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City of Mesquite Animal Services

STRATEGIC PLAN

January 13, 2016

Prepared by:

Petty & Associates, Inc.

P&A

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Introduction

The City of Mesquite has offered its residents effective and compassionate Animal Services for many decades. The Division has grown in both size and scope over the years to keep up with the demand for animal related services and the concern for animal welfare and safety.

In order to continue exemplary service and to address the growing needs of the community, Animal Services asked City consultant, Petty & Associates, Inc. (P&A) to facilitate a process that would result in a new Mission and Vision Statement for Animal Services, as well as a clear and measurable Strategic Plan with prioritized operating and capital recommendations.

The City Council, recognizing the need for a diverse perspective to address the growth and challenges facing Animal Services, appointed a community Task Force made up of veterinarians, Shelter volunteers, rescue partners, trappers, residents and City Staff to participate in the Strategic Planning process and to advise the City Council accordingly. In addition, a community wide survey was conducted to gather as much pertinent data as possible in preparing their recommendations. This report required many hours of dedicated service from Task Force volunteers, each contributing their own expertise and unique perspectives to arrive at the recommendations herein.

Understanding the Need for a Strategic Plan

The Task Force quickly recognized that a lack of a clear Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan posed a threat not only to the effective allocation of resources for operations, but also increased the risk that services would not be aligned with Council and community expectations.

Strategic Planning is a process that translates vision or broadly held goals or objectives into the necessary steps to obtain measurable data. When *Strategic Thinking* is incorporated in the process it carries the organization beyond the process of arriving at consensus on mission, vision and major policy objectives. Through the next step of dealing with transforming the short-term business plan into a planning and strategy horizon that will become a vehicle to carry and transform the organization for the next five, ten, fifteen years and beyond.

Thus the Animal Services Strategic Plan defines the steps necessary to address long-range needs in a fashion guided by Mission, inspired by Vision and measured according to achievable Goals and Objectives. These Goals and Objectives become an integral component to the annual budget process where they are translated into operating expenses and revenues as well as the long-range capital needs.

A variety of strategic planning models described in literature and found in practice emphasize the need for each organization to find a process design that best fits its own unique situation. [1] The City Council established a representative and diverse Task Force made up of community experts, volunteers and residents to work alongside City Staff and engaged a consultant to gather and analyze data, and facilitate the Strategic Planning process and report the results.

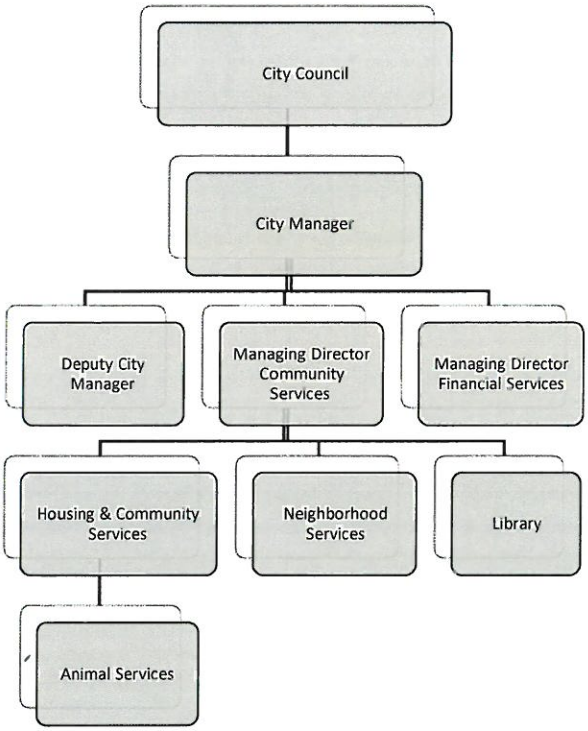
The Strategic Plan provides for:

The Strategic Plan document will become the foundational component of future annual capital and operating budgets and will therefore need to be revisited as needs and conditions change in order to keep the Shelter's operations congruent with the Mission and Vision.

[1] McCann PhD., Joseph E., "Developing 'Strategic Support Systems' for Electric Utility Strategic Planning." Emory University. December 1985.

Animal Services Overview

The Animal Services Division of the City of Mesquite is managed under the Director of Community Services.



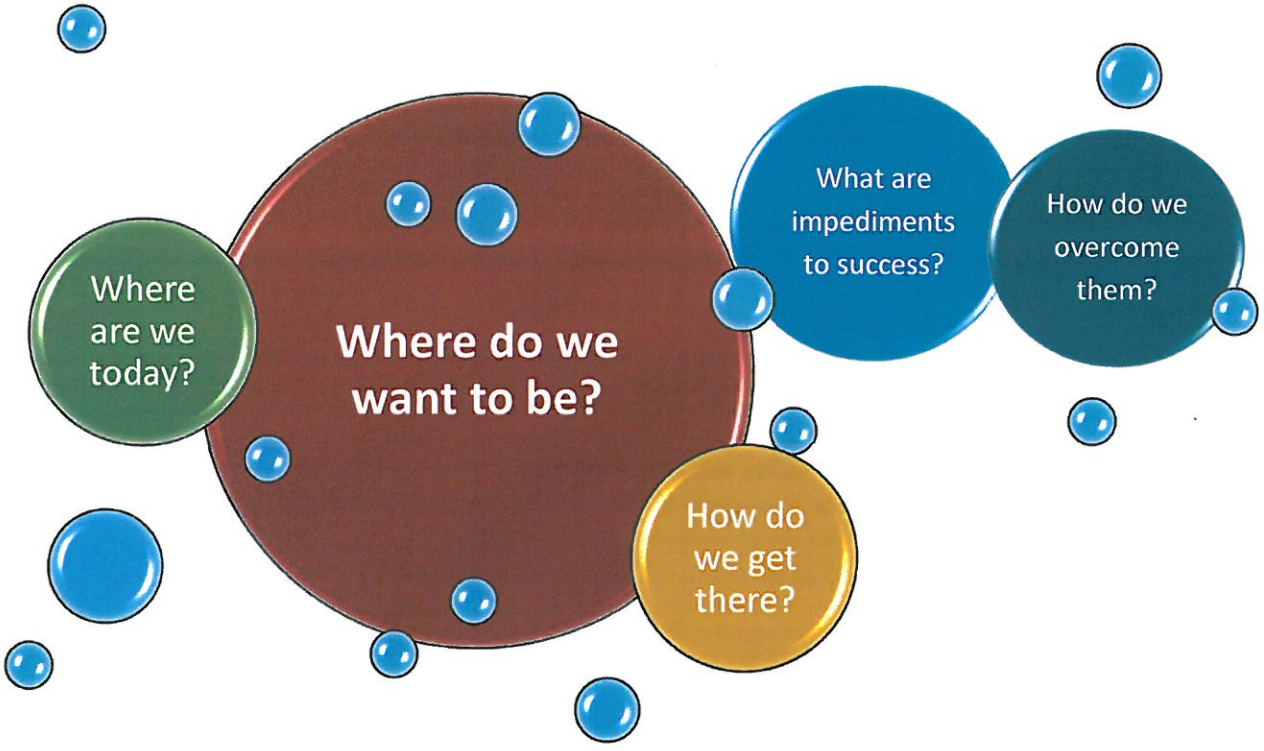
The City engaged P&A to facilitate a series of Task Force Meetings following a city-wide survey on Animal Services to align the needs and long-range plans of Animal Services volunteers and Staff, and to examine the Division for effectiveness, as well as, ineffective policy and procedures as the Animal Services functions as an interdependent and integral part of the City of Mesquite operations.

