What to Do Before Approaching Your Local Government About Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR)

Lobbying for animal welfare issues is an essential component to saving lives and improving conditions for animals in your community. To do so effectively, you must understand the reality behind the issues and obtain the necessary knowledge to strategically operate within the structure of your local government.

Once you understand local government processes, it’s important to conduct thorough research to understand who may be impacted by any trap/neuter/return (TNR) ordinance changes. It is also important to understand the background and interests of the audience — researching the political affiliation, voting records, and, to the extent possible, the ideologies of each of your elected town officials. This knowledge is powerful and vital for maximizing your presentation’s persuasive impact. So, do your homework, answering the following questions before you start your campaign to advocate for TNR.

**Structure of Your Local Government**

Every town or municipality is different, so it’s important to determine how your local government is structured. This information will likely be available on the town’s website, or you can call your local courthouse or government complex. You can also go to your local library and check with the information desk for assistance. Generally, the governing body consists of a mayor (or other executive), city (or town) council and/or a county commission or council.

What is the local governing body? ______________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

How often do the decision-makers meet? _______________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

What are the names and locations of all animal shelters and animal control facilities that the local government oversees? __________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

What is the jurisdiction (the area over which their authority extends) for each shelter and animal control facility? ________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
What type of access to public information is available in your state: Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA), FoI (Freedom of Information), public access (sunshine) laws?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

What other local branches of government (e.g., public health department, zoning department, etc.) may have an interest in a TNR ordinance?

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

**Current Community Cat Situation**

Estimated number of cats: ________

Is rabies present in your area? _____ Yes _____ No

Number of rabid wild animals (during the past five years): ______

Number of rabid cats: ______

Are free-roaming cats currently being vaccinated and sterilized? _____ Yes _____ No

If so, under what programs?

_____________________________________________________________________________________

Number of governmental staff trapping free-roaming cats for TNR: ________________

Number of governmental staff trapping free-roaming cats to be killed: ________________

Names of governmental staff responding to free-roaming cat complaints:

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

**Elected Officials**

Names of elected officials who understand and support TNR: ___________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

Names of elected officials opposed to TNR: _________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________
Have elected officials responded positively to animal issues in the past?  _____ Yes  _____ No

If yes, which ones?  ________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

What is the political climate regarding animal welfare?  __________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Current Elected Officials

Name:  ________________________________________________________________
Title:  ________________________________________________________________

Name of administrative assistant:  ____________________________________________
Phone:  _________________________________________________________________
E-mail:  _________________________________________________________________
Political affiliation:  ________________________________________________________
Number of years in office:  _________________________________________________
End of election cycle:  ______________________________________________________
Personal interests:  _________________________________________________________
Organization affiliations:  _________________________________________________
Personal contacts who know him/her personally:  _________________________________

Name:  ________________________________________________________________
Title:  ________________________________________________________________

Name of administrative assistant:  ____________________________________________
Phone:  _________________________________________________________________
E-mail:  _________________________________________________________________
Political affiliation:  ________________________________________________________
Number of years in office:  _________________________________________________
Political affiliation: ________________________________________________________________
Number of years in office: _________________________________________________________
End of election cycle: _____________________________________________________________
Personal interests: _________________________________________________________________
Organization affiliations: __________________________________________________________
Personal contacts who know him/her personally: _______________________________________

Miscellaneous Notes about Current Elected Officials
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Local Government Meetings
Frequency of meetings: ______________________________________________________________
Meeting location: _________________________________________________________________
Is the room A/V accessible (for doing a PowerPoint presentation)? _______________________
What is the chain of command? ______________________________________________________
What is the deadline for getting an issue on the agenda? _________________________________
How long is a person allowed to speak? ______________________________________________
Is there additional time available for questions? _____ Yes _____ No

Current Ordinance and/or Regulatory Obstacles to TNR
Pet limit: _______________________________________________________________________
Feeding restrictions/bans: ____________________________________________________________
At-large provision(s) related to cats: _________________________________________________
Trapping permit requirements (if any): ________________________________________________
Cat licensing requirements: __________________________________________________________
Unsanitary condition definition (typically under the department of health): ________________
Other restrictions or regulations: ______________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________

Animal Shelters / Animal Control
Annual intake/admissions numbers: Cats ______ Kittens ______
Euthanasia numbers: Cats/socialized ______ Cats/unsocialized ______ Kittens ______
Annual adoption rate: Cats ______ Kittens ______
Nuisance complaint calls: Per month ______ Per year ______
Annual budget: ____________ Percentage funded by taxpayers: ________
Grants or other sources of funding being received for local programs: ______________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
Shelter or animal control’s policy for free-roaming cats: _________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
Shelter or animal control’s philosophy toward TNR: _____________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
Does the shelter or animal control lend traps? _____ Yes _____ No
Rental fee: _____________________
Length of rental agreement: ________________________
Does the shelter or animal control trap cats? _____ Yes _____ No
Does the shelter have an owner relinquishment fee? _____ Yes _____ No
If so, what is the cost? _________________________

Available Resources
Other community groups or 501(c)(3) nonprofits addressing the needs of cats: _______________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
Areas of focus for local animal welfare groups: ___________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
Preparing Your PowerPoint Presentation

As part of the toolkit, we have provided a generic PowerPoint that you can customize and use to make a presentation to city officials to educate them about the benefits and efficacy of TNR. Here are some tips for preparing your PowerPoint presentation:

• Concisely organize the presentation. You don’t want to lose the attention of your audience.
• Include your contact information so audience members can contact you if they have questions later.
• Adequately address the problems with the current system, whether it’s trap-and-kill or some other method.
• Highlight the philosophical shift in animal control that has occurred around the country.
• Stress the specific benefits of TNR.
• Use statistics from other cities or towns with successful TNR programs.
• Assign talking points to all speakers (no more than three points per speaker).
• Explain exactly what it is you’re asking for.
• Make paper copies of the entire PowerPoint presentation beforehand and give one to every elected official. (Time constraints can cut your presentation short, so distributing paper copies will ensure that officials get the entire presentation.)

**Additional Resources**

• *Get Political for Animals and Win the Laws They Need* by Julie Lewin, 2007
• *Rules for Radicals* by Saul D. Alinsky, 1971
• *Community Approaches to Feral Cats* by Dr. Margaret R. Slater, DVM, Humane Society of the U.S. Press, 2002
• Best Friends Animal Society cat initiatives: bestfriends.org/straycats
• Join our action network: bestfriends.org/action