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Date: May 9, 2018

To: E. Donoghue, City Manager, City Councilors

*EMD*

From: V. Woodley, Library Director

Re: 2/27/18 7.1. C. Cirillo - Req. City Mgr. explore feasibility of implementing "Paws to Read" program at the Pollard Memorial Library

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"Paws to Read" is a therapy program that brings animals (such as dogs) and children together so the children can read to the animals. Is this program effective? Children who read aloud to therapy dogs or shelter cats on a regular basis demonstrate drastic improvement in their reading skills! Animals provide a safe, non-judgmental presence for struggling readers.

There is no material cost for library supplies, however, staff time would need to be reallocated to operate the program. The N. Andover library schedules 15 minute sessions with dogs from Therapy Dog International. We have also found another dog therapy organization called DOG-BONES.

I accessed the "Paws to Read" website, but they didn't reply to my request for contact information on therapy dogs and their handlers. I didn't see a chapter in Massachusetts.

Do we have a place for this program at our library?

Possibly, yes. It is recommended that the child and dog be in a room with a door that can be closed. We could use one of our quiet study rooms on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor to do this. There is a window in the room from which parents could watch what is going on inside.

I have spoken with our Coordinator of Children's Services. She is very interested in the program. She would like the time to apply for the dog therapy programs and schedule a meeting with dog/handler to check out the demeanor of the dog.

I recommend that you give us a period of 2 months to vet these programs and let us get back to the Council when and if we can implement a dog therapy program.

Respectfully submitted.