

Johnson, Krista

From: Coats, Nikki
Sent: Tuesday, June 7, 2022 8:26 AM
To: BCC Agenda Comments
Subject: FW: Online Customer Service Contact Us Form Result #24385028

Categories: SENT TO BOARD REPORTERS

Nikki Coats

Executive Assistant to the Board of County Commissioners
315 Court Street, Clearwater, FL 33756
727-464-3377 office
ncoats@pinellascounty.org
www.pinellascounty.org

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From: noreply@fs30.formsite.com <noreply@fs30.formsite.com>
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 6:56 PM
To: Coats, Nikki <ncoats@co.pinellas.fl.us>
Subject: Online Customer Service Contact Us Form Result #24385028

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This information is a result of a Pinellas County Online Customer Service form submission from the Pinellas County web site.

Direction of Inquiry

- Commissioner Janet C. Long - District 1 (2022 Vice-Chair)
- Commissioner Pat Gerard - District 2
- Commissioner Charlie Justice - District 3 (2022 Chairman)
- Commissioner Dave Eggers - District 4
- Commissioner Karen Williams Seel - District 5
- Commissioner Kathleen Peters - District 6
- Commissioner René Flowers - District 7

Subject Writing a second time with updated content regarding the pet store ordinance

Message June 6, 2022

Dear Pinellas County Commissioners:

I am writing to you a second time on behalf of the National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA),

a broad-based animal welfare organization founded in 1991 to provide balanced and fact-based answers to complex and controversial issues regarding animals. We are subject-matter experts who focus on problem solving. NAIA's membership is diverse and bipartisan and includes pet owners, hobby dog breeders, rescuers, animal scientists, hunters, pet businesses, conservationists, ranchers, scientists, and veterinarians. NAIA's expertise in animal welfare and husbandry is recognized nationwide and we have members in all fifty states including Florida.

With regard to the proposed Pinellas County pet store ordinance update, I am writing today to urge you not to adopt any provision which devalues a legally operating Pinellas County business.

Here is an extremely important addition to my previous letter.

We strongly support most of the changes in the ordinance, especially ones that pertain to sourcing requirements, transparency and health certifications.

Reasonable, enforceable regulations aimed at eliminating the bad actors and supporting the businesses that operate responsibly is the only way to improve dog welfare in the long run.

By requiring pet stores to source their puppies only from USDA licensees whose inspection reports show good compliance and by assuring transparency for consumers and regulators, this ordinance will go a long way to advance dog welfare. More stringent requirements have a long and proven history of only driving the marketplace underground.

Our strongest objection to the ordinance involves the provisions against expansion or relocation and the ban of future stores. If a pet store meets or exceeds all regulatory requirements, and is not generating valid complaints from consumers, it is no more appropriate to impose limitations on them that it would be to impose limitations on any other legitimate, legally operating business. Putting these limitations in place brands all pet stores - the good along with the bad - as inherently undesirable. If you properly regulate pet stores they can be an asset to your community.

The criticism against pet stores started long ago. In past decades, much of the criticism was justified. But thankfully, the pet industry has made huge strides in the last 20 years. The changes didn't happen over night but advances are happening in modern commercial kennels today that were unheard of even 15 years ago. Like all attempts to change whole industries, there will always hold outs; but as lawmakers you have the ability to impose the regulations necessary to enable the good operators to distinguish themselves from those who won't or can't make the necessary changes.

The preamble to the ordinance offers a very prejudicial and inaccurate view of the modern commercial dog breeding industry, including USDA. The claims are outdated, out-of-context overly broad and/or biased. As a group that is focused on solving problems, we think it's only fair to acknowledge improvements when they've happened. We don't expect anyone to amend these statements but want to go on record stating that these undocumented statements perpetuate outdated stereotypes and retard rather than accelerate progress. Please ask for documentation before accepting broad-brush disparaging comments about any group or business. Name calling is not the same as problem solving.

Patti Strand, President
National Animal Interest Alliance

Your Name	PATTI STRAND
Your Street Address	1017 SW Morrison St Suite 511
City/Unincorporated County	Portland
Zip Code	97205
Your Phone Number	5037560826
Your Email Address	naia@naiaonline.org

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