The approach P&A employs is distinguished from traditional planning and engineering firms in that P&A heavily relies upon the collection, interpretation, and application of reliable data and the transformation of that data into performance measurements with goals to educate and equip Staff in a way that does not require outside assistance to update the Plan when that time comes. Absent strategic thinking, strategic plans can quickly become **"shelf art" that lack ownership and alignment** with the changing organization needs. This Plan will address the basic business components that comprise the organization, and the elements required to develop and effectively execute this Strategic Plan.

Mission and Vision

Mission and Vision are the tools through which Animal Services clearly communicates the overarching purpose of the Division, as well as articulating the direction and the expectations of stakeholders. The absence of a unified Mission and Vision undermines the ability to operate and plan the Shelter in a manner consistent with community expectations.

Since Mission and Vision underpin every Strategic Plan, Animal Services began with crafting a Mission and Vision statement.



This task was accomplished through a needs based assessment, which was based on answers to the following questions:

Where are we today? The Task Force was provided education on Mission/Vision/Strategic Plan elements as well as the results from the resident survey.

Where do we want to be? The Task Force collaborated to craft the Mission and Vision Statements.

How do we get there? The Task Force reviewed existing and proposed policy issues, arrived at conclusions.

What are the impediments to success and how do we overcome them? Given available resources and financial, as well as policy constraints, the Task Force prioritized their findings in order to focus on those that were most likely to address the key issues and ultimately be implemented.

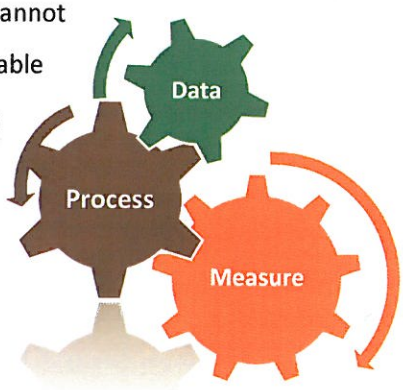
The Task Force, through several hours of collaborative effort, unanimously approved these Mission and Vision Statements to be recommended to the City Council as part of the Strategic Plan.

MISSION: *Mesquite Animal Services serves the residents of Mesquite, both animal and human, with professional and compassionate animal care including education, compliance, adoptions and disease prevention.*

VISION: *Mesquite Animal Services will be a regional leader achieving exemplary animal welfare through humane treatment, adoption, spay/neuter, 90% live release, outreach and education.*

The Purpose of Collecting and Evaluating the Data:

Even the most effective organizations cannot manage what they cannot measure. In order to effectively measure, there must be uniformly agreeable data, a logical means of analyzing that data and most importantly, a system to use the data to illustrate and chart organization needs and direction. As such, the Task Force had to think beyond Mission and Vision and take an in-depth view of the organization from several perspectives.



The Survey

The critical first step for the Strategic Plan was accomplished via a city-wide public survey, results attached in the appendix, to assist in identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The Task Force reviewed the results of the survey that opened August 28, 2015 and closed at midnight, September 11, 2015, in which there were over 1,000 respondents. These responses, as well as Task Force's key observations facilitated the opportunity and means to align the Task Force efforts with key

community observations as well as establish a basis on which goals, objectives and performance measures could be established.

Staff then provided the history of the organization, current policies, procedures, budgets, goals and objectives as well as their perception regarding the organization's strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. This data aligned very closely with survey results and was encouraging to the Task Force that the current direction and desires of the Task Force were very much consistent with respondent's desires and expectations.

Identification of Policy Issues and Goal Creation:

Following the survey analysis, the Task Force reviewed the priorities that needed discussion and direction related to responsibility and accountability as well as the likelihood of implementation. This process included educating the Task Force on best practices, community preferences, budgetary impact and financial requirements followed by analyzing the key Policy Issues identified by staff. Policy Issues were discussed at length over an entire evening session and were accompanied by the consensus creation of Goals designed to address the Policy Issues as well as the anticipated operating and/or capital budget impact of implementation. The prioritized Policy Issues, Goal Creation and Budgetary Impact are described below.

Animal Services Strategic Plan

POLICY DIRECTION and GOALS

HIGH PRIORITY

1. **Improve ability for staff to locate animal owners and reduce the average length of stay at shelter**

Staff Recommendation: Require microchipping of animals released from the Shelter (excluding rescue).

Task Force Goal: Develop an implantation plan, schedule and budget for microchipping.

Budgetary Impact: $0 – Program to be funded through the collection of a fee to cover the cost of the chip – est. $10/chip.

2. **Change impound fees to encourage responsible pet ownership**

Staff Recommendation: Discount impound fees for the ***first day** of impound (current fees are $20 per impound and $5/day at shelter)

Proposed Change:

- $10 for wearing tags/registered chip
- $10 for current city registration

** repeat offenders would not be eligible for discounted fees*

Task Force Goal: Prepare and present recommended discounts following Council approval of Strategic Plan and include in FY 2016/17 Budget Plan.

Budgetary Impact: No direct cost to Animal Services – slight reduction in fee revenue offset by reduced impound time and associated operating expenses.

3. **Provide opportunities to educate the public on responsible pet ownership**

Staff Recommendation: Offer a responsible pet ownership class involving adopters, new pet owner residents, first time offenders (deferred adjudication option for Court to consider).

Task Force Goal: Staff to prepare course curriculum and implementation schedule.

Budget Impact: Minimal – Recommended cost of $25 for first time offenders. May be considered by Court to qualify for deferred adjudication eligibility requirement.

4. Increase the Shelter live release rate to 90% or higher

Staff Recommendations:

a. Allow the practice of Trap, Neuter, Release ("TNR") within the city.
b. Allow residents to continue to trap animals considered a nuisance and investigate additional clarifications.
c. Use registered colony caretakers to monitor feral colonies and establish parameters.

Task Force Goal:

1. Prepare TNR operations policies and procedures document.
2. Introduce a 24 month pilot program to analyze structure of program and impacts to residents.

Budget Impact: est. $10,000 per year plus Ordinance change

i. Monitor program for caretakers
ii. Additional coordination of trapping with detailed parameters
iii. Quarterly progress reporting

MEDIUM PRIORITY

5. Provide field response to residents more promptly, primarily on weekends

Staff Recommendations: Add one additional Animal Control Officer (ACO) position to allow for more responsive evening and Saturday field service. Offer regular Sunday field service.

Task Force Goal: Prepare necessary budget material and present to Council for FY 2016-17 budget.

Budget Impact:

i. ACO salary and benefits, approx. $40,000/yr.

ii. Initial Capital equipment, approx. $48,000 (vehicle, telephone, tablet, equipment)

6. **Reduce the number of unwanted litters, strays and nuisance animals impounded at the shelter**

Staff Recommendations:

a. Require residents to spay/neuter reclaimed pets (first time offense) over the age of six months.
b. Offer an annual in-tact permit for residents who do not wish to spay/neuter.

Task Force Goal: Prepare an Ordinance to require spay and neutering of reclaimed animals over the age of 6 months, with an intact permit option, and provide additional research related to exceptions and conditions (6 in favor, 1 opposed and 2 undecided)

1. Ordinance amendment to include resident outreach education and information campaign
2. Staff to investigate additional alternatives to accomplish the policy including:
   i. Investigate means of assistance for those who cannot afford to pay
   ii. Exceptions and conditions
   iii. Reporting to include monitoring releases
   iv. Additional results from similar programs and best practice reviews

Budget Impact: $0 new cost - Ordinance change only. Increase permit/fee revenue from in-tact permits.

7. **Have the ability to provider sterilization and rabies vaccination to adoptable animals inside the Shelter**

Staff Recommendations:

a. Pre-alter highly adoptable animals before adoption, when possible.
b. Sterilize animals before releasing to adopter.
c. Vaccinate adoptable animals against rabies to do off-site events.

