

A Spay/Neuter Program
For Free-Roaming Cats
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RECEIVED

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M/L [Signature]
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT UNIT
RENT STABILIZATION PROGRAM

Matt Brown
Staff attorney
2125 Milvia
Berkeley, CA 94704

Dear Mr. Brown,

I would like to report on the negotiation of a feral cat issue which was undertaken by the joint efforts of Fix Our Ferals, Berkeley Rent Board Mediator Nick Traylor, and the City of Berkeley Animal Care and Control Services.

Tenant Brenda Laffall, of 1541 Russell Street, called Fix Our Ferals, a non-profit spay-neuter organization for outdoor cats, during the first week of July to ask for help. Brenda had sterilized 8 feral cats and fed them for 12 years, and now her landlord had proposed that she capture the 4 remaining cats and surrender them to the city shelter.

The agreement Brenda signed with property owner Suhlan Shyu pertained to many issues, only one of which involved the cats, which were to be removed from the property by July 24th. When she signed, Brenda did not know that, since the cats were feral, they would be put to death if surrendered to a shelter.

Linda McCormick of Fix Our Ferals asked Nick Traylor for help in understanding the nature of landlord Suhlan Shyu's complaint about the cats, and upon learning that cat feces was the reason for removing the cats, Linda worked with Brenda to agree that that she, the tenant, would keep the yard clean by regularly cleaning up cat feces.

A petition was signed by six of the seven co-tenants of the apartment complex in support of maintaining the cats on the property: for rodent control, and for the sake of demonstrating kindness toward animals to the many children living there. Tenants feel that the cats help create a comforting homey atmosphere to the apartment complex.

The City of Berkeley's policy since 2000 has been to encourage residents to spay-neuter, then return feral cats to their homes to live out their lives. A meeting on July 23rd at the city shelter was held with Officer Marcie Burrell, Nick Traylor, Brenda Lafall, property owner Suhlan Shyu, Mrs. Shyu's son as interpreter, and two representatives from Fix Our Ferals, Linda McCormick and Dairne Ryan. A new agreement to override the previous one on the one point regarding the cats, was approved and signed the following week by Mrs. Shyu.

Thanks to the joint efforts of two city departments, Rent Stabilization and Animal Services, and the non-profit spay-neuter organization Fix Our Ferals, needless deaths of 4 beloved cats were spared, children witnessed a reaffirmation of humane policy toward animals, and a compassionate tenant may continue to set an example of responsible caregiving.

In addition, valuable cooperation between Rent Stabilization and Animal Care and Control was established and can continue. This relationship contributes to awareness of each other's policies, and paves the way for future sharing of information. For example, the Rent Board can advise the shelter on issues such as recourse for tenants who are pet guardians, and Animal Care and Control can share information on creative humane solutions to property owners' complaints about pets and wildlife.

Nick Traylor was immediately responsive to the concerns of Fix Our Ferals regarding this case. He was instrumental in facilitating communication and bringing together the parties involved so that a solution beneficial and acceptable to all could be agreed upon.

Sincerely,



Linda McCormick

Founder, Fix Our Ferals