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Donald E. Jordan/Tony Kilduff  
FAS Pet License Amnesty 2013 ORD  
October 15, 2012  
Version #14

**CITY OF SEATTLE**  
**ORDINANCE** \_\_\_\_\_  
COUNCIL BILL 117628

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AN ORDINANCE relating to animal licensing; amending Section 9.25.100, Section 9.26.020 and Section 9.26.025 in connection therewith, and adding a new Section 9.25.200 to the Seattle Municipal Code, authorizing the establishment of amnesty periods by Director's rule.

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle seeks to increase compliance by pet owners in obtaining and maintaining animal licenses as required by Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 9.25; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, 2000, and 2005, the City effectively increased pet license compliance through one-month amnesty periods, during which the City waived civil penalties and late fees for pet owners obtaining new animal licenses or renewing lapsed animal licenses; NOW, THEREFORE,

**BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:**

**Section 1.** Subsection 9.26.020.D of the Seattle Municipal Code, which section was last amended by Ordinance 123471, is amended as follows:

**9.26.020 Cat, dog or goat license fee – Renewal((:))**

\* \* \*

D. Late fee for the renewal of a cat, dog or miniature goat license more than ((thirty  
)30(+) days after its expiration....\$15.

\* \* \*

**Section 2.** Subsection 9.26.025.C of the Seattle Municipal Code, which section was last amended by Ordinance 121004, is amended as follows:





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**Section 4.** A new Section 9.25.200 of the Seattle Municipal Code is added as follows:

**9.25.200 Amnesty**

The Director may from time to time declare periods of amnesty in which the penalties imposed under Sections 9.25.100, 9.26.020, and 9.26.025 may be waived. Such periods of amnesty and the terms thereof may be established upon a finding by the Director that they are likely to have the effect of increasing compliance with one or more provisions of this Title 9. The Director may promulgate rules and procedures to implement the provisions of this section.

**Section 5.** This ordinance shall take effect and be in force 30 days after its approval by the Mayor, but if not approved and returned by the Mayor within ten days after presentation, it shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Section 1.04.020.

Passed by the City Council the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2012, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_  
President \_\_\_\_\_ of the City Council

Approved by me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael McGinn, Mayor



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Filed by me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2012.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)



**2013 BUDGET LEGISLATION FISCAL NOTE**

| <b>Department:</b>                  | <b>Contact Person/Phone:</b> | <b>CBO Analyst/Phone:</b> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Finance and Administrative Services | Don Jordan/386-4286          | Jennifer Devore/615-1328  |

**Legislation Title:** AN ORDINANCE relating to animal licensing; amending Section 9.25.100, Section 9.26.020 and Section 9.26.025 in connection therewith, and adding a new Section 9.25.200 to the Seattle Municipal Code, authorizing the establishment of amnesty periods by Director's rule.

**Summary of the Legislation:**

The proposed Council Bill makes technical amendments to various subsection of SMC 9.26 and adds a new subsection 200 that authorizes the Director of FAS to grant amnesties from time to time to pet license scofflaws to encourage pet licensing.

**Background:**

SMC 9.25.050 establishes the requirement for licensing cats, dogs, miniature goats and potbelly pigs. SMC 9.25.051 requires pet owners to obtain valid licenses for all cats and dogs over the age of 8 weeks, or within 30 days of the animal's arrival in Seattle. SMC 9.25.052 requires the owners of potbelly pigs and miniature goats to obtain valid licenses within 30 days of the animals' arrival in Seattle, with the exception of nursing offspring born to licensed miniature goats. SMC 9.25.100 establishes civil penalties for failure to have a valid pet license. While failure to license a pet can result in a civil penalty up to \$500, the Seattle Municipal Court bail schedule sets the standard civil penalty level at \$125. In addition to the civil penalty, pet owners known to be delinquent in licensing cats, dogs, or miniature goats are assessed a late fee of \$15 per license, per SMC 9.26.020 D. Owners of pot belly pigs who are delinquent in licensing their pet are assessed a late fee of \$10.00 per SMC 9.26.025.C.

The City has an interest in increasing the compliance rate for pet licensing. Increased compliance raises revenue that supports animal welfare and enforcement activities of the Seattle Animal Shelter. It also supports the Seattle Animal Shelter's efforts to promote pet identification as a means of reuniting lost pets with their owners. Providing for an amnesty period is one strategy the Department of Finance and Administrative Services is using to increase pet licensing compliance. The amnesty strategy is a low-cost, positive approach to increasing compliance. Civil penalties and late fees can be a deterrent for individuals who have failed to license a pet in the required time frame or who have failed to make timely license renewals. An amnesty period provides incentive to individuals to comply with the requirements. Once licensed, the license record is kept in a database through which the City is able to follow-up with the owner, improving renewal rates. Pet licensing amnesty periods, which the City previously provided in 1997, 2000 and 2005, have provided excellent public relations and an opportunity for the Seattle Animal Shelter to promote its many services and programs. The Seattle Animal Shelter will conduct a positive media campaign to inform pet owners of the benefits of pet licensing, as well



as mailings targeted to pet owners who are on-file as delinquent in obtaining licenses.  
 Please check one of the following:

**This legislation does not have any financial implications.**  
 (Please skip to the "Other Implications" Section at the end of the document and answer questions a-f. Delete sections that are left blank and the instructions provided in parentheses at the end of each question.)