Task Force Goal: Gather specific cost/benefit data and budget related material followed by necessary operations policies and procedures.

Budget Impact: Substantial - Part time veterinarian salary (survey in process to refine estimates).

LOW PRIORITY, LONG-RANGE TARGET

8. **Provide a convenient space for residents to visit and adopt pets, increasing holding capacity for adoptable animals, and promote a positive adoption experience for residents**

Staff Recommendation – High traffic retail space in Town East or other busy retail area.

Task Force Goal: Low priority, but desirable long term means of increasing adoption rates. Identify space options, prepare schedule and budget.

Budget Impact: Substantial

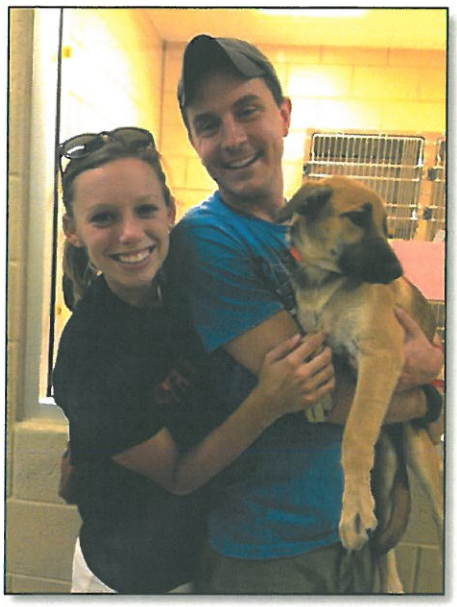
i. Cost of retail space, utilities (est. $25,000/yr.)
ii. Cost of increase staffing (4 persons $140,000/yr.)
iii. Cost of kennels/equipment (est. $120,000)

Next Steps

The Animal Services Task Force, upon approval of the Final Draft of the Strategic Plan, will present the Plan to Council in early 2016. Depending on Council approval, the next steps will be for staff to identify specific tasks or objectives associated with implementing the plan in order to complete a Strategic Plan Performance Dashboard and prepare budget documents to include activity and performance measures that incorporate the plan recommendations into the FY 2016/2017 and subsequent budgets. Animal Services Staff will report progress on the Strategic Plan to the Council at intervals determined by the City Manager.

Summary

The Strategic Plan adopted by the Animal Services Task Force includes input from residents, staff and Task Force participants comprised of a veterinarian, shelter volunteers, rescue volunteers and residents that are passionate about Animal Services delivery to the residents of Mesquite. The Plan provides a new Mission and Vision for Animal services as well as a comprehensive overview of the current and future challenges of the department accompanied by short- and long-term solutions to address these challenges. The measurable goals adopted by the Task Force will be an integral part of future budget planning and will require periodic reporting and follow-up by staff with some additional research required, especially as it relates to required spay and neutering and the 24-month TNR program.



The final component of the Strategic Plan will be the completion of the Performance Dashboard by Staff each year during budget preparation. This step keeps the Strategic Plan vital and moving forward by providing scalable activity and performance measures that reflect the ability to make adjustments. This collaborative process will require the participation and engagement of the Animal Services and Executive Staff of the City to identify and assess adjustments which may necessitate plan review and updating and development of new strategies and tactics to accomplish the Mission and Vision of Animal Services.

Appendix

- Meeting Schedule
- List of Participants
- Resident Survey and Results

ANIMAL SERVICES STRATEGIC PLAN TASK FORCE

Meeting Dates

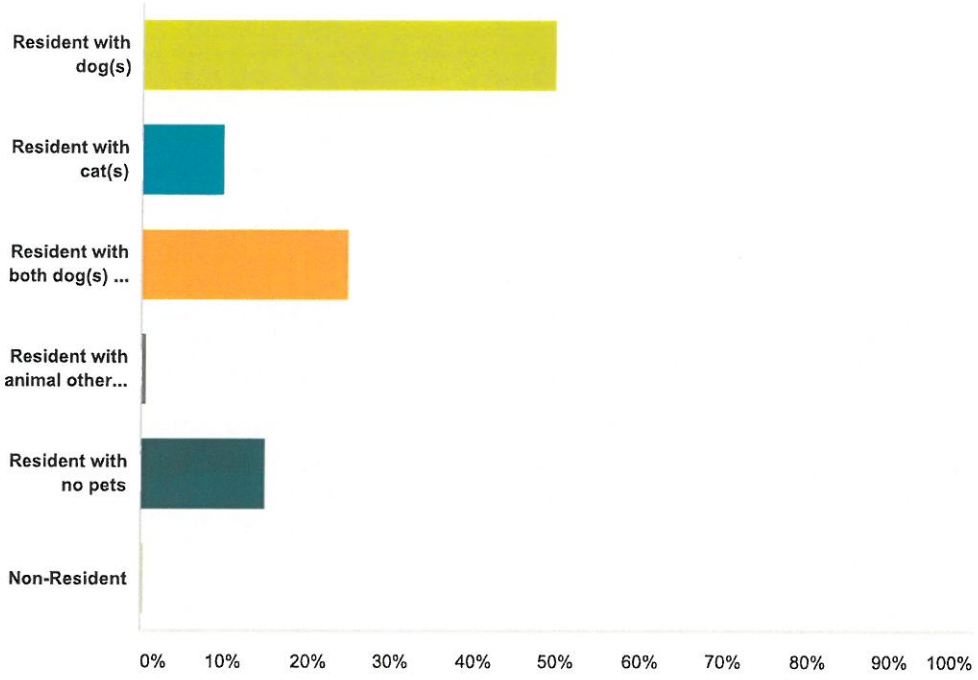
Thursday, October 1, 2015
Wednesday, October 21, 2015
Tuesday, December 8, 2015
Wednesday, January 13, 2016

Participants

Mr.	Avila	Louis	Animal Control Officer	City of Mesquite
Ms.	Bradley	Valerie	Managing Director of Community Services	City of Mesquite
Ms.	Canada	Sonja	Dog Park proponent	Mesquite Resident
Ms.	Ehlers	Sarah	Dog Park proponent	Mesquite Resident
Ms.	Freeman	Lisa	Volunteer	Oak Hill Animal Rescue
Mr.	Keheley	Cliff	City Manager	City of Mesquite
Mr.	Knudson	Terry	Permitted Regular Trapper	Mesquite Resident
Ms.	Mashburn	Emily	Volunteer	City of Mesquite
Ms.	Orr	Charlene	Volunteer	City of Mesquite
Dr.	Pirrung	Mark	DVM	South Mesquite Veterinary Hospital
Ms.	Sauceda	Deanna	Executive Director	Spay Neuter Network
Ms.	Simmons	Anne	Animal Services Superintendent	City of Mesquite
Ms.	Stallcup	April	Animal Shelter & Rescue Coordinator	City of Mesquite
Ms.	Williams	Debra	Volunteer	Paws Patrol

Q1 Are you a resident of Mesquite and/or a pet owner?

