

GROOMING PINELLAS COUNTY PETS—SAFELY

Chairman Gerard:

You, and the other Pinellas County Commission members, are being forced to consider a subject that no County Commission has ever had to consider: Reopening Pinellas County for Business. Needless to say, that process will involve lots of decisions - some that probably won't make everyone happy. I am writing to provide some insight into a topic that is dear to many - and one that you will be deciding, soon: Pet Grooming. Even if your pets were groomed the day before Governor DeSantis issued order 20-91, they are, now, more than ready for another groom. Therefore, you may be feeling some pressure to come up with an appropriate way to reopen commercial grooming. The question is: "How can we offer pet grooming, while ensuring maximum safety for pet parents and groomers?" The answer is: "Open the county for mobile grooming." Our company has been grooming pets in Pinellas County for a long time. In fact, our roots go back to 1958 and, for almost 40 years, we have provided both mobile and salon pet grooming. From our neutral perspective, it is an easy call. There is no good rationale for keeping mobile groomers closed and, from the standpoint of public safety, there is no good rationale for allowing salon groomers to open. Of course, that means we are advocating for the continued closure of our own pet grooming salon, as well.

The truth is, "walk in" grooming salons should remain closed for the same reason that "sit down" restaurants should remain closed: It is practically impossible for employees and customers to adhere to "social distancing" guidelines in restaurants or in grooming salons. For safety reasons, you decided to close restaurants and to keep them closed, while allowing curbside pick up. Likewise, for safety reasons, we recommend that you keep grooming salons closed, while allowing mobile groomers to provide curbside grooming. Fortunately, Pinellas County has a small army of mobile groomers who are ready, willing and able to care for the grooming needs of the pets we all love - and they are fully equipped to do it in a way that is safe for both customers and groomers. Following are details of the logic behind our recommendation to permit mobile groomers to provide a much needed, and much safer, service to Pinellas County pet parents until the risks of Covid-19 further subside:

- 1) Pet grooming salons, typically, employ multiple groomers and provide them with small work areas. Their grooming tables are seldom 6 feet apart and, since they must compete for/share salon resources, like bath tubs, cages, dryers, cash registers, credit card machines, etc, groomers are often forced to be in very close proximity to one another. It would be virtually impossible for groomers, in a multi groomer salon, to conform to "social distancing" standards at all times. Groomers, in grooming salons, work in close quarters, much like the cooks in a restaurant. In addition to the difficulty for groomers/employees to practice "social distancing," we must, also, consider customer safety. In multi groomer salons, customers must park in a common parking area (occupied by other customers,) walk their dogs in common "wetting areas," (occupied by other customers,) enter a building (occupied by multiple groomers/employees) and wait in a lobby (occupied by other customers.) In most multi groomer salons, neither customers nor groomers/employees will be able to comply with "social distancing" and all other CDC guidelines. Therefore, they should not be allowed to reopen at this time.
- 2) Though the end result (a healthy, clean and beautiful pet) is the same, mobile pet grooming is very different from salon pet grooming. Mobile grooming is a curbside service. Customers never leave their homes. Instead, groomers walk up to each customer's door. At the door, "social distancing" is maintained as the customer hands off their leashed dog. Then, groomers carry or walk pets to a mobile grooming van or trailer. Mobile groomers perform the entire grooming service in an environment where there are never any other people. Mobile grooming is a one pet - one groomer process. In addition to all the other considerations, mobile grooming is often the only choice for the disabled and those who are unable to drive. Mobile groomers can comply with "social distancing" and all other CDC guidelines. Therefore, all mobile pet grooming services should be allowed to reopen, immediately.