

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: FEBRUARY 7, 2001

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *ps*

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO TRANSFER OWNERSHIP OF ONE OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT'S K-9 DOGS

ISSUE: Request to transfer ownership of one of the Police Department's K-9 Dogs.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council authorize the transfer of ownership of Police Department K-9 dog *Griff* to his handler, Sergeant Greg Spitzer, under the payment terms described below.

DISCUSSION: On October 17, 1998, Officer Greg Spitzer was transferred to the K-9 Unit of the Alexandria Police Department and the Police Department purchased K-9 dog *Griff* as his partner at a cost of \$3,500. Officer Spitzer handled *Griff* for a period of 27 months. Following his promotion to the rank of Sergeant in December, Sergeant Spitzer was transferred out of the K-9 Unit on January 6, 2001. Since then, *Griff* has resided with Sergeant Spitzer and his family.

Due to his transfer, Sergeant Spitzer has requested permission to purchase and keep *Griff* as a family pet. Police officers in the K-9 unit who have dogs assigned to them keep the dogs at their home, and the most successful K-9 dogs often develop a strong bond with the officer and his or her family. While it is possible to retrain a dog and assign it to another officer, this approach is not always successful. Police staff have estimated that *Griff* could have another four years as a Police K-9 dog, which equates to a fair market value of \$2,000. Officer Spitzer has requested that he be permitted to purchase *Griff* and reimburse the City \$500 a year over a four year period to pay for the dog. The Police Department supports the transfer of ownership of the dog to Sgt. Spitzer.

In the past, City Council has authorized the transfer of K-9 dogs to their Police Department handler when the dogs have retired because of age or medical problems. This is the first case in recent memory in which a K-9 dog has been purchased by its Police Department handler. Section 2.03 (g) of the City Charter authorizes Council to transfer ownership of *Griff* to Sgt. Spitzer. Because of the strong bond that has developed between the Spitzer family and *Griff*, and

since Sergeant Spitzer is willing to reimburse the City for the estimated fair market value of the dog, I recommend that Council authorize the transfer of ownership of *Griff* to Sergeant Spitzer for \$2,000 to be paid to the City over four years.

FISCAL IMPACT: The City would receive \$2,000 in revenue from the purchase of *Griff* by Sergeant Spitzer. The cost of a new dog for the canine unit (estimated to be from \$3,500 to \$4,000) is included in the FY 2001 Police Department budget.

STAFF: Michele Evans, Assistant City Manager
Mark Jinks, Assistant City Manager
Charles Samarra, Chief of Police
Amy Flenniken, Division Chief, Police
Joe Hilleary, Deputy Chief of Police
Peter Crawford, Commander, K-9 Unit