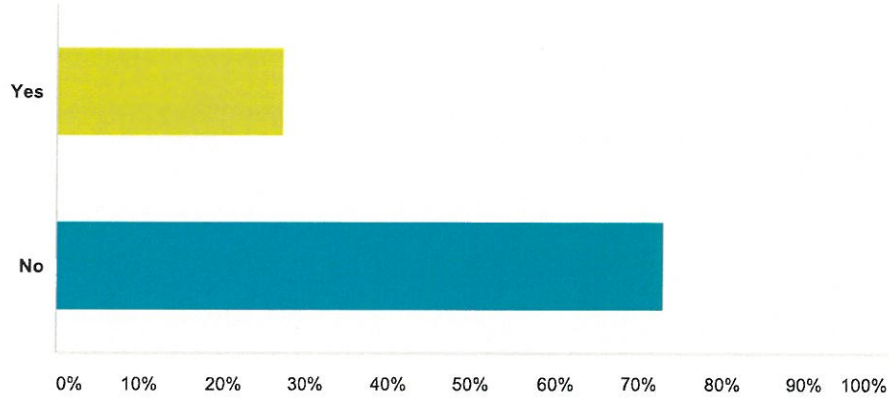
Answered: 1,050 Skipped: 3



Answer Choices	Responses	
Resident with dog(s)	49.71%	522
Resident with cat(s)	9.81%	103
Resident with both dog(s) and cat(s)	24.67%	259
Resident with animal other than dog or cat	0.57%	6
Resident with no pets	14.76%	155
Non-Resident	0.48%	5
Total		**1,050**

Q2 Have you ever volunteered with or donated to the Mesquite Animal Shelter?

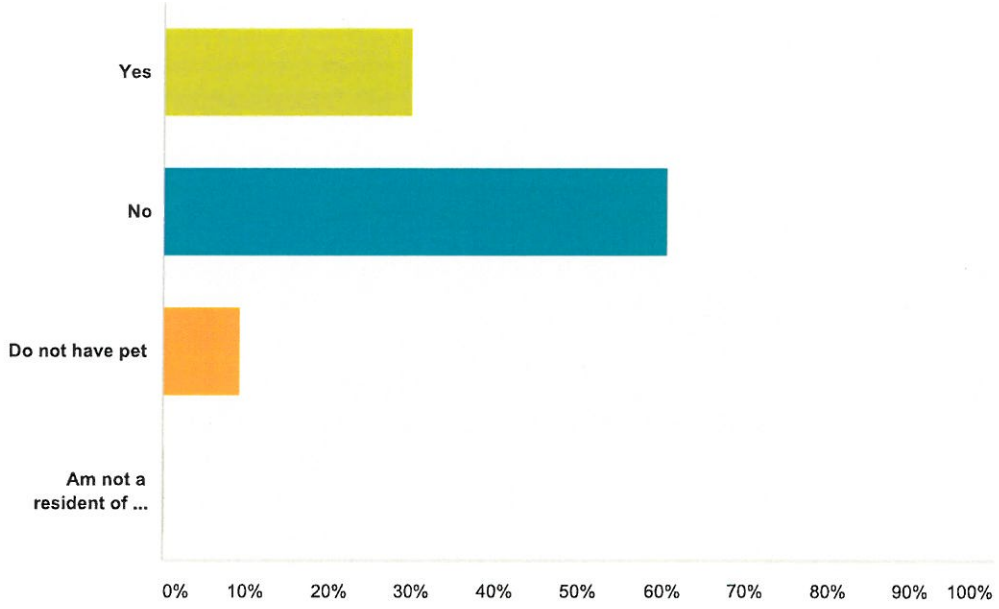
Answered: 1,050 Skipped: 3



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	27.05%	284
No	72.95%	766
Total		1,050

Q3 Have you encountered the Mesquite Animal Services on a matter involving your pet?

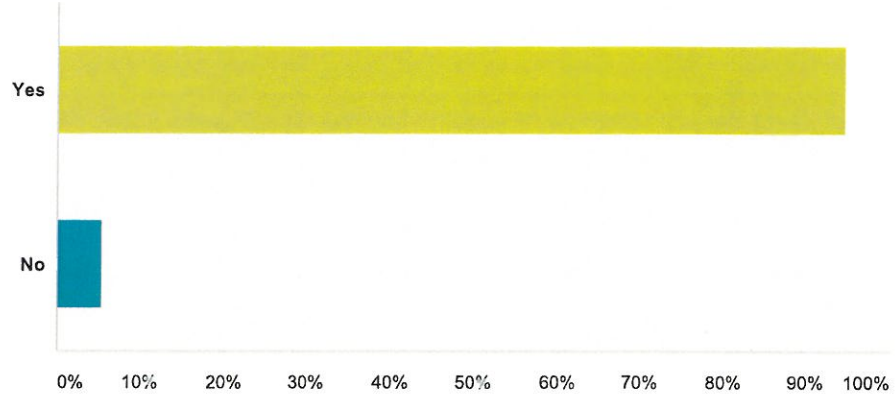
Answered: 1,047 Skipped: 6



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	29.89%	313
No	60.55%	634
Do not have pet	9.26%	97
Am not a resident of the City or Mesquite	0.29%	3
Total		1,047

Q4 Are you aware that Mesquite Animal Services has a program that allows the adoption of pets?

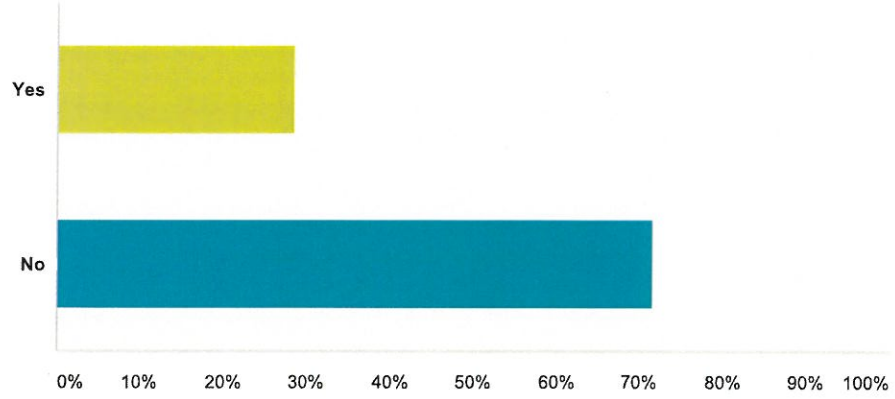
Answered: 1,048 Skipped: 5



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	94.66%	992
No	5.34%	56
Total		1,048

Q5 Have you ever adopted a pet from the Mesquite Animal Shelter?

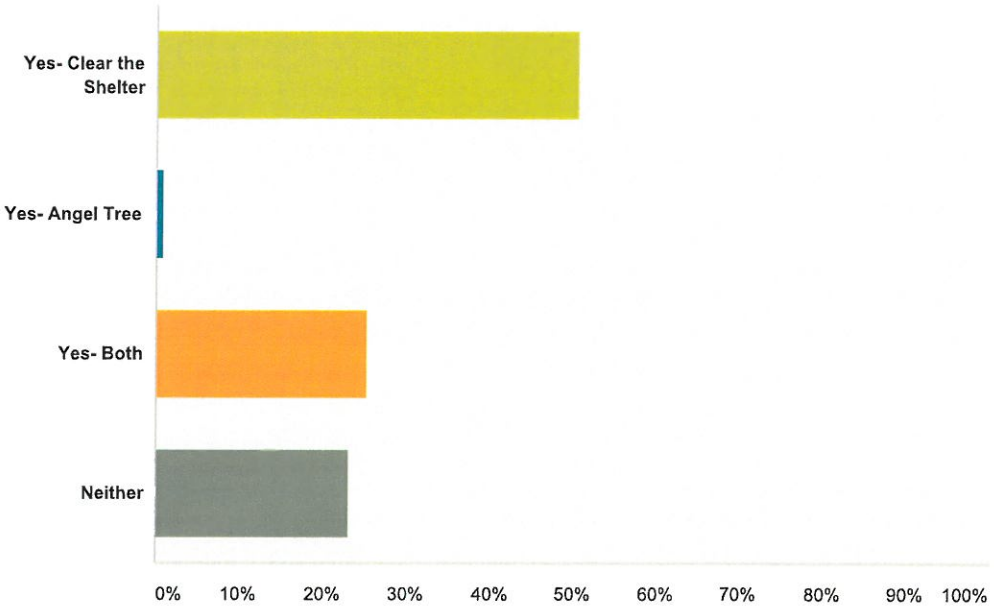
Answered: 1,049 Skipped: 4



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	28.41%	298
No	71.59%	751
Total		1,049

Q6 Are you aware of the following programs that aid in the adoption of animals: "Clear the Shelter" annual event waiving adoption fees for one day; or "Angel Tree" providing donations to defer adoption costs for other customers?

