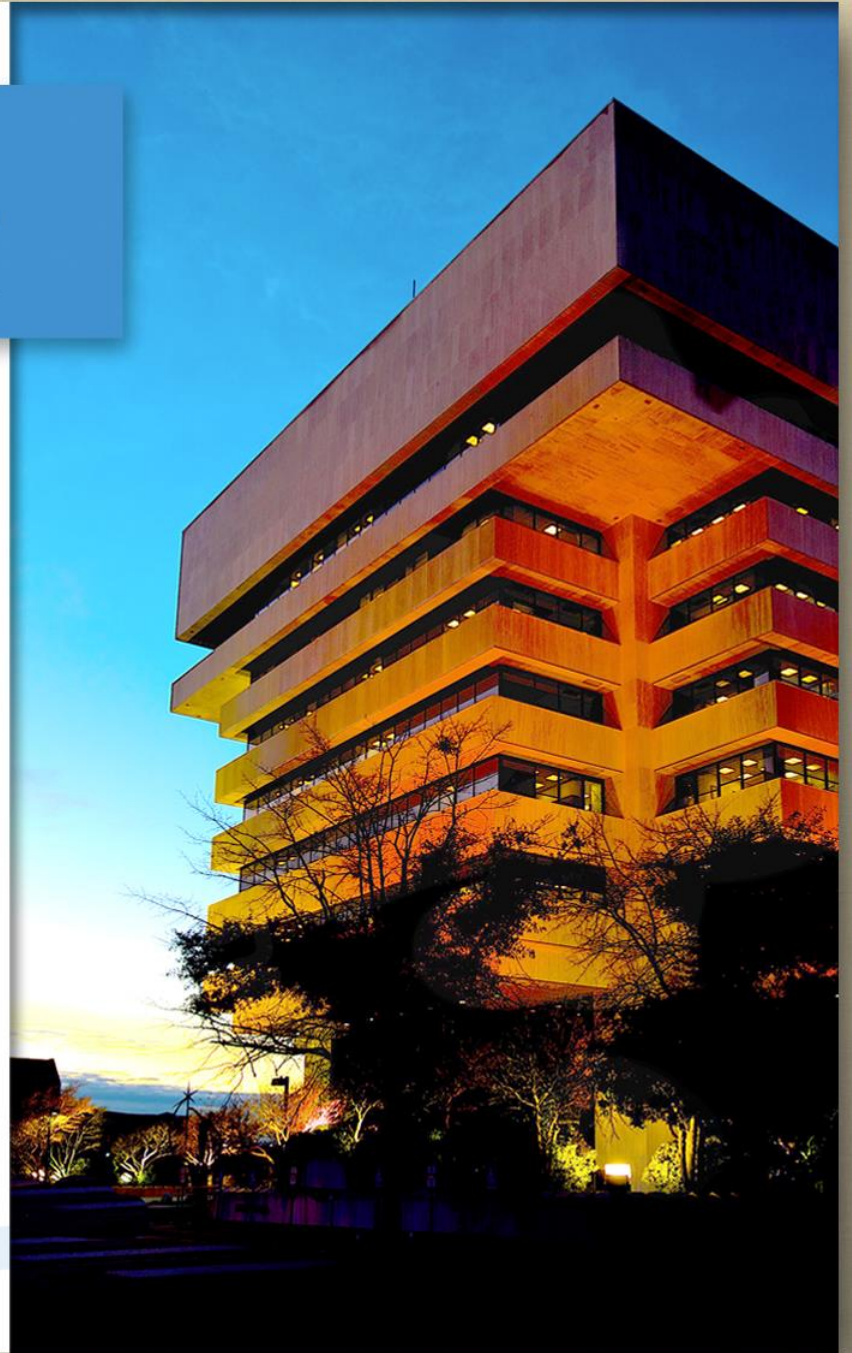


HAMPTON VA

Animal Licenses Briefing

City Council
October 11, 2017



Background

- Virginia Code §§ 3.2-6524 and 3.2-6528 mandate that all dogs over the age of 4 months be licensed and that every locality impose a tax on that license.
- Those same Code provisions make licensing for cats over the age of 4 months optional to the locality.
- Prior to July 1, 2017, the Code only allowed for annual animal licenses and stated the maximum tax for that license could not exceed \$10 per year.

