



What to Do Before Approaching Your Local Government About Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR)

Lobbying for animal welfare issues is an essential component to saving lives and improving conditions for animals in your community. To do so effectively, you must understand the reality behind the issues and obtain the necessary knowledge to strategically operate within the structure of your local government.

Once you understand local government processes, it's important to conduct thorough research to understand who may be impacted by any trap/neuter/return (TNR) ordinance changes. It is also important to understand the background and interests of the audience — researching the political affiliation, voting records, and, to the extent possible, the ideologies of each of your elected town officials. This knowledge is powerful and vital for maximizing your presentation's persuasive impact. So, do your homework, answering the following questions before you start your campaign to advocate for TNR.

Structure of Your Local Government

Every town or municipality is different, so it's important to determine how your local government is structured. This information will likely be available on the town's website, or you can call your local courthouse or government complex. You can also go to your local library and check with the information desk for assistance. Generally, the governing body consists of a mayor (or other executive), city (or town) council and/or a county commission or council.

What is the local governing body? _____

How often do the decision-makers meet? _____

What are the names and locations of all animal shelters and animal control facilities that the local government oversees? _____

What is the jurisdiction (the area over which their authority extends) for each shelter and animal control facility? _____

What type of access to public information is available in your state: Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA), FoI (Freedom of Information), public access (sunshine) laws?

What other local branches of government (e.g., public health department, zoning department, etc.) may have an interest in a TNR ordinance? _____

Current Community Cat Situation

Estimated number of cats: _____

Is rabies present in your area? _____ Yes _____ No

Number of rabid wild animals (during the past five years): _____

Number of rabid cats: _____

Are free-roaming cats currently being vaccinated and sterilized? _____ Yes _____ No

If so, under what programs? _____

Number of governmental staff trapping free-roaming cats for TNR: _____

Number of governmental staff trapping free-roaming cats to be killed: _____

Names of governmental staff responding to free-roaming cat complaints: _____

Elected Officials

Names of elected officials who understand and support TNR: _____

Names of elected officials opposed to TNR: _____

Have elected officials responded positively to animal issues in the past? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, which ones? _____

What is the political climate regarding animal welfare? _____

Current Elected Officials

Name: _____

Title: _____

Name of administrative assistant: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Political affiliation: _____

Number of years in office: _____

End of election cycle: _____

Personal interests: _____

Organization affiliations: _____

Personal contacts who know him/her personally: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Name of administrative assistant: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Political affiliation: _____

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Personal contacts who know him/her personally: _____

Miscellaneous Notes about Current Elected Officials

Local Government Meetings

Frequency of meetings: _____

Meeting location: _____

Is the room A/V accessible (for doing a PowerPoint presentation)? _____

What is the chain of command? _____

What is the deadline for getting an issue on the agenda? _____

How long is a person allowed to speak? _____

Is there additional time available for questions? ____ Yes ____ No

Current Ordinance and/or Regulatory Obstacles to TNR

Pet limit: _____

Feeding restrictions/bans: _____

At-large provision(s) related to cats: _____

Trapping permit requirements (if any): _____

Cat licensing requirements: _____

Unsanitary condition definition (typically under the department of health): _____

Other restrictions or regulations: _____

Animal Shelters / Animal Control

Annual intake/admissions numbers: Cats _____ Kittens _____

Euthanasia numbers: Cats/socialized _____ Cats/unsocialized _____ Kittens _____

Annual adoption rate: Cats _____ Kittens _____

Nuisance complaint calls: Per month _____ Per year _____

Annual budget: _____ Percentage funded by taxpayers: _____

Grants or other sources of funding being received for local programs: _____

Shelter or animal control's policy for free-roaming cats: _____

Shelter or animal control's philosophy toward TNR: _____

Does the shelter or animal control lend traps? _____ Yes _____ No

Rental fee: _____

Length of rental agreement: _____

Does the shelter or animal control trap cats? _____ Yes _____ No

Does the shelter have an owner relinquishment fee? _____ Yes _____ No

If so, what is the cost? _____

Available Resources

Other community groups or 501(c)(3) nonprofits addressing the needs of cats: _____

Areas of focus for local animal welfare groups: _____

Other groups that can assist with TNR efforts: _____

Local low-cost spay/neuter services for free-roaming cats: _____

Community cat-friendly veterinarians: _____

Buy-in from government officials: _____

Volunteers: _____

Fundraising or grant opportunities: _____

Other: _____

Preparing Your PowerPoint Presentation

As part of the toolkit, we have provided a generic PowerPoint that you can customize and use to make a presentation to city officials to educate them about the benefits and efficacy of TNR. Here are some tips for preparing your PowerPoint presentation:

- Concisely organize the presentation. You don't want to lose the attention of your audience.
- Include your contact information so audience members can contact you if they have questions later.
- Adequately address the problems with the current system, whether it's trap-and-kill or some other method.
- Highlight the philosophical shift in animal control that has occurred around the country.

- Stress the specific benefits of TNR.
- Use statistics from other cities or towns with successful TNR programs.
- Assign talking points to all speakers (no more than three points per speaker).
- Explain exactly what it is you're asking for.
- Make paper copies of the entire PowerPoint presentation beforehand and give one to every elected official. (Time constraints can cut your presentation short, so distributing paper copies will ensure that officials get the entire presentation.)

Additional Resources

- *Get Political for Animals and Win the Laws They Need* by Julie Lewin, 2007
- *Rules for Radicals* by Saul D. Alinsky, 1971
- *Community Approaches to Feral Cats* by Dr. Margaret R. Slater, DVM, Humane Society of the U.S. Press, 2002
- Best Friends Animal Society cat initiatives: bestfriends.org/straycats
- Join our action network: bestfriends.org/action

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