



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Merritt Perry, City Manager

PREPARER: Danielle Allred, Contracts and Special Projects Manager

DATE: August 20, 2025

TITLE: **Introduce Ordinance No. 1582 An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Arcata Amending the Arcata Municipal Code Relating to Dogs at Large, Service Animals, Dog Licenses, and Dog Impoundment, Title V–Sanitation & Health, and Title X–Public Property.**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council introduce Ordinance No. 1582, An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Arcata Amending the Arcata Municipal Code Relating to Dogs at Large, Service Animals, Dog Licenses, and Dog Impoundment, Title V—Sanitation & Health, and Title X—Public Property; waive reading of the text and consent to read by title only.

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this ordinance is to update the City’s laws pertaining to dog leash requirements, dogs in the downtown areas, and dog licensing fees, to recognize and accommodate service animals and their handlers. This ordinance would also create leash law exceptions for designated dog parks and for dogs assisting peace officers. Additionally, the ordinance would update local code sections pertaining to holding periods of impounded dogs to be consistent with the California Food & Agriculture Code.

BACKGROUND:

Sections of the Arcata Municipal Code pertaining to dogs at large, dog licensing, and dog impoundment are outdated and require revision to remain consistent with state and federal laws. For example, the code section establishing Arcata’s leash law was adopted in 1981, prior to passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, and updated language is needed to recognize and accommodate service animals and their handlers.

DISCUSSION:

The proposed updates within the ordinance would establish exemptions for service animals to be permitted in areas where other dogs are not typically allowed, as well as leash law exemptions for service animals and their handlers, when the handler of a service animal has a disability that prevents them using a leash or similar device, or when the use of such a device would interfere with the service animal’s safe, effective performance of its trained tasks. Proposed updates also include exemptions from dog licensing fees – but not the licensing requirement itself – for service animals.

The ordinance would also create leash law exceptions for dogs assisting peace officers, and for dogs in designated dog parks, such as the recently established dog park in Valley West.

Code sections pertaining to hold times for impounded dogs are also outdated, and the proposed revisions would bring Arcata's municipal code in line with the California Food & Agriculture Code, as well as the practices of the Humboldt County Animal Shelter, operated by the County Sheriff Department with whom the City contracts for animal shelter services.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

If introduced, the ordinance may then be considered for adoption at the Council's next regularly scheduled meeting on September 3, 2025. If adopted, the ordinance would bring outdated sections of the municipal code into compliance with state and federal laws.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

No budgetary impact. There is already an existing practice that exempts service animals from dog licensing fees.

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

1. Open the Public Hearing.
2. Receive a staff report and review questions with staff.
3. Open public comment.
4. Close public comment/the public hearing.
5. Motion to Introduce Ordinance No. 1582, An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Arcata Amending the Arcata Municipal Code Relating to Dogs at Large, Service Animals, Dog Licenses, and Dog Impoundment, Title V—Sanitation & Health, and Title X—Public Property; waive reading of the text and consent to read by title only.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Ordinance No. 1582