratify the acceptance of a \$170,000 donation from the Elizabeth S. Smallfelt Revocable Trust and a \$35,000 donation from Joan Walsh-Szott for deposit into the Department of Animal Services' Medical Expense "Spirit" Trust Fund and Animal Control Public Education Trust Fund.
2. Authorize the Chair of the Board of Supervisors to sign letters of appreciation on behalf of the Board to the Elizabeth S. Smallfelt Revocable Trust and Joan Walsh-Szott.
3. Establish appropriations of \$100,000 in the Department of Animal Services, Capital Assets Equipment, to purchase an ultrasound machine with associated software and a surgical laser based on donations **(4 VOTES)**

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The County of San Diego Department of Animal Services (DAS) periodically receives monetary gifts and in-kind donations to benefit animal and public health and safety, including care for orphaned pets in County animal shelters. In Fiscal Year 2024–25, DAS served 6,238 animals, many of which enter shelters as unaltered strays in need of veterinary care. Gifts and donations received by DAS help advance equity by providing access to services for those in historically underserved communities, which often lack affordable veterinary care. By expanding access to critical services such as spay and neuter procedures, vaccinations, and microchipping, DAS helps keep pets in homes with their families and out of shelters.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed actions contribute to the County of San Diego's Sustainability Goals by aligning available resources with the delivery of essential veterinary services, such as spay and neuter surgeries, vaccinations, microchipping, and advanced medical care, particularly in underserved areas where animals have historically faced barriers to care. The Department of Animal Services (DAS) is committed to keeping pets in homes with their families and out of shelters by delivering mobile outreach services that offer spay and neuter procedures, vaccinations, microchipping, and pet wellness education.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are partially included in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Operational Plan for the Department of Animal Services. Between May 2025 and October 2025, the Department of Animal Services received two cash donations totaling \$205,000. If approved, today's request will ratify the acceptance of the two donations and authorize the Department of Animal Services to deposit \$100,000 into the Medical Expense "Spirit" Trust Fund to purchase an ultrasound machine with associated software and surgical laser. The remaining \$105,000 will be deposited into the Animal Control Public Education Trust Fund to support mobile outreach events, with the funding estimated to provide over 800 spay and neuter services, 800 vaccinations, and 800 microchips, and pet wellness education in underserved communities. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

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BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The Department of Animal Services (DAS) accepts tangible and monetary donations to help support animal cruelty investigations and other community services that promote animal and public health and safety, including care for orphaned pets in County animal shelters. In October of 2002, DAS established the Animal Control Public Education Trust Fund to support spay and neuter surgeries of unaltered animals in the community, with the goal of reducing the number of unplanned litters and preventing shelter intake.

Funds deposited into the Public Education Trust Fund are used to support mobile outreach events that provide spay and neuter procedures, vaccinations, microchipping, and pet wellness education. These services are focused on historically underserved communities where access to affordable veterinary care is limited. By expanding access to preventive care, DAS helps reduce the number of animals entering shelters and supports the health and stability of families and their pets. In July 2008, the DAS established the Medical Expense “Spirit” Trust Fund after a 10-week-old puppy was beaten and in a critical state near the US-Mexico border. Donations began to pour in from around the country to pay for the expensive treatment needed to save the puppy’s life. Today, donations to the Spirit fund are used to cover the high cost of veterinary procedures for animals in DAS’s care and custody that have serious medical needs that the department would otherwise not have funds to treat.

Today’s action requests the Board of Supervisors (Board) to ratify the acceptance of a \$170,000 donation from the Elizabeth S. Smallfelt Revocable Trust and a \$35,000 donation from Joan Walsh-Szott and authorizes the Chair to sign letters of appreciation on the Board’s behalf. Additionally, the item requests to establish appropriations of \$100,000 in the Department of Animal Services, Capital Assets Equipment, to purchase an ultrasound machine with associated software and a surgical laser based on these donations.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today’s proposed action supports the Community, Empower, and Equity Strategic Initiatives in the County of San Diego’s 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, by expanding access to preventive veterinary care in underserved communities, and promoting health, safety, and family stability.

Respectfully submitted,

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SMALLFELT REVOCABLE TRUST AND JOAN WALSH-SZOTT
(DISTRICTS: ALL)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Strong", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Andrew Strong for

EBONY N. SHELTON
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

Attachment A – Letter of Appreciation to the Elizabeth S. Smallfelt Revocable Trust

Attachment B – Letter of Appreciation to Joan Walsh-Szott