

REQUESTED COUNCIL MEETING DATE: APRIL 4, 2016

ITEM: COUNCIL BILL No. 2016-451

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: HEALTH DEPARTMENT

ATTACHMENT: COUNCIL BILL

Health Director: Dan Pekarek

Police Chief: Matt Stewart

City Attorney: Peter Edwards

City Manager: Sam Anselm

INTRODUCTION:

This council bill would authorize a change to the animal control codes clarifying the authority for animal control or police department staff to enter vehicles to remove animals in distress.

DISCUSSION:

The animal control program regularly receives calls, especially during the summer months, about animals being left alone in parked cars on public or private property. Callers express concern about the condition of the animal until owner returns. Animal control responds to and investigates each call to check on the welfare of the animal. In most situations, the car is gone upon the animal control officer's (ACO) arrival at the scene. In a large percentage of remaining calls, the car owner returns within a few moments of the ACO arrival. If the animal appears to be ok, the owner is warned about the dangers of such an action and is allowed to leave with the animal. If the animal appears to be in significant distress, usually from heat, the ACO can impound the animal for evaluation by the Joplin Humane Society or a veterinarian and/or issue a citation for animal abuse.

In a small percentage of calls the owner does not return to the car in a short period. The ACO must attempt to determine if it is appropriate to remove the animal from the vehicle based on the animal's apparent condition. Staff does not believe the current code adequately delineates this authority to act in these situations. Further, the suggested code change would be easier to communicate to the general public about their responsibilities for protection of their pets in these situations.

The suggested code change would be a simple addition to the Animal Abuse and Neglect section of the code.

Animal Control and Police Dept. staff reviewed many other city/state ordinances to arrive at the suggested change. The Health Board reviewed and approved the proposed change.

RECOMMENDATION:

City Staff recommends this Council Bill be approved on first reading.