

Council Resolution 188-2026 Fiscal Analysis

Introduced: October 5, 2026

Fiscal Manager: Melinda Massey

Legislative Intent: CR188-2026 would establish low-cost, flat-rate adoption fees for dogs and cats adopted from the Howard County Animal Control Facility. The proposed fee structure is intended to make adoptions more affordable and align the County's fees with those of surrounding jurisdictions. The proposed legislation would also waive adoption fees for adopters who are age 65 or older and for Veterans.

ANALYSIS

Fiscal Impact:

The Animal Control Facility (Facility) does not currently charge a separate adoption fee. Instead, adopters are charged an amount intended to reimburse the County for certain medical expenses incurred while an animal is in the Facility's care. The Administration has stated that under the current fee structure, the maximum cost to adopt a dog is \$291 and the maximum cost to adopt a cat is \$241. According to the Administration, the average adoption cost across dogs and cats is \$61.76 per animal. These amounts include services and treatments such as spay or neuter surgery, vaccinations, flea treatment, FIV/FELV testing for cats and heartworm testing for dogs. The Administration has provided a list of medical services and their associated costs. The link below provides the corresponding fees for each service: [Administration Comparison of Adoption Fees.pdf](#)

The Administration also reviewed adoption fees charged by surrounding jurisdictions and animal welfare organizations, [including Baltimore County, BARCS, the Humane Society of Carroll County, Anne Arundel County, and Frederick County](#); the research found that many neighboring jurisdictions charge substantially lower adoption fees. The Howard County Department of Police, which manages the Facility, anticipates with the proposed fee reduction there will be an increase in adoption; thereby reducing shelter-related costs, including feeding, medication, holding, and overtime expenses for staff.

Budget Implications:

Adoption fee revenues are deposited into the General Fund and are not exclusively attributable to animal adoption-related expenses. According to the Administration, in 2025, Animal Control collected an estimated \$41,384 in adoption fees across 655 adoptions, including 198 dogs, 325 cats, and 132 other domestic animals (*such as rabbits and guinea pigs*). Applying the adoption fees proposed under the legislation would result in estimated adoption fee revenue of \$25,130, representing a net of \$16,254.

Other Notes:

Administration has provided the actual expenses for FY2023 to FY2025:

Fiscal Year	Kennel/Animal Control Overtime	Drug & Medicine	Pet Food	Total
FY23	\$70,429	\$20,990	\$11,585	\$103,004
FY24	\$87,718	\$18,974	\$9,073	\$115,765
FY25	\$90,350	\$30,045	\$11,900	\$132,295
Total	\$248,350	\$70,009	\$32,558	\$351,064

Staff Overtime:

The Administration indicated that kennel overtime expenses are combined with Animal Control Officers' on-call and field overtime. Consequently, overtime costs are directly attributable to animal care cannot be separately identified.

Drugs and Medicine:

The Administration indicated that these expenses include vaccines, flea treatments, and medications used to treat routine illnesses, such as diarrhea, eye and ear infections, and upper respiratory infections. Animals that remain in the shelter for extended periods may require completion of the distemper vaccination series, which begins at intake and typically consists of three doses administered four weeks apart. These expenses vary depending on the length of stay and the medical needs of each animal.

Pet Food:

The Administration indicated that most animals at the Facility are fed twice daily. Pet food expenditures may vary depending on the number and types of animals housed at the Facility and their length of stay.