

RESOLUTION NO. ___

March 19th, 2024

**A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CHIEF OF POLICE TO ESTABLISH,
IMPLEMENT AND OVERSEE A THERAPY CANINE PROGRAM FOR THE CITY OF
HUDSON POLICE DEPARTMENT**

WHEREAS, recognizing the importance of fostering positive community relationships and enhancing the overall well-being of both citizens and officers, the Hudson Police Department aims to implement a Therapy Dog Program; and

WHEREAS, studies have demonstrated the positive impact of therapy dogs on reducing stress, promoting emotional well-being, and improving community engagement; and

WHEREAS, the Therapy Dog Program aligns with the department's commitment to Community-oriented policing, supports its current Safeguarding Children policy, and aims to strengthen the bond between the Hudson Police Department and the community they serve; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of a Therapy Dog Program will provide additional support for officers dealing with stressful situations and enhance the department's capacity to engage with community members in a positive and proactive manner; and

WHEREAS, the City of Hudson recognizes the potential benefits of the Therapy Dog Program in fostering positive community relationships, improving officer well-being, and contributing to a safer and more harmonious community environment; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Chief of Police is hereby authorized to establish and oversee the implementation of the Therapy Dog Program within the Hudson Police Department; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the necessary funds for the initiation and maintenance of the Therapy Dog Program, including the acquisition, training, and care of therapy dogs, shall be allocated from grant funding ; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Council expresses its support for the Hudson Police Department in implementing the Therapy Dog Program as a proactive measure to enhance community relations, officer well-being and assist children victims; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Police Department is encouraged to collaborate with local community organizations, veterinary professionals, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation and sustained success of the Therapy Dog Program.

Introduced _____

Seconded _____

Approved _____

By _____

Kamal Johnson, Mayor



HUDSON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Therapy Dog Program

Therapy Dog Proposal



Overview

The presence of a therapy canine has been shown to have positive effects on health, mood, and quality of life by increasing levels of oxytocin and other anti-stress agents in humans.

A therapy canine is specially trained to offer comfort, companionship, and affection to those in need of a friendly presence. Recently, therapy canines have been gaining popularity with law enforcement agencies. They are being used to comfort citizens, non-sworn members and sworn members of agencies who are dealing with emotional or traumatic experiences. They can be integrated and utilized in Employee Wellness programs and Employee Assistance programs with high levels of success. Therapy canines have proven to be extremely effective during interviews of victims of sexual and physical abuse, both in adult, and especially children. They can be utilized in disaster areas including fire and flooding events to reduce anger, anxiety, depression, and to reduce symptoms of PTSD. These gentle animals can be used in a variety of collaborative situations, such as, courtrooms, nursing homes, hospitals, schools and mental health facilities. Community outreach events, such as Pop ups, parades, festivals, child safety seat checks, races, runs, or walks, would also benefit from the availability of a therapy dog.

Although there is a large body of scientific evidence supporting the health and emotional benefits of human-animal interaction, both immediately and long term, there are very few law enforcement agencies in the United States tapping into this resource and it is still considered a progressive concept. It will directly enhance the lives of victims, officers, detectives, and professional staff in the City of Hudson Police Department and in the City of Hudson.

Handler Selection

We believe there should be a primary and secondary handler selected by the Chief of Police and/or police administration. We propose that the selection of handlers is based upon current duty position, good standing within the Department, suitable living situations and the ability to participate in city functions and events. In the event that this is not an exclusive dog handling position and the responsibilities will be in addition to already established job duties, we believe there are current positions that are more conducive to successfully implementing the use of a therapy dog. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of interviews and investigations that the therapy dog could be utilized for, we propose the primary and secondary handlers are sworn members of the Department.

A secondary handler should be selected so the dog will always be available to meet the needs of the department. In the event that the primary handler is not available due to vacation, injury, illness, etc., the secondary handler would assume responsibilities of the dog. Preference for potential secondary handler candidates is at the discretion of the Chief of Police and should be based on the same standards as a primary handler.

Acquisition and Training

The Hudson Police Department will adhere to NYS Agriculture and Markets Law regarding Therapy Dogs and best practices. The Committee has established a collaborative relationship with the Columbia Greene Humane Society, the Hi-Tec K-9 Academy, and K9 Works Dog Training. Rescue dogs will be prescreened to ensure we receive a dog with the proper temperament, behavioral characteristics and abilities for advanced training. There will be no breed discrimination for the selection of a potential therapy dog. Once the initial selection of a rescue dog is made, Hudson Police Department will determine which organization will continue temperament assessment and complete basic obedience training. The dog will be trained by its handler with the assistance of a trainer in an intensive one-on-one basic training course. The course lasts 8-12 weeks. The dog will continue training in the nationally recognized Canine Good Citizen Course, then an accredited Therapy Dog International course. We encourage enrollment in further training through the Paws and Stripes Law Enforcement and Multidiscipline Crimes against Children Therapy Dog Training Program in Brevard County, Florida. This 40 hour advanced training course provides instruction and practical application in basic and advanced obedience, behavioral observations, vehicle operations, investigation interview techniques, workplace adjustments, home adaptation and the “Do’s and Don’ts” of deploying a therapy dog for child victims. This course is FREE for Law Enforcement and prepares teams to complete the necessary requirements of becoming Nationally Registered as a therapy dog team. Additionally, the handler will be registered with the United States Police Canine Association, Inc. (USPCA) and participate in the Law Enforcement Therapy Dog Certification testing.

Deployment and Use of HPD Therapy Canine

The handler(s) will assess all situations before deploying the dog. We anticipate visitation request from multiple establishments and institutions. Therapy dogs are routinely welcome inside hospitals, courtrooms, schools, and other government facilities. The dog and handler would be accessible for Pop-Up events, parades, festivals, Neighborhood Association Meetings, etc. The dog would be available to children of arrested parents to supplement HPD's safeguarding children policy. The dog would be available to the Detective Office for juvenile and adult interviews or investigations. Perhaps, and most importantly, the dog and handler would be available to assist officers, employees, and victims after traumatic events. On days when there is no event or visitation requested handlers will bring the dog to different City Offices.

Other Considerations

The Dog is to be considered an asset of the Hudson Police Department. It would live with the primary handler, however all insurance and veterinary bills as well as other costs will be paid by the Police Department. In addition to a vehicle, the handler should be provided a crate for both home and office use should the dog need down time during a shift.

The handler should be provided a fully equipped SUV in order to safely transport the dog to and from various facilities, special events, and home. Accepting a position as a handler means responsibility above and beyond the normal scope of duties. At any time a handler is called in outside of their normal shift, they will be compensated IAW the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the City of Hudson and Council 82, AFSCME, Local 3979 Hudson Police Department.

All primary and secondary handlers will be required to attend initial and continued certifications, testing, and trainings. As per the Canine Good Citizen (CGC) and Therapy Dog International (TDI) guidelines, both handlers will need to be tested on their ability to perform with their therapy dog.