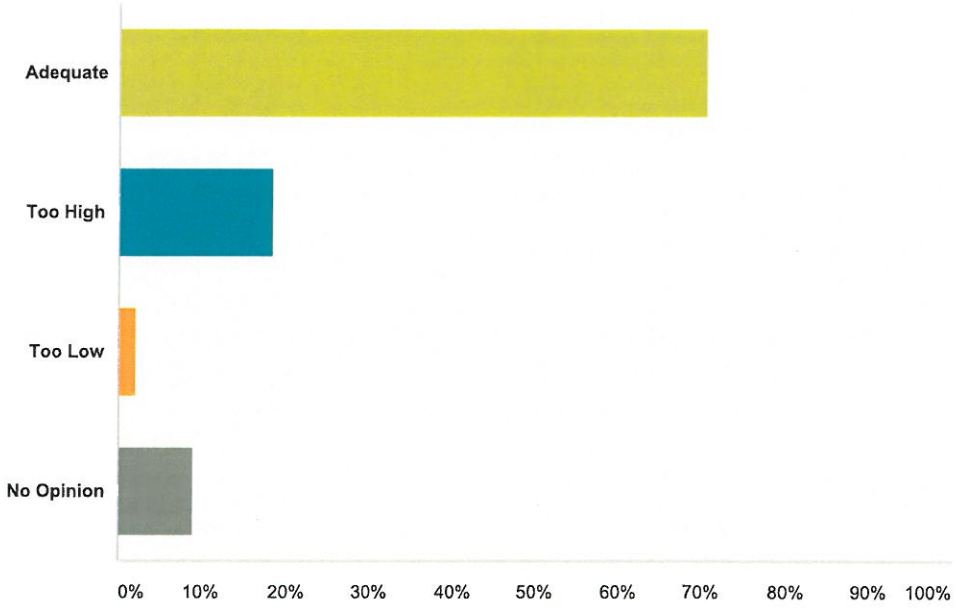
Answered: 1,050 Skipped: 3



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes- Clear the Shelter	50.57%	531
Yes- Angel Tree	0.86%	9
Yes- Both	25.33%	266
Neither	23.24%	244
Total		1,050

Q7 The basic adoption fee is $65 for a cat and $85 for a dog. This includes sterilization, rabies vaccination, microchip and one year City registration. Do you feel that these fees are:

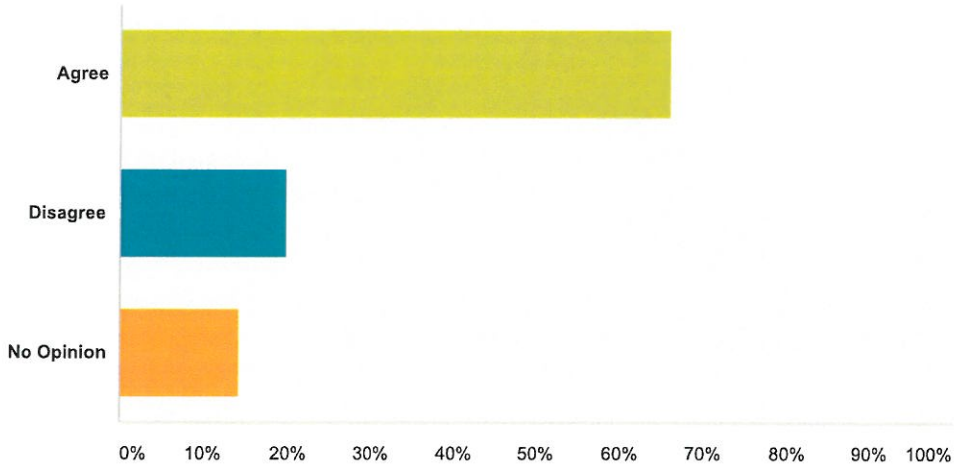
Answered: 1,046 Skipped: 7



Answer Choices	Responses	
Adequate	70.55%	738
Too High	18.45%	193
Too Low	2.10%	22
No Opinion	8.89%	93
Total		1,046

Q8 The City should charge persons wishing to adopt an animal fee sufficient to cover the City's cost of treating and spaying/neutering the animal versus placing that cost burden on the taxpayer.

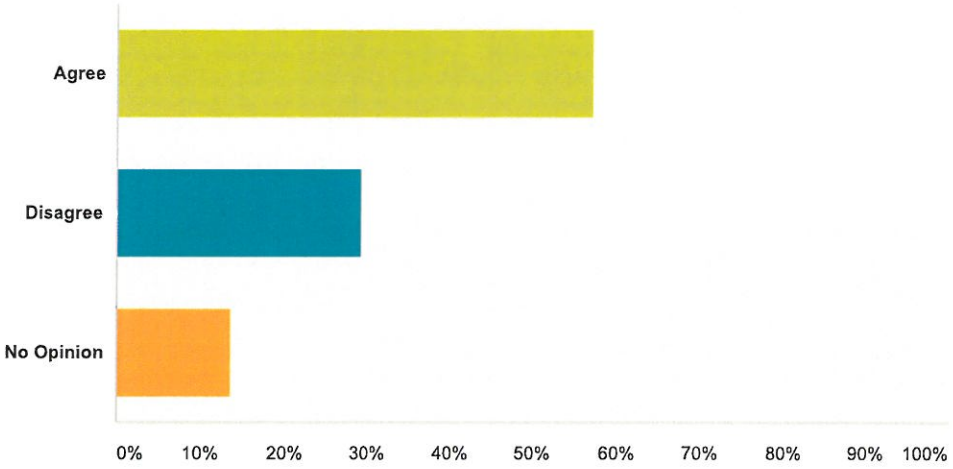
Answered: 1,046 Skipped: 7



Answer Choices	Responses	
Agree	66.06%	691
Disagree	19.79%	207
No Opinion	14.15%	148
Total		1,046

Q9 I am willing to pay increased property taxes in order to provide new animal services facilities that will allow more time for each animal to be adopted.

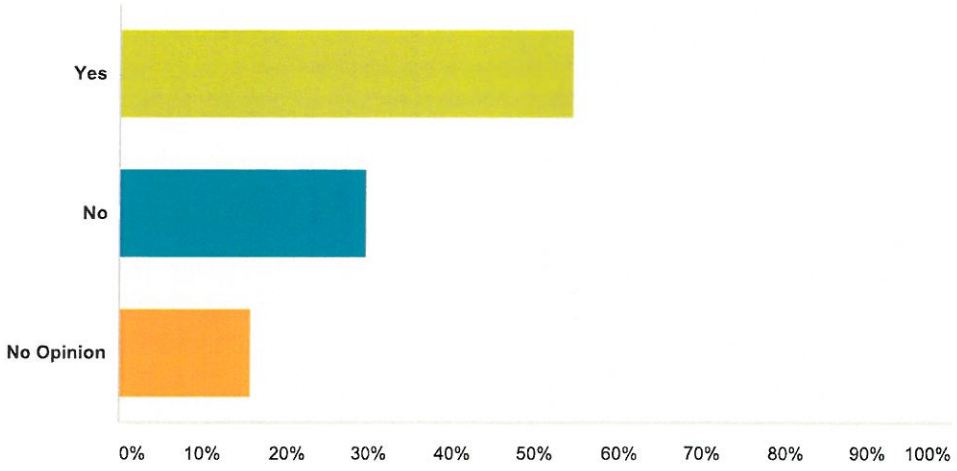
Answered: 1,049 Skipped: 4



Answer Choices	Responses	
Agree	**57.20%**	600
Disagree	**29.17%**	306
No Opinion	**13.63%**	143
Total		**1,049**

Q10 Do you support increasing fees in order to cover optional microchipping of pets taken in to the shelter?

