

## Pittsburgh! America's Model Humane City



*HUMANE ACTION Pittsburgh is advancing animal protection through education, policy, and community action. By establishing healthy relationships with legislators and leadership partners in business, faith, and advocacy, animal protection is within reach.*

## What does the Model Humane City look like?

It's an ongoing dialogue of animal groups and civic leaders working together to create healthy citizens and communities while using the most humane practices and living peaceably with all animals in our city.

Recognizing that all animals are sentient beings, capable of feeling pleasure and pain, this city-wide commitment to the humane treatment of animals will be accomplished through education, policy, and community action.

## Why America's Model Humane City?

In addition to leading the nation in the humane treatment of animals, HAP seeks to institute policies that protect the safety and health of our citizens, encourage thriving commerce, combat climate change, and save taxpayer dollars.

## Our 2020/2021 campaigns

### 1. Protect Pittsburghers from Dangerous Reptiles

In the past several years, Pittsburgh Animal Care and Control along with our local shelters have had to handle dozens of dangerous reptiles let loