



Howard County

Internal Memorandum

Subject: Testimony & Fiscal Impact Statement
Council Resolution No. _____-2026 providing for a cap in dog and cat adoption fees.

To: Brandee Ganz
Chief Administrative Officer

Through: Antonio Thomas
Acting Chief of Police

From: Sheri Fox, Administrator
Animal Control Division

Date: September 23, 2026

Summary

Resolution _____-2026 creates low-cost fees for pets adopted through the Howard County Animal Control adoption program to be competitive with surrounding jurisdictions. Currently, Howard County has some of the highest pet adoption costs in the area, negatively impacting the adoption rate.

Background

We do not currently have adoption fees. When an animal is adopted from the Animal Control Facility, we charge an adopter for the reimbursement of medical expenses. Currently, the most a dog adoption can cost is \$291, and \$241 for a cat adoption. Included in this cost is spay and neuter surgeries, vaccines, and flea treatment, and FIV/FELV testing for cats and Heartworm testing for dogs. Through a recent research project, we have found much lower adoption fees in surrounding counties and organizations including Baltimore County, BARCS, Humane Society of Carroll County, Anne Arundel County, and Frederick County.

The purpose of instituting a low cost, flat rate adoption fee for dogs and cats is to stay competitive with the surrounding jurisdictions and increase our adoption rate. Our proposed adoption fees would make us very much in line with the other agencies and would encourage citizens to adopt from us versus traveling a short distance to save money. We also propose to waive fees for adopters over the age of 65 and Veterans.

Fiscal Impact

Funds collected by Animal Control go into the General Fund and are not solely adoptions related. We are able to provide a best estimate of \$41,384 collected in 2025 in adoption fees. That number represents all 655 adoptions for 2025. Of that number, 198 were dogs, 325 were cats and 132 were domestic others (rabbits, guinea pigs, etc.) Only a very small portion of the \$41,384 collected can be attributed to domestic “others”, as most have no fees. Calculating the proposed adoption fees using the max adoption rate proposed by this legislation would result in the collection of \$25,130 in adoption fees. A difference of \$16,254 less than without a maximum adoption rate.

Any negative impact that this change in the adoption fees would have would be offset by the increase in adoptions. In theory, lowering the adoption fees along with streamlining the adoption process, should increase adoptions, shorten the length of time an animal is at the shelter, decrease holding costs, feeding costs, medication costs, and overtime in staffing. We are looking at other ways to streamline the adoption process including possibly proposing an increase in fines for cruelty violations. Both of these possible changes will increase adoptions and have a positive impact on revenue.

It is worth noting that every year in August, Animal Control waives all adoption fees for animals as part of the MD 3000 event, participating with most other shelters in the state. Also, in September, Animal Control participates in the Bissell Empty the Shelters event. This is a 2-week event, fees are waived and most rescues and shelters participate nationwide.