

# Cat Shelter Pilot Project Update 2023

Priorities Committee  
June 13, 2023

# Background

- The licensing of domestic cats is currently not required in Strathcona County; stray cats have been identified as an ongoing issue
- Strathcona County Council launched the cat shelter pilot project initiative in July 2022
- The County selected the Greater Edmonton Animal Rescue Society (GEARS) to open Sheltered Paws as a one-year pilot project, investing \$100K for start up costs

# Sheltered Paws

## Opened October 1, 2022

### Shelter Services:

- Care for cats in distress or those who have been abandoned
- House cats until they are reunited with their owner, relocated to a foster home or adopted
- Complimentary microchip scans by appointment
- Animal care education to cat owners



Located at 21757 87 Ave NW

# Shelter Update

- As of May 15, 2023
  - A total of 87 cats were brought into the shelter (37 females and 50 males)
  - Only 11 were spayed/neutered on intake
  - 36 were kittens under one year of age
- Many cats taken into the shelter have been injured or ill
- On average, sheltered cats spent 25 days at Sheltered Paws
- Unlike other shelters, GEARS will not euthanize for time or space
- Cats remain in shelter until they can be transferred into foster care or placed with partner organizations

# Adoption / Reunification

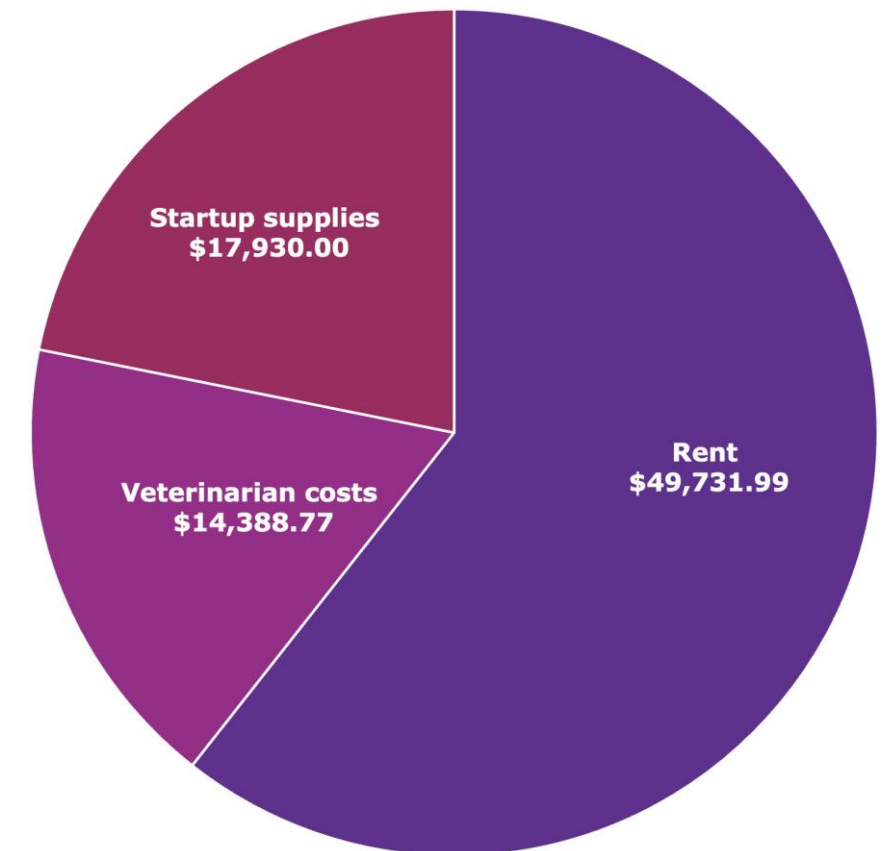
- Three cats were reunited with their owners
- One cat was reunited after being seen on social media (a feral barn cat), and one was returned to central Edmonton thanks to a microchip
- 56 cats were transferred to GEARS foster homes and 21 were transferred to partner organizations
- The number of cats adopted from GEARS from October 2022 to Mid-May 2023 was 23



# Volunteer Operations and Shelter Costs

- Shelter Paws is 100% volunteer run with 35 volunteers working two shifts per day totaling 1,431.9 hours over 8.5 months (most of whom are County residents)
- Year to date costs \$82,050.76 (Average of \$11,725 per month)
  - The community has supported the shelter with material and monetary donations
  - Many local businesses support GEARS Sheltered Paws by providing discounted vet care, donations or fundraising efforts including donations of cat food and litter
  - The Shelter's lease expires on August 31, 2023, although funding is in place to extend until December 31, 2023

Operating costs from  
September 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023



# Shelter Events

- GEARS has held two open house events at the shelter
- Events have been well received, and have brought in donations of supplies, bottles for refund, new volunteers, and new foster homes
- GEARS is planning to host ongoing education through social media and in-person events
- There are plans to hold a microchip clinic
- Volunteers are encouraged to take part in a no cost "Fear Free Shelter" course to learn how to reduce stress in the shelter
- A local animal trainer with a special interest in cats has started volunteering at the shelter
- Cats are regularly provided with enrichment and are allowed out of cage time for mental and physical stimulation



# Pilot Evaluation



- Shelter Paws has responded to a need in our community
- The shelter has provided a safe and caring environment for stray cats and has facilitated re-housing and permanent adoption arrangements for over half of all cats found in distress
- Since Sheltered Paws opened its door, community complaints regarding stray cats have been minimal and largely focused on information requests about the shelter
- Shelter availability and efforts to educate the public on responsible cat ownership seem to be addressing the community's needs



# Conclusion

- Operating at or near capacity, the pilot project has proven successful in terms of addressing the community's concerns to date
- Shelter access and the services provided, including education on responsible pet ownership, seem to be addressing the community need
- Legislative mechanisms such as licensing domestic cats in response to community concerns is not recommended.
  - Legislation would be costly and place an undue burden on residents, while having little impact on addressing the underlying issues
- Ongoing annual grant funding needed to continue the Shelter's operation will be brought forward for Council's consideration as part of budget 2024 (recommend \$160,000 annually)
- Partnership and associated grant funding provided to GEARS will move from RCMP and Enforcement Services to Agriculture and Environment under Planning and Development Services
- This program is within the Environmental Framework given its link to the biodiversity outcome and the impact stray and outdoor cats have on bird/small mammal populations

# Questions