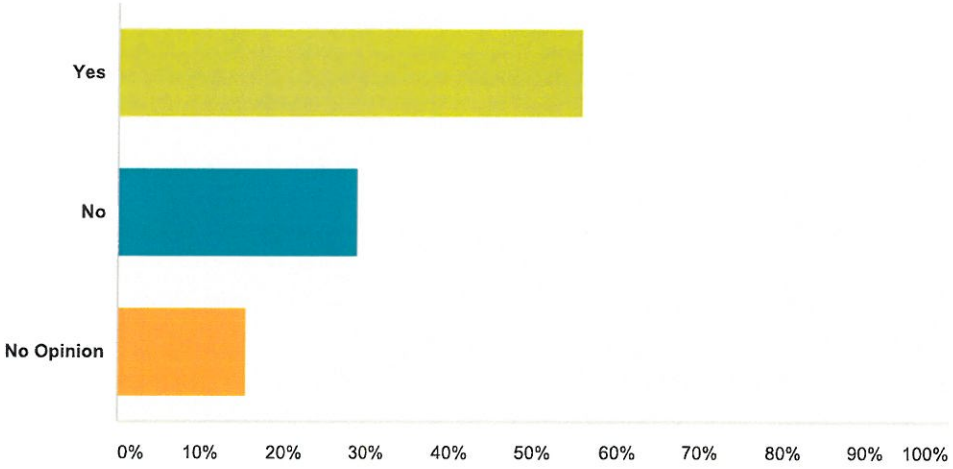
Answered: 1,050 Skipped: 3



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**54.57%**	573
No	**29.71%**	312
No Opinion	**15.71%**	165
Total		**1,050**

Q11 Animal Services field response should be available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, even it means increasing taxes to provide this level of service.

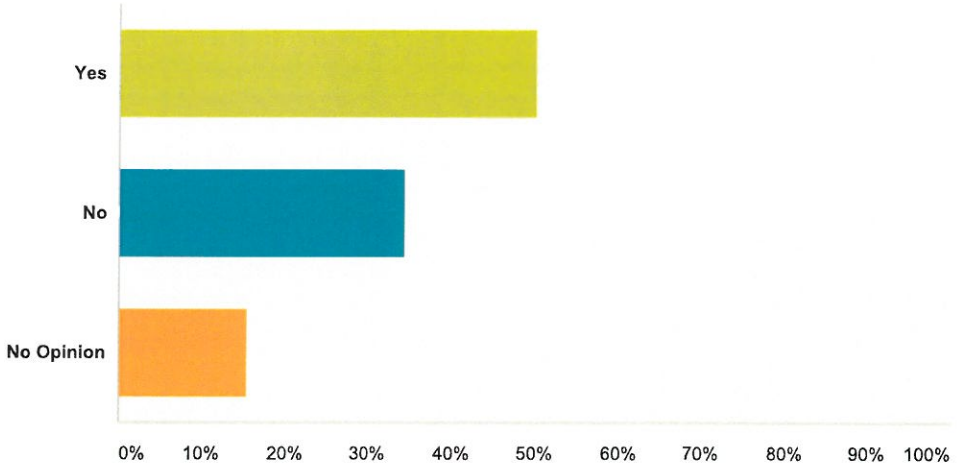
Answered: 1,046 Skipped: 7



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	55.83%	584
No	28.78%	301
No Opinion	15.39%	161
Total		1,046

Q12 Should the City have tighter ordinances regulating how many pets a person can have?

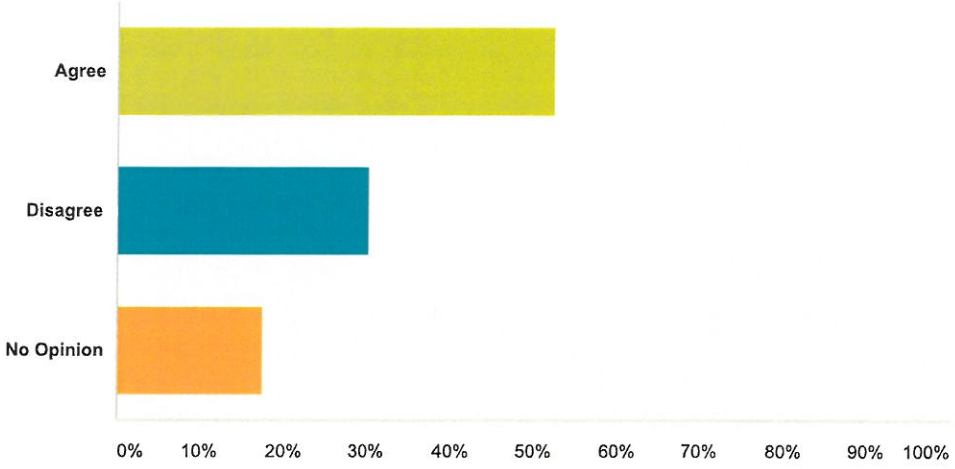
Answered: 1,048 Skipped: 5



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	50.19%	526
No	34.45%	361
No Opinion	15.36%	161
Total		1,048

Q13 The City should require that all pets in Mesquite be registered.

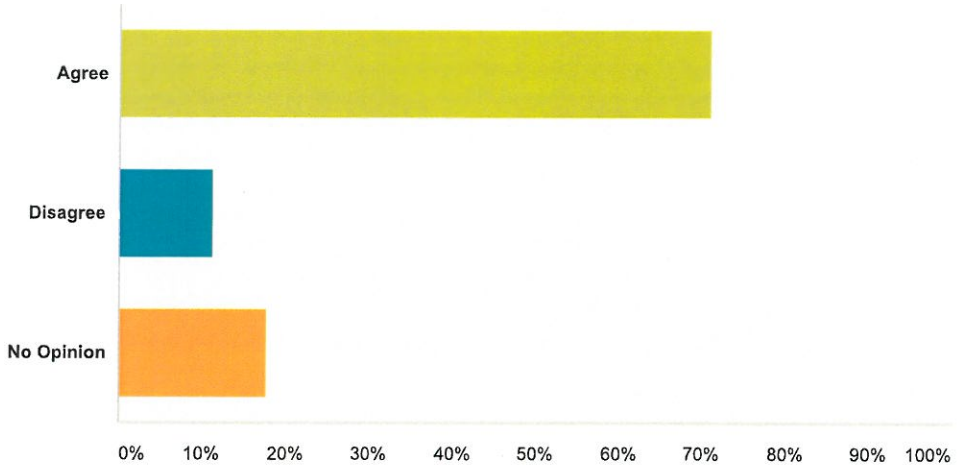
Answered: 1,049 Skipped: 4



Answer Choices	Responses	
Agree	52.34%	549
Disagree	30.22%	317
No Opinion	17.45%	183
Total		1,049

Q14 The City should provide discounts or waivers on animal service-related fees if a pet is properly registered with the City.

