

My name is Bruce Cohen aka Big Bruno. I reside at [REDACTED] Gaithersburg MD. I volunteer at the animal shelter in Derwood MD and have been volunteering to help homeless animals in Montgomery County for 16 years.

I come to you today not just on behalf of the animals in our care at the shelter, but on behalf of the families, seniors, children, and individuals whose lives are made better by what we do at the animal shelter. The shelter does so much...here are some items people might not know about:

1. The shelter recently started a much needed Spay & Neuter Program which will gain in popularity very quickly. The shelter must be prepared.
2. The shelter assists local families in crisis, offering temporary care for pets during hardship through our "Safe Keep" program, helping families stay united with their beloved animals.
3. The shelter has a modest "Pet Pantry" program.
 - a. Let's help support Montgomery County families.
 - b. The next time you are shopping please think about buying an extra case of pet food for the pantry
4. The shelter also provides outreach programs, volunteer opportunities, and school partnerships that teach compassion and civic responsibility.
 - a. In CY 2024 the volunteer hours totaled nearly 20,000.

Recommendations:

I recommend to increase the number of Animal Care Attendants or ACA's from 15 to 23 beginning in FY2026. The ACA's consists of the dedicated folks who take care of nearly 300 animals every day from cleaning cages and kennels, feeding all the animals, walking dogs and so many more other tasks and duties.

1. This recommendation is consistent with the "Maddies Million Pet Challenge" Report that was issued on September 2023.
2. This group has been understaffed for many years and we need to get back on the right track.
3. Increasing the number of ACA's will allow for "proper care" of every animal...something we need to improve upon.
4. Increasing the number of ACA's will allow the shelter to develop an "evening" walking program which I strongly recommend. Currently dogs are locked in their kennels anywhere from 12 to 20 hours every night. Their final potty break is anywhere from 2 PM to 6 PM. Adding an evening walking shift and taking them out for a final potty break between 7 pm and 10 PM will greatly increase their physical and mental wellbeing, keep them house broken and help them get adopted much quicker.

I want to thank the Council for always supporting the homeless animals of Montgomery County and for this opportunity to speak on their behalf.