**This legislation has financial implications.**

**Summary of Changes to Revenue Generated Specifically from this Legislation:**

|  | Revenue Source                                  | 2013 Proposed | 2014 Endorsed |
|--|---|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Total Fees and Charges Resulting From Passage of This Ordinance</b> | License Fees <sup>1</sup><br>Per SMC 9.26.020 C | \$25,000      | \$20,000      |

**Revenue Change Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Additional license fee revenue in 2013 is based upon an estimated new or renewed pet licenses garnered specifically as an effect of the proposed amnesty program only during the month of April, 2013 and there will not be any other new revenue experienced from this amnesty program during 2013. The estimate is based upon results from the 2005 amnesty program. The 2014 license fee revenue is based upon a subsequent non-renewal rate of approximately 20%, due to the death of the pet, the owner removing the pet from Seattle, or failure to follow through on renewal.

**Anticipated Total Revenue from Entire Program, Including Changes Resulting from this Legislation:**

| Fund Name and Number  | Revenue Source                                  | Total 2013 Revenue | Total 2014 Revenue |
|---|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| Seattle Animal Shelter subfund of the Department of Finance and Administrative Services subfund 50355 | License Fees <sup>1</sup><br>Per SMC 9.26.020 C | \$1,212,500        | \$1,207,500        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  |   | <b>\$1,212,500</b> | <b>\$1,207,500</b> |

**Total Revenue Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Anticipated total revenue for 2013 and 2014 is based upon cat and dog licenses only as there are less than 20 miniature goats and potbelly pigs licensed in Seattle and their overall impact on total license revenue is inconsequential to the license program.

**Other Implications:**



- a) Does the legislation have indirect financial implications, or long-term implications?  
Yes. The amnesty program encourages individuals who may not otherwise license their pets to take advantage of the opportunity to forego civil penalties. Once a pet is licensed and on record, the Seattle Animal Shelter sends renewal notices at the time a license expires, thereby affecting future revenue potential.
- b) What is the financial cost of not implementing this legislation? The pet license amnesty program is a low-cost method for promoting pet license compliance. Passage of this legislation potentially saves the City from more costly direct enforcement efforts.
- c) Does this legislation affect any departments besides the originating department? No.
- d) What are the possible alternatives to the legislation that could achieve the same or similar objectives? The authority to waive late fees and civil penalties associated with pet licensing requires an ordinance. The Seattle Animal Shelter can promote pet licensing compliance through other strategies, including canvassing neighborhoods. However, direct canvassing is more costly to implement, and often contributes to negative public relations.
- e) Is the legislation subject to public hearing requirements? No.
- f) Other Issues:

Please list attachments to the fiscal note below:





City of Seattle  
Office of the Mayor

September 24, 2012

Honorable Sally J. Clark  
President  
Seattle City Council  
City Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

Dear Council President Clark:

I am pleased to transmit the attached proposed Council Bill for consideration with the 2013 Proposed and 2014 Endorsed Budget. This legislation establishes an amnesty period during the month of April 2013. The amnesty program will permit pet owners to obtain pet licenses for their cats, dogs, miniature goats, or pot belly pigs without incurring applicable late fees or civil penalties. The proposed Bill suspends for one month late license fees, and waives the civil penalty for failure to have a properly licensed pet as provided for in the Seattle Municipal Code. The proposed amnesty program is expected to increase pet license compliance rates while educating the public about the merits of pet licensing. Finally, this legislation authorizes the Director to establish amnesty periods by Director's rule when they are likely to have the effect of increasing compliance with one or more provisions of Title 9, which is the main portion of the Seattle Municipal Code that relates to animals.

Civil penalties and late fees can be a deterrent for individuals who have failed to license a pet in the required time frame or who have failed to renew their licenses. The amnesty period provides incentive to individuals to comply with this requirement. Once licensed, the license record is kept in a database through which the City is able to follow-up with the owner, thereby improving renewal rates. Besides providing revenue that supports the Seattle Animal Shelter, increased licensing promotes pet identification as a means of reuniting lost pets with their owners. Finally, previous pet licensing amnesty periods have offered excellent public relations opportunities for the Seattle Animal Shelter to promote its many services, as evidenced by the City's successful amnesty program that was last conducted in 2005.

The amnesty period in April 2013 will help to promote many benefits of pet licensing. Thank you for your consideration of this legislation. Should you have questions, please contact Denise Movius at 684-9259, or Don Jordan at 386-4286.

Sincerely,

Michael McGinn  
Mayor of Seattle

cc: Honorable Members of the Seattle City Council

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