

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2003 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1027

(Washington County Delegation)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs

Washington County - Animal Control Enabling Law

This bill authorizes the Washington County Commissioners to adopt an animal control ordinance that creates a quasi-judicial deliberative animal control authority. The animal control authority must hold public hearings to decide citations, complaints, and other controversies arising under the animal control ordinance other than those filed with the District Court of Maryland for Washington County. The bill also requires the authority to adopt rules and regulations for the governance of its hearings and designate an appropriate private agency or department of county government to enforce the ordinance.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: Washington County finances would not be materially affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: In Washington County, the animal control ordinance regulates the presence of any at-large horse, dog, or cat in the county. The Sheriff and deputy sheriffs enforce the provisions of the ordinance including the licensing of dogs, kennels, and pet shops; the control and impoundment of rabid animals; and the disposition of uncontrolled, vicious, and sick animals.

Background: The Washington County Commissioners were granted the authority to adopt an animal control ordinance by Chapter 341 of 1985. Washington County advises that the county commissioners passed a local ordinance for the control of any at-large animal on February 20, 2001 by making the animal control authority a quasi-judicial deliberative authority. Pending General Assembly approval, the current animal control ordinance would authorize an animal control officer to issue warnings or citations for violations of the county's animal control ordinance. For a first offense a civil penalty of up to \$25 may be imposed, for a second offense a civil penalty of up to \$100 may be imposed, and for a third or subsequent offense a civil penalty of up to \$250 may be imposed.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Washington County, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 18, 2003
lc/hlb

Analysis by: Christopher J. Kelter

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510