

My plea to the Bridgeport Common Council 12-5-11

I would first like to thank the all the members of the common council for allowing me these few minutes to speak on behalf of something that has become a labor of love for me. As you may know I have been your city's Chief ACO now for five years. They have been a very difficult five years. Back on April 16th of 2006, when I first grabbed my van keys and my catchpole I could have never imagined I would be standing here today. Well, here I stand before you a little older, a little grayer and very tired. Many of you may not know that our city's animal shelter is the largest in the State. On average, we bring in close to 2,000 animals a year and although we don't have a large staff, compared too many other shelters , I can honestly say we do a great job! As the Chief ACO, I have witnessed thousands of adoptions and I also have had to sign off on thousands of animals throughout the years to be put to sleep because of a lack of compassion, respect, and basic common sense towards our four legged friends. The knowledge and experience I have gained over my last few years will never be forgotten. Not a day goes by that I have not tried to figure out how to stop this revolving cycle of animals coming in and animals hopefully going out adopted. The answer is something that for the past few years my staff and I have tested and proven that it does work. We must EDUCATE, we most convey compassion, and teach our community how to respect our warm and cuddly counterparts. During Mayor Bill Finch's congressional terms, he was a major supporter for Humane Education because it is a way to build the human animal bond in these children so they don't participate in animal cruelty and so they understand the emotional lives of animals and learn how to relate carefully, respectfully and intelligently. During these tough economic times we need more proactive crime prevention; a way to entertain children and create a productive focus so these children don't become hardened, hopeless and commit crimes because there is nothing else for them. After school programs provide positive enrichment for Bridgeport youth. Imagine a center of animal learning that presents all animals in a positive and happy light; not just learning about the habitat and traits of animals but the relationships that are formed with humans. In today's society dogs and cats are welcomed more and more as part of the family. You see them in Xmas cards I even saw one recently in a wedding procession. We owe it to them to be their voice and their defenders against harm and injustice. Think of the proposed Bridgeport Animal Resource center as an investment in the future rather than a band-aid on a problem that has grown out of control due to lack of education and services. A project like BARC will not only help educate our community about bite prevention, spaying and neutering, and proper pet awareness but overall by keeping citizens together with their pets. BARC will establish better, affordable and responsible resources to help the citizens of Bridgeport from not being able to

afford or care for their loved ones. With our projected program the possibilities of dog bites, roaming dogs, and abandoned animals will be slashed! Within a few years the City of Bridgeport will see a reduction of over population of animals in its shelter and roaming its streets. Which will dramatically reduce the cost for care of its animal shelter, health department, police department, and public works. On average, the city of Bridgeport spends about \$200,000 annually for the animal shelter's housing/maintenance and veterinarian fees and with our declining economy these numbers are on a steady rise. BARC's privately funded, aggressive spay/neuter program was inspired by PAWS Chicago, which performed over 83,000 surgeries and seen a 60% reduction in euthanasia and intake at local shelters. Soon BARC will reduce the Bridgeport Animal Control intake and euthanasia rate saving the city approximately \$99,000 dollars in shelter spending solely as a result of it's spay/neuter offerings. Spaying and neutering and having available resources are the answers. The amount of animals being dumped at shelters around the country is staggering and I feel that Bridgeport can proudly set an example not only for our entire State but for the entire country. Many spay and neuter clinics around the country are proving that this is the way to stop the overpopulation of animals in our shelters. In fact the HOPE clinic in Waterbury currently has a three month wait and on average spays and neuters between 20 and 30 animals a day. BARC wishes to raise the bar and offer "animal social services" to not just end a problem of overpopulation but to keep pet's home and out of shelters. I am proud to say that many people are sitting by waiting to see where you our common council vote on this issue. I am also presenting a petition with 1,783 signatures for your review. When you vote on this matter please take note that this is not just a clinic, or a school on humane education but an answer to solving a problem that is not going away. With BARC the City of Bridgeport will in time be able to cut cost and have an overall safer community! We feel that the city of Bridgeport would be well served to allow BARC to use the Whittier School to continue Mayor Finch's efforts to improve the city.

Thank you!