

Culver CITY

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 31, 2017
TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
THROUGH: John M. Nachbar, City Manager
FROM: Shelly Wolfberg, Assistant to the City Manager
SUBJECT: Ferret Legalization Request
CC: Scott Bixby, Chief of Police
Corolla Fleeger, Animal Services Officer

At the October 23, 2017 City Council Meeting, Meghan Mitchell addressed the City Council requesting that the ownership of ferrets be legalized in Culver City. Corolla Fleeger, Culver City's Animal Services Officer and Vince Wong, Director of Policy and Civic Engagement for the Found Animals Foundation were asked to provide their perspectives on ferrets as pets.

According to Officer Fleeger:

"Ferrets are banned in California per California Fish and Wildlife laws. There is a concern that escaped ferrets may start a wild population and could disrupt the ecosystem. Further reasons from California Fish and Wildlife expressed (after ferret owners wished to have the ferret removed from the ban list) that ferrets: (1) can carry rabies; (2) remain a threat to agri-business; and (3) are prone to biting owners and children.

It's about protecting native species. The concern is that if ferrets were legal, people would breed and sell them in California, some might get loose, and they might compete with native species resulting in extinction of native species. In Southern California, there are many species that live in a certain place in a desert or semi-desert environment, introducing a new species could disrupt several other species."

Officer Fleeger enforces California Fish and Wildlife laws regarding this ban.

Additionally, Vince Wong, offers the following information:

“Unfortunately I'm not well versed on the topic, but as you know this is a California ban on ferrets, not a local one. My understanding is the primary reason is because they are non-native to California and could be considered an invasive species (I'm not weighing in here on whether or not they actually are).

I did a little online digging, and it looks like several organizations have tried unsuccessfully a couple of times over the years, and most recently in 2016 went before CA Fish and Game (now called CA Fish and Wildlife, by the way) which concluded that an EIR would need to be completed. Staff recommended not proceeding with that since the process could effectively remove their ability to regulate ferrets statewide.

I can tell you from the many years I've been working already on the free-roaming cat issue in the City of LA (the City has an injunction against it since 2008 to do trap-neuter-return of free-roaming cats), and that they've ponied up \$800k to complete that EIR (after rejecting a previous MND), I imagine that F&W's recommendation is going to stay.”

If you have any questions about this matter, please contact Officer Fleeger at (310) 253-6143 or me at (310) 253-6008.