

Office of the County Auditor
Auditor’s Analysis

Council Bill No. 58-2024

Introduced: October 7, 2024

Auditor: Diane Zagorski-Kelly

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 Animal Control law. If Council Bill 58-2024 passes, at the discretion of the Animal Control Administrator (Administrator), fines will be adjudicated through either the Animal Matters Hearing Board (AMHB) or the District Court rather than solely handled through the District Court’s civil citation process.

Purpose:

The purpose of this legislation is to allow civil citations imposed by the Administrator, at their discretion, to be adjudicated through the AMHB or the District Court.

Other Comments:

Below is a recent history of total animal citations that were issued versus appealed and heard by the District Court in prior years:

Fiscal Year	Total Citations	Heard by District Court	% Heard by District Court
FY 2022	215	39	18%
FY 2023	373	107	29%
FY 2024	231	59	26%
FY 2025*	63	23	37%

*Year-to-date through October 10, 2024

Below are the results of the citations issued and heard by the District Court through October 10, 2024:

Fiscal Year	Paid	Outstanding	Dismissed
FY 2022	13%	85%	3%
FY 2023	19%	47%	35%
FY 2024	5%	73%	22%
FY 2025*	9%	65%	26%

*Year-to-date through October 10, 2024

Since October 13, 2021 (when CB60-2021 took effect) through October 3, 2024, the Office of Law has been to the District Court on 459 animal citation cases. Of these animal citation cases, 203 collections cases for unpaid fines were initiated.

According to the Administrator, if an appeal is made within 15 days of a citation being issued, it will be heard by the AMHB within 4-6 weeks (compared to the 10-12 weeks for citations heard by the District Court).

Appealed decisions from the AMHB will be handled by the Board of Appeals, whereas appeals from the District Court will continue to be handled by the Circuit Court.

NOTE: The Animal Control and Adoption Center indicated that it expects to send all future Animal Control cases (with rare exceptions as needed) to the AMHB. While not resulting in a direct fiscal impact, this would likely result in Office of Law (OOL) staff spending fewer work hours on Animal Control cases in District Court.

The following estimates were provided by the OOL, regarding the time it spends on Animal Control cases referred to the District Court. These totals include attorney and paralegal hours spent per case:

- Average time per citation case: three hours and 45 minutes
- Average time per collections case: one hour and 30 minutes

These time estimates do not include time spent on any applicable appeals. The cost to the County to bring a collections case for an unpaid animal citation fine is the same if heard by the AMHB or the District Court.