

Office of the County Auditor

Auditor's Analysis

Council Bill No. 60-2021

Introduced: September 8, 2021

Auditor: Owen Clark

Fiscal Impact:

There is no direct fiscal impact anticipated as a result of this legislation. The County will continue its practice of imposing fines for violations of the Animal Control law. If Council Bill 60-2021 passes, fines will be adjudicated through the civil citation process in the District Court rather than handled through the County's internal administrative process.

Additional costs for filing citations to impose civil fines in the District Court are not expected, as Howard County is not charged filing fees and court costs, if imposed, are generally imposed on the violator.

NOTE: While not resulting in a direct fiscal impact, the Office of Law (OOL) has confirmed it will represent the Animal Control Administrator in District Court proceedings and estimated total attorney and paralegal time to be roughly six hours per citation case. The OOL has indicated the time consumed on this new docket of litigation will mean less time for other legal work, assuming staffing levels remain constant.

Purpose:

The purpose of this legislation is to allow animal citations to be imposed by the Animal Control Administrator as civil penalties and require them to be adjudicated through the civil citation process in the District Court, rather than handled through the Animal Matters Hearing Board.

Other Comments:

A recent history of animal citations that were appealed and heard by the Animal Matters Hearing Board in prior years is as follows:

- Fiscal Year 2018 – 100 citations
- Fiscal Year 2019 – 103 citations
- Fiscal Year 2020 – 49 citations (impacted by COVID)
- Fiscal Year 2021 – 43 citations as of September 2, 2021