



# What to Do Before Approaching Your Local Government About Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR)

Lobbying for animal welfare issues is an essential component to saving lives and improving conditions for animals in your community. To do so effectively, you must understand the reality behind the issues and obtain the necessary knowledge to strategically operate within the structure of your local government.

Once you understand local government processes, it's important to conduct thorough research to understand who may be impacted by any trap/neuter/return (TNR) ordinance changes. It is also important to understand the background and interests of the audience — researching the political affiliation, voting records, and, to the extent possible, the ideologies of each of your elected town officials. This knowledge is powerful and vital for maximizing your presentation's persuasive impact. So, do your homework, answering the following questions before you start your campaign to advocate for TNR.

## Structure of Your Local Government

Every town or municipality is different, so it's important to determine how your local government is structured. This information will likely be available on the town's website, or you can call your local courthouse or government complex. You can also go to your local library and check with the information desk for assistance. Generally, the governing body consists of a **mayor (or other executive)**, city (or town) council and/or a county commission or council.

What is the local governing body? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How often do the decision-makers meet? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are the names and locations of all animal shelters and animal control facilities that the local government oversees? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the jurisdiction (the area over which their authority extends) for each shelter and animal control facility? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What type of access to public information is available in your state: Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA), FoI (Freedom of Information), public access (sunshine) laws?

What other local branches of government (e.g., public health department, zoning department, etc.) may have an interest in a TNR ordinance?

### Current Community Cat Situation

Estimated number of cats: \_\_\_\_\_

Is rabies present in your area? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Number of rabid wild animals (during the past five years): \_\_\_\_\_

Number of rabid cats: \_\_\_\_\_

Are free-roaming cats currently being vaccinated and sterilized? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If so, under what programs? \_\_\_\_\_

Number of governmental staff trapping free-roaming cats for TNR: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of governmental staff trapping free-roaming cats to be killed: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of governmental staff responding to free-roaming cat complaints: \_\_\_\_\_

### Elected Officials

Names of elected officials who understand and support TNR: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of elected officials opposed to TNR: \_\_\_\_\_

Have elected officials responded positively to animal issues in the past? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the political climate regarding animal welfare? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Current Elected Officials

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of administrative assistant: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Political affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of years in office: \_\_\_\_\_

End of election cycle: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization affiliations: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal contacts who know him/her personally: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

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End of election cycle: \_\_\_\_\_  
Personal interests: \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization affiliations: \_\_\_\_\_  
Personal contacts who know him/her personally: \_\_\_\_\_

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End of election cycle: \_\_\_\_\_  
Personal interests: \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization affiliations: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Name of administrative assistant: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Political affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of years in office: \_\_\_\_\_  
End of election cycle: \_\_\_\_\_  
Personal interests: \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization affiliations: \_\_\_\_\_  
Personal contacts who know him/her personally: \_\_\_\_\_

**Miscellaneous Notes about Current Elected Officials**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Local Government Meetings**

Frequency of meetings: \_\_\_\_\_  
Meeting location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Is the room A/V accessible (for doing a PowerPoint presentation)? \_\_\_\_\_  
What is the chain of command? \_\_\_\_\_  
What is the deadline for getting an issue on the agenda? \_\_\_\_\_  
How long is a person allowed to speak? \_\_\_\_\_  
Is there additional time available for questions? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

**Current Ordinance and/or Regulatory Obstacles to TNR**

Pet limit: \_\_\_\_\_  
Feeding restrictions/bans: \_\_\_\_\_  
At-large provision(s) related to cats: \_\_\_\_\_  
Trapping permit requirements (if any): \_\_\_\_\_  
Cat licensing requirements: \_\_\_\_\_  
Unsanitary condition definition (typically under the department of health): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other restrictions or regulations: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Animal Shelters / Animal Control**

Annual intake/admissions numbers: Cats \_\_\_\_\_ Kittens \_\_\_\_\_  
Euthanasia numbers: Cats/socialized \_\_\_\_\_ Cats/unsocialized \_\_\_\_\_ Kittens \_\_\_\_\_  
Annual adoption rate: Cats \_\_\_\_\_ Kittens \_\_\_\_\_  
Nuisance complaint calls: Per month \_\_\_\_\_ Per year \_\_\_\_\_  
Annual budget: \_\_\_\_\_ Percentage funded by taxpayers: \_\_\_\_\_  
Grants or other sources of funding being received for local programs: \_\_\_\_\_

Shelter or animal control's policy for free-roaming cats: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Shelter or animal control's philosophy toward TNR: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does the shelter or animal control lend traps? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Rental fee: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of rental agreement: \_\_\_\_\_

Does the shelter or animal control trap cats? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Does the shelter have an owner relinquishment fee? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If so, what is the cost? \_\_\_\_\_

**Available Resources**

Other community groups or 501(c)(3) nonprofits addressing the needs of cats: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Areas of focus for local animal welfare groups: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other groups that can assist with TNR efforts: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Local low-cost spay/neuter services for free-roaming cats: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Community cat-friendly veterinarians: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Buy-in from government officials: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Volunteers: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Fundraising or grant opportunities: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Preparing Your PowerPoint Presentation**

As part of the toolkit, we have provided a generic PowerPoint that you can customize and use to make a presentation to city officials to educate them about the benefits and efficacy of TNR. Here are some tips for preparing your PowerPoint presentation:

- Concisely organize the presentation. You don't want to lose the attention of your audience.
- Include your contact information so audience members can contact you if they have questions later.
- Adequately address the problems with the current system, whether it's trap-and-kill or some other method.
- Highlight the philosophical shift in animal control that has occurred around the country.
- Stress the specific benefits of TNR.



- Use statistics from other cities or towns with successful TNR programs.
- Assign talking points to all speakers (no more than three points per speaker).
- Explain exactly what it is you're asking for.
- Make paper copies of the entire PowerPoint presentation beforehand and give one to every elected official. (Time constraints can cut your presentation short, so distributing paper copies will ensure that officials get the entire presentation.)

### **Additional Resources**

- *Get Political for Animals and Win the Laws they Need* by Julie Lewin, 2007.
- *Rules for Radicals* by Saul D. Alinsky, 1971.
- *Community Approaches to Feral Cats* by Dr. Margaret R. Slater, DVM, Humane Society of the U.S. Press, 2002.
- Best Friends Animal Society cat initiatives:  
<http://bestfriends.org/What-We-Do/Our-Work/Initiatives/Cat-Initiatives/>
- Voices for No More Homeless Pets: <http://capwiz.com/bestfriends/home/>
- Words of encouragement and support: Laura Nirenberg, legislative attorney for cat initiatives, Best Friends Animal Society, [lauran@bestfriends.org](mailto:lauran@bestfriends.org)

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