



# Pinellas County

## Staff Report

---

**File #:** 21-800A, **Version:** 1

---

**Subject:**

Proposed ratification of initiation of litigation in the case of Pinellas County v. Stephanie Johnson - action for protection of animals.

**Recommended Action:**

Ratification of the Chair's approval of authority for the County Attorney to initiate litigation in the case of Pinellas County v. Stephanie Johnson.

**Strategic Plan:**

N/A

**Summary:**

On March 31, 2021, responding to law enforcement, Animal Services seized three dogs from a residence where they were being kept in substandard, cruel conditions. On April 2, 2021, with the owner's permission, Animal Control Officers returned to perform a wellness check on the nine animals remaining in the home. On that date, given the conditions of the animals and conditions of confinement, seven dogs and two potbellied pigs were seized. Pursuant to Florida law, the County is seeking custody of the animals, or alternatively court-ordered restrictions on the manner in which the owner can keep dogs in a non-cruel environment.

The County Attorney will additionally bring claims against anyone subsequently claiming or determining to be the owner of the dogs at issue.

**Background Information:**

On March 6, 2021, the Chair authorized initiation of litigation to comply with statutory time frames.

**Fiscal Impact:**

Unknown.

**Staff Member Responsible:**

Jewel White, County Attorney

Christy Donovan Pemberton, Managing Assistant County Attorney

**Partners:**

N/A

**Attachments:**

N/A