

STATEMENT BY SUE SKASKIW REGARDING VSNIP

APRIL 7, 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to briefly address the merits of adding a slight increase to the funding of the Vermont Spay Neuter Incentive Program (VSNIP). VSNIP evolved out of Vermont Volunteer Services for Animals Humane Society's (VVSA) statewide spay/neuter program begun nearly thirty years ago. In order to make our statewide program more viable and sustainable, we drafted legislation that was adopted and evolved into what is now VSNIP.

The \$3.00 fee for every dog licensed was able to meet the needs of VSNIP for many years. However as the program has grown, so have the needs. While the program is currently malfunctioning under the current administration, it is our hope that VSNIP will be put out to bid (in accordance with the Vermont statutory mandate and Rules), thus enabling a new administrator to address the overall mismanagement, as well as serious concerns regarding the use of funds and relatedly lack of transparency. (For instance one of the criteria of VSNIP is that it is designed to be a low cost program, including veterinary reimbursements; the trend has been to move away from that concept and significantly raise reimbursement fees, thus straying from and undermining the legislative intent of the program and resulting in dire financial straits, including shutting down of the program for extended periods of time. This is but one critical factor that must be addressed under new administration in order to ensure that the program remains alive and viable.)

With respect to the nominal increase in dog license surcharges, having worked one on one with Vermont applicants for seven years while administering VSNIP after its inception and the animal community throughout the state at large, I can confidently state that a \$5.00 fee for the first dog registered would not be a hardship, but suggest that for every dog thereafter, the \$3.00 fee be maintained. Alternatively, a \$4.00 increase across the board would be acceptable as well. Our humane society conducts an annual rabies clinic where we have the opportunity repeatedly to speak with dog owners about registering their animals with regard to VSNIP. Incidentally we also receive calls daily from distraught Vermonters unable to obtain vouchers with which to have their animals spayed/neutered at this time because there is a waiting list for applicants who applied in November of 2014! While economic times are difficult for everyone around our state, Vermonters understand the importance of the spay/neuter program and support its funding.

If I can answer any questions I would be honored to meet with the committee and/or individual legislators with regard to the history of VSNIP, how it came to be where it is today, and how it can most effectively and efficiently move forward. Many thanks for your consideration and attention to this matter.

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