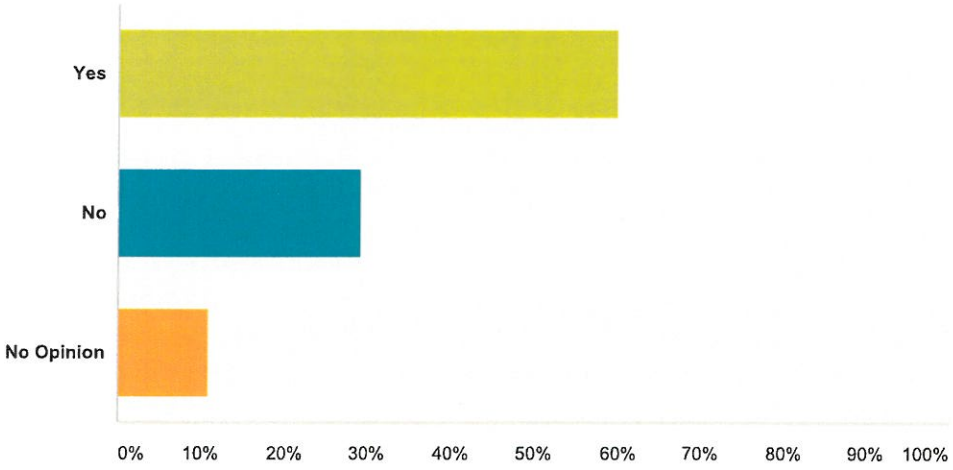
Answered: 1,047 Skipped: 6



Answer Choices	Responses	
Agree	71.06%	744
Disagree	11.17%	117
No Opinion	17.77%	186
Total		1,047

Q15 Do you believe that all non-permitted (non-registered) animals received by the Mesquite Animal Shelter should be subject to mandatory spaying or neutering at owner cost?

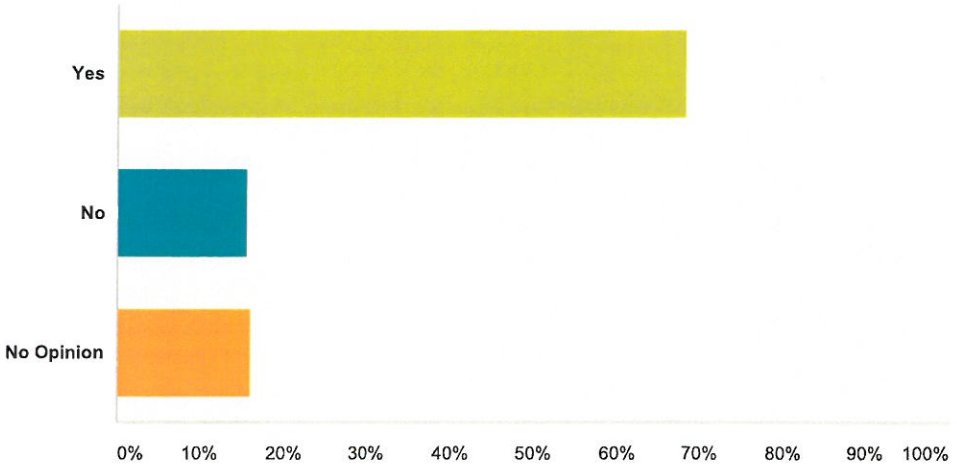
Answered: 1,046 Skipped: 7



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	59.85%	626
No	29.25%	306
No Opinion	10.90%	114
Total		1,046

Q16 Would you support a lifetime pet registration program for improved cost and operational efficiencies? The program would issue one registration number for the lifetime of a cat or dog and automatically generate annual reminders to pet owners to renew their registration.

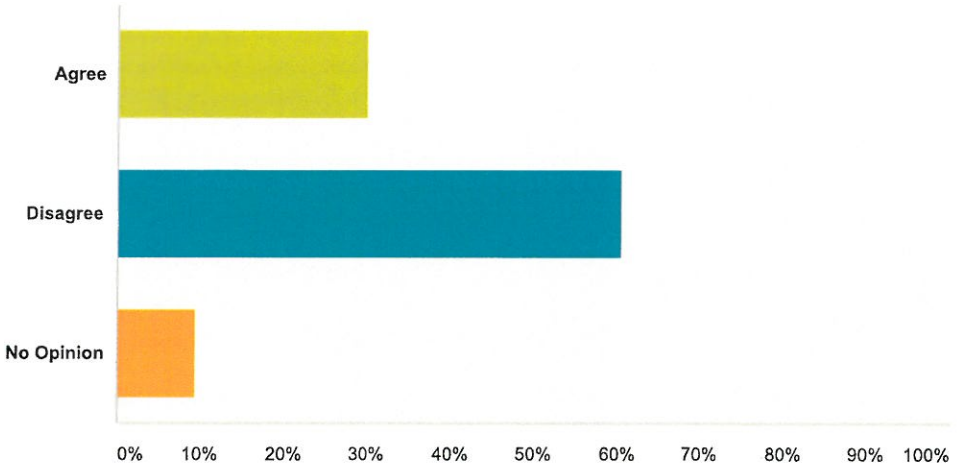
Answered: 1,046 Skipped: 7



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	68.26%	714
No	15.58%	163
No Opinion	16.16%	169
Total		1,046

Q17 Seventy-two (72) hours is an adequate amount of time to hold an unregistered animal.

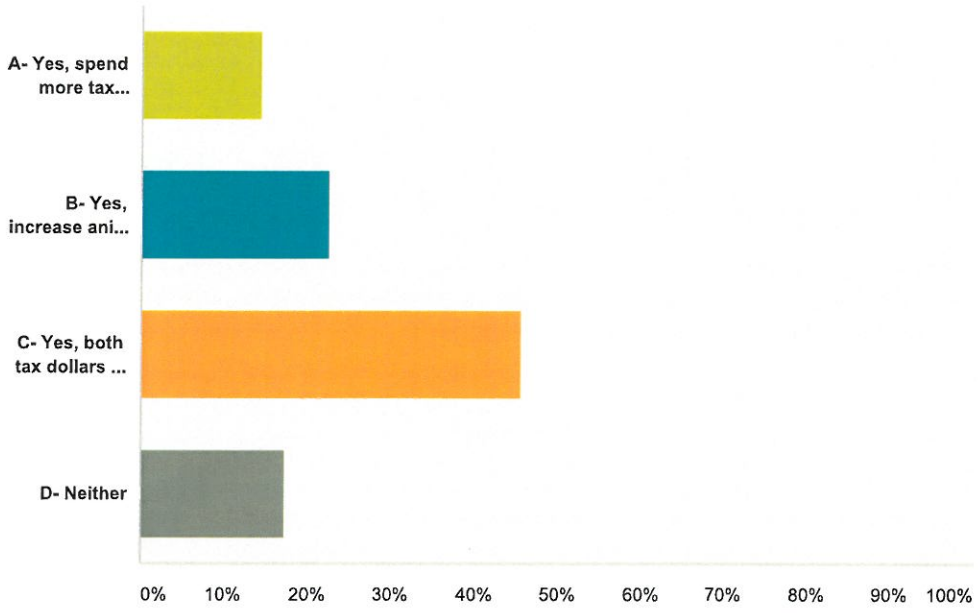
Answered: 1,049 Skipped: 4



Answer Choices	Responses	
Agree	30.03%	315
Disagree	60.63%	636
No Opinion	9.34%	98
Total		1,049

Q18 Do you believe the City should expand its efforts to reduce euthanasia rates by either1.) Spending more tax dollars on increasing adoption opportunities and services, or2.) Increasing animal services fees

