



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee ON Government Operations
Ricardo Arroyo, Chair

One City Hall Square ♦ 5th Floor ♦ Boston, MA 02201 ♦ Phone: (617) 635-3040 ♦ Fax: (617) 635-4203

REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

December 6, 2023

Dear Councilors:

Docket #0626, Ordinance amending City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Section 16-1.9G, to prohibit the sale of guinea pigs in pet shops, was referred to the Committee on March 22, 2023, and sponsored by Councilor Liz Breadon. The Committee held a hearing on December 4, 2023.

Summary of Legislation As Filed:

Docket #626 would expand the existing ban on pet shop sales in the City of Boston, originally covering dogs, cats, and rabbits, to now include guinea pigs. The change addresses concerns about guinea pigs being sourced from large-scale breeding facilities and subsequently surrendered to shelters. The amendment introduces definitions for “animal shelter,” “animal rescue organization,” “breeder,” and “broker,” alongside regulations for pet shops. Existing pet shops can sell guinea pigs until December 31, 2023, unless they expand animal offerings or undergo changes in ownership or location. The ordinance also emphasizes record-keeping for pet shops regarding the source of acquired animals and imposes immediate sales restrictions for violations.

Information Gathered at the December 4, 2023 Hearing:

The following individuals from the Administration attended: Kat Eshel, Chief of Staff, Mayor’s Office of Environment, Energy, and Open Space; and, Ms. Alexis Trzcinski, Director, Boston Animal Care and Control. A panel of the following community organization participated and offered testimony in support of the ordinance: Deb Bobek, Director of Operations, Boston Animal Adoption Center and Community Clinic MSPCA-Angell; Kara Holmquist, Director of Advocacy, MSPCA-Angell; Alison Blanck, Director of Advocacy, Animal Rescue League of Boston; and, Cailey Bloomgarden-Bredin, Director of Animal Care Operations, Animal Rescue League of Boston.

Representatives from community organizations discussed the increase in population of guinea pigs in the City and the increase of guinea pigs in pet shelters. The advocacy organizations reviewed data that showed that the number of guinea pigs in shelters has increased and explained the difficulty for shelters to place the guinea pigs. The representatives explained that many people do not know that shelters rescue guinea pigs and that the length of time that guinea pigs remain in shelters is longer than dogs and cats. The advocates explained that guinea pigs are often abandoned and brought to shelters in poor health. The representatives from the shelters explained that pet stores are the initial source of the increase in the guinea pig population and that this

ordinance will be helpful in reducing the abandonment of guinea pigs by banning the sale in pet shops. The Committee discussed the care and the cost of maintaining the pets. The Administration expressed support explaining that animal shelters and rescue organizations need relief and that there would be no issues with enforcement. Public comments reflected support of the docket.

Summary of Amendments:

There is one change to the ordinance from its initial filing. In **16-1.9G.2(b)**, pet stores will be able to sell guinea pigs until 90 days after passage of this ordinance. This change will allow for planning and will provide time for animal shelters and rescues to organize.

Rationale and Recommended Action:

This ordinance will assist in providing relief to animal shelters and rescues and will help decrease the abandonment of guinea pigs. Allowing pet shops to sell guinea pigs for 90 days after passage of this ordinance will provide time for appropriate planning.

By the Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, to which the following was referred:

Docket #0626, Ordinance amending City of Boston Code, Ordinances, Section 16-1.9G, to prohibit the sale of guinea pigs in pet shops,

submits a report recommending that this docket ought to pass in a new draft.

For the Chair:



Ricardo Arroyo, Chair
Committee on Government Operations