Background Continued

- In 2016, the General Assembly received the results of a study it requested to evaluate the licensing process and make recommendations to improve that process.
- Based on that study, the General Assembly amended several code sections to allow localities to offer a lifetime animal license in addition to, or in lieu of, the traditional annual license.
 - The changes went into effect July 1, 2017
 - The General Assembly capped the maximum fee for a lifetime license at \$50; the \$10 cap on annual licenses remain in place.

Hampton's Animal License Options

Current Laws

- Currently Hampton offers three kinds of annual licenses
 - All in-tact dogs and cats are \$10 per year
 - All unsexed dog and cats are \$4 per year
 - Annual kennel licenses – amounts vary depending on the number of animals in the kennel
 - Kennel is defined as any establishment in which five (5) or more canines, felines, or hybrids of either are kept for the purpose of breeding, hunting, training, renting, buying, boarding, selling, or showing

Hampton's Animal License Options

Proposed Laws

- Staff has consulted with the Treasurer, Animal Control, and the Animal Control Advisory Committee.
- The consensus is that Council should approve and enact a lifetime license option. Staff recommends a one-time fee of \$20 per animal.
- The current annual licenses should remain an option for citizens at the current rates.
- This change will have no impact on kennel licenses.

Rationale for Lifetime License Option

- Convenience to pet owners
- Potential financial savings to pet owners
- Pet owners have flexibility to decide which option is best for them
- Reduced administrative burden to Treasurer's office
- Reduced financial cost for processing license renewals
- No impact on enforcement of laws

Current Laws – Legal Requirements

- All animals in the City over the age of 4 months must be licensed
- Licenses must be obtained from the Treasurer within 30 days of the animal turning 4 months old, or within 30 days after the owner obtains an animal over the age of 4 months
- Annual licenses expire on December 31st of each year
- License tax for the next year is due January 1st, but owners have until January 31st to pay without penalty
- Any owner who has not obtained an annual license by February 1st is guilty of a class 4 misdemeanor (max. fine of \$250)

Proposed Laws – Legal Requirements

- All requirements for annual licenses will remain the same
- Owners will have option to purchase lifetime license instead of annual license
- Lifetime license never has to be renewed
- Time of purchase is the same as annual

Proposed Laws – Legal Requirements

- Lifetime license is valid as long as the animal remains up to date on rabies vaccinations. Once the vaccination expires, the license is invalid.
- The license is automatically valid again upon the renewal of the vaccine.
- No action is required by the citizen or the Treasurer to re-new or verify the status of vaccinations after the license is issued initially.
- Enforcement of license/rabies vaccine requirements will not change

Proposed Laws – Legal Requirements

- If owner moves to another locality, the lifetime license is no longer valid. Owner would have to comply with laws of their new locality.
- The lifetime license tax is not refundable/pro-rated in the event of the premature loss of the animal.
- The lifetime license is not transferable to another animal.
- The lifetime license is good for the lifetime of the animal – not the owner.

Actions By Other Localities

Jurisdiction	Action Taken
Stafford County	Lifetime License Only - \$10
Patrick County	Lifetime License Only - \$20
Hanover County	Lifetime License Only - \$10
Poquoson	Lifetime License Only - \$5
Williamsburg	Lifetime License- \$50; Annual- \$5/\$10
Portsmouth	Considered – No Action
New Kent County	Considered – No Action
King William County	Considered – No Action
Caroline County	Considered – No Action
Manassas	Annual licenses, but option for lifetime license when animal turns 8 years old

Conclusion

Staff recommends adoption of the ordinance amendments to allow a lifetime license option for a fee of \$20, while leaving the current annual license provisions intact.

This will benefit the pet owners of Hampton as well as reduce the costs of administration.

Questions