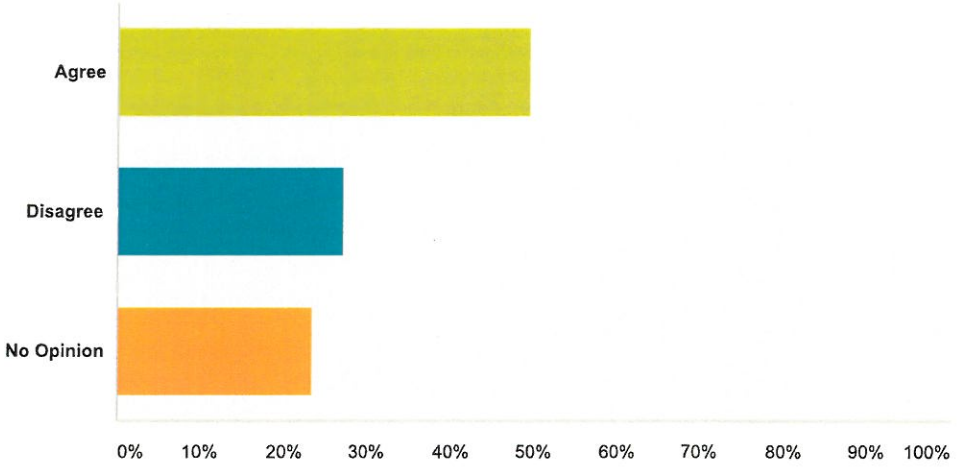
Answered: 1,042 Skipped: 11



Answer Choices	Responses	
A- Yes, spend more tax dollars	14.49%	151
B- Yes, increase animal service fees	22.65%	236
C- Yes, both tax dollars and animal service fees	45.59%	475
D- Neither	17.27%	180
Total		1,042

Q19 Feral dogs and/or cats are a problem in Mesquite.

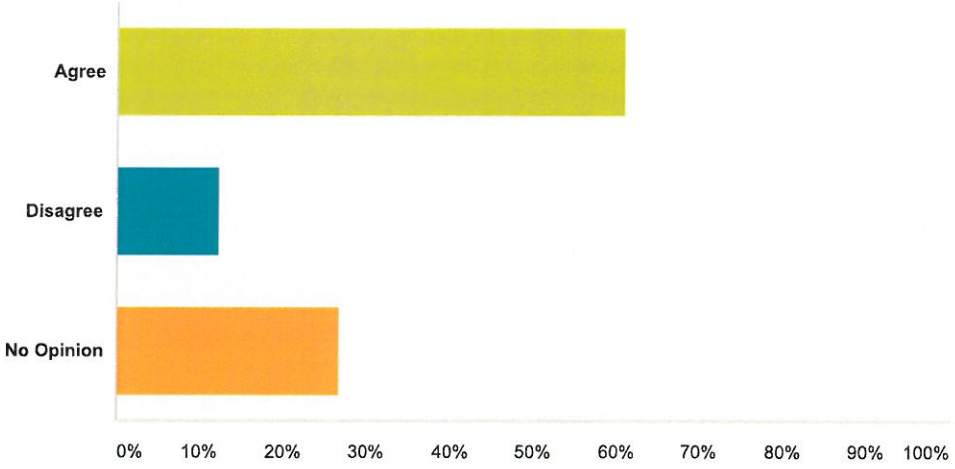
Answered: 1,047 Skipped: 6



Answer Choices	Responses	
Agree	**49.57%**	519
Disagree	**27.13%**	284
No Opinion	**23.30%**	244
Total		**1,047**

Q20 Animal Services should be more aggressive about addressing colonies of feral dogs and/or cats.

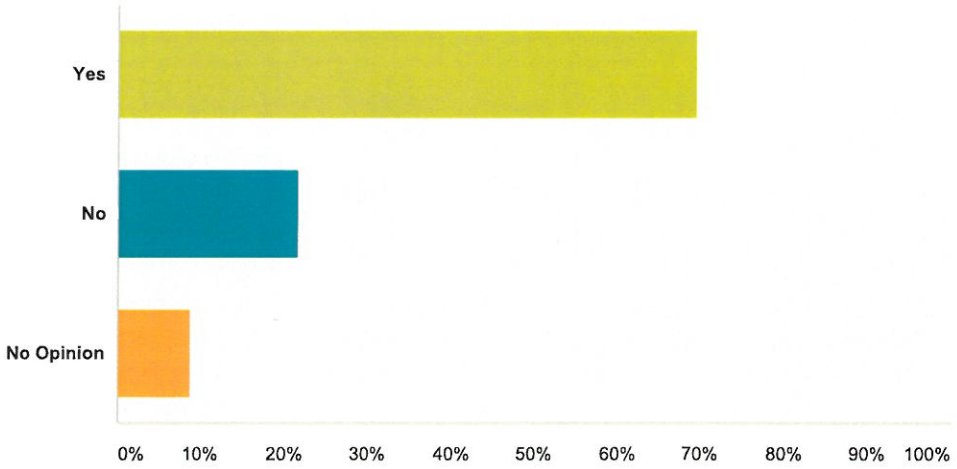
Answered: 1,047 Skipped: 6



Answer Choices	Responses	
Agree	60.94%	638
Disagree	12.42%	130
No Opinion	26.65%	279
Total		1,047

Q21 In order to help control the feral (wild) cat population, would you support a policy that traps feral cats, has them professionally neutered and then released at the location the cat was trapped?

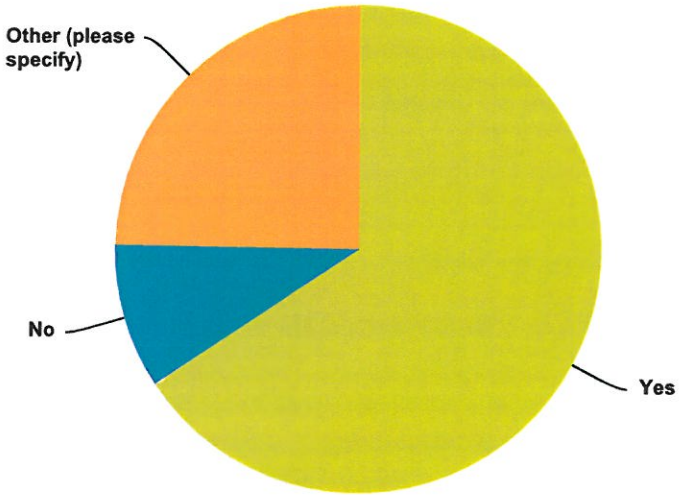
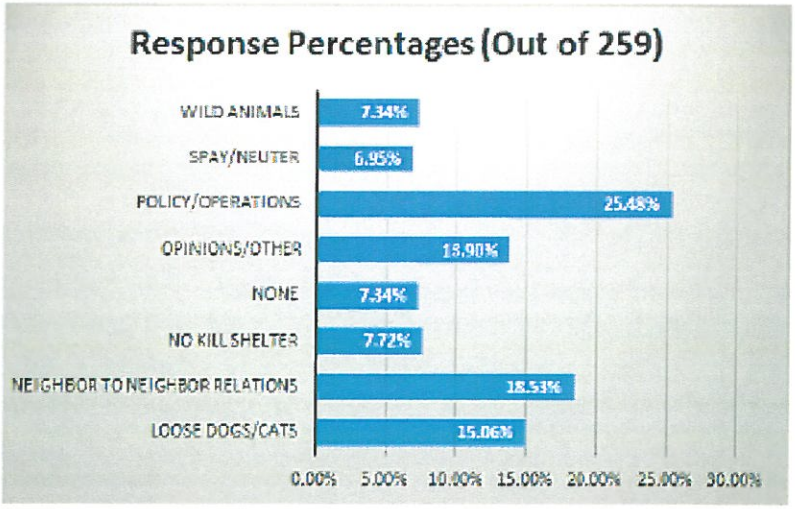
Answered: 1,045 Skipped: 8



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	69.57%	727
No	21.72%	227
No Opinion	8.71%	91
Total		1,045

Q23 Did this survey cover all topics you feel are current challenges facing the City of Mesquite Animal Service division?

Answered: 1,048 Skipped: 5



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	65.65%	688
No	9.64%	101
Other (please specify)	24.71%	259
Total		1,048