COUNCILMEMBER CHRIS CATE
CITY OF SAN DIEGO
SIXTH DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: **July 13, 2021**

TO: **Mayor Todd Gloria**

FROM: **Councilmember Chris Cate, District 6**

SUBJECT: **Cost Analysis for Providing Lifelong Maintenance, Veterinary Care, and Benefits for Retired San Diego Police Department K-9s**

Established in 1984, the San Diego Police Department's (SDPD) K-9 Unit is utilized for non-lethal apprehension, de-escalation, detection, search and rescue. There are currently 36 SDPD K-9s with dog breeds including Belgian Malinois, German Shepherds, Dutch Shepherds, and Labradors. The SDPD K-9 Unit has been recognized as one of the best teams in the nation. The police dogs are requested for instances such as burglary, robbery, or vehicle pursuits. The dogs are responsible for clearing areas before uniformed, human officers approach the suspect. K-9s are valuable tools that can be recalled.

Throughout my two terms in office, I have hosted several charity fundraisers for the San Diego Police Foundation. Due to the success of the events, I raised close to $20,000 with the sole purpose of purchasing and training a K-9 for the San Diego Police Department. The San Diego Police Foundation is an independent 501c3 nonprofit organization, providing support for efforts that enhance police and community relations, crime prevention, and public safety through grant funding for specialized equipment, training, and cooperative community programs. While the foundation specifically supports the K-9 program with training equipment, it is unable to financially support personnel and healthcare related costs pertaining to K-9s.

The San Diego Police Canine Association is a 501c3 non-profit organization whose mission is to offset the costs of the retired police dog. The San Diego Police Department's Canine Unit Operation Manual (section 4.14) specifies retirement procedures, but current policy requires ongoing medical care and expenses for the retired K-9s borne by the adopting handler. The police dog is an athlete. Like all athletes, over time, the activities take a toll on the body. When a police dog retires, they often require extensive medical attention over a long period of time. This is usually much

more than your average pet. Dental care alone can be thousands of dollars. The San Diego Police Canine Association is committed to giving our retired canines the quality retirement they deserve.

Earlier this year, Poland introduced national legislation to provide lifelong maintenance and veterinary care retirement benefits for dogs that have served in the police force. Food, medical treatment, and other costs would be covered by the government. Several years ago, the State of California presented a proposal to offer $100,000 to provide retired California Highway Patrol police dogs with a $2,000 retirement plan to help pay for medical costs.

I am requesting a cost analysis for providing lifelong maintenance, veterinary care, and benefits for retired San Diego Police Department K-9s. These dogs are faithful public servants, and countless lives have been saved and preserved due to their efforts.

cc: Jessica Lawrence, Director of Policy
Matt Yagyagan, Deputy Director of Policy
Javier Gómez, Senior Advisor of Policy
Chief David Nisleit, San Diego Police Department
Lieutenant Christopher Tivanian, San Diego Police Department K-9 Unit
Officer Jonathan Wiese, San Diego Police Canine Association
Sergeant Zach Pfannenstiel, San Diego Police Canine Association