

From: Daisy Ruiz
Sent: Monday, January 11, 2021 10:46 AM
To: Karen Phillips; Bryan Pankhurst
Cc: Christina Flores
Subject: FW: Re Agenda Item 10A Council Meeting January 11, 2021
Attachments: City of Port St. Lucie-Sale of Rabbits.pdf

Good morning,

Can you please add this email to tonight's agenda item?

Thank you,

Daisy Ruiz

Executive Assistant

Office of the Mayor and City Council

City of Port St. Lucie

121 SW Port St. Lucie Blvd.

Port St. Lucie, FL 34984

(772) 871-5159 *office*; (772) 871-7382 *fax*

DRuiz@cityofpsl.com

From: Kathy Harter ORCA <kharter@orlandorabbit.org>
Sent: Monday, January 11, 2021 9:56 AM
To: David Pickett <David.Pickett@cityofpsl.com>; Greg Oravec <Mayor@cityofpsl.com>; Jolien Caraballo <Jolien.Caraballo@cityofpsl.com>; Shannon Martin <Shannon.Martin@cityofpsl.com>; Stephanie Morgan <Stephanie.Morgan@cityofpsl.com>
Cc: Amy Bernauer <amybernauer@hotmail.com>; Chairvolotti, Sue <sueorca@outlook.com>; Denika Robbins <Denika.robbins@gmail.com>; 'Susan Dietrich' <sdietrich32750@yahoo.com>
Subject: Re Agenda Item 10A Council Meeting January 11, 2021

January 11, 2021

City of Port St. Lucie
121 SW Port St. Lucie Blvd.
Port St. Lucie, FL 34984

Delivered via email

david.pickett@cityofpsl.com

Mayor@cityofpsl.com

Jolien.Caraballo@cityofpsl.com

Shannon.Martin@cityofpsl.com

Stephanie.Morgan@cityofpsl.com

Dear City Council Members,

We are writing on the subject of Rabbits and your consideration of a Retail Pet Sale Ban that includes

them (Agenda Item 10A on January 11, 2021). As a rescue, we repeatedly receive requests from individuals who purchased their rabbits from pet stores or breeders. The individuals frequently suffer 'buyers remorse' and reach out to us. We often hear that they bought two females (or males) and then had a litter of babies. Even worse, the domestic rabbits are tossed outside to fend for themselves. In November/December we spent close to \$1,000 on medical bills for one such rabbit. The other two who reported to be with him were not found and we assume they perished. In Southeast Florida, there is a current situation of a rabbit dump where the rabbit was shot with an arrow. Another rescue took the rabbit to a vet for surgery, which so far the rabbit has survived.

Rabbits are the third most populous animal found in shelters, after dogs and cats. Orlando Rabbit Care and Adoptions, Inc. serves the central Florida area. In 2020 we adopted out over 130 rabbits, and took in over 175 rabbits. We now have close to 90 in our rescue and are 'full', as are many of the rabbit-focused rescues throughout the state.

In December 2020, a case of Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus was found in Lake County, Florida. The disease has spread from Canada to the American North West, to the South West. This virus has now been identified in Florida and it is unknown how it reached here. This virus is lethal and highly contagious to wild and domestic rabbits. There is a vaccine available in Europe but is not readily available in the US. The USDA is approving it for use on a state-by-state basis. Specific details are easily available on the Web from Rabbit.org or House Rabbit Society. The impact of this virus will affect the entire State in regards to the intake of rabbits at shelters, rescues, and even perhaps Veterinary Offices. The virus can be tracked in on clothing, shoes, and the paws of other animals which necessitates specific quarantine conditions. The virus can live for over 100 days on inanimate objects, making it easy to transmit. Think: hunters and hikers can track it on their shoes and the virus can live 100 days – being transmitted during that time. Additionally, other animals (ex. Birds of prey, scavengers, domestic pets) can carry the virus as well.

Due to the highly contagious and lethal aspects of this virus, any outdoor domestic rabbit (whether contained or dumped) can be a receiver or spreader of the virus with the wild rabbit population. As Pet Supermarket rabbits have been documented as coming from a warehouse in Georgia from unknown breeding sources, there is no way to ascertain that consumers are being sold an uninfected rabbit. As there is no qualified education being distributed with the sale of a rabbit.....especially if an outdoor hutch is sold as suitable housing....the virus will be more readily spread by the uninformed.

We support the ASPCA version of law that regulates pet stores sales strictly prohibit *all retail sales of dogs and cats (and rabbits!)* but permit pet stores to partner with shelters and rescues to provide space in their stores to display adoptable animals. Under this model, ownership remains with the partnering non-profit or governmental organization.

We hope this that you consider this information when making a decision on the proposed needs to happen for the safety of the consumer and domestic and wild rabbits.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy J. Hartez". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Kathy I. Harter
Vice President/Treasurer
Orlando Rabbit Care and Adoptions, Inc.



January 11, 2021

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121 SW Port St. Lucie Blvd.
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Kathy I. Harter
Vice President/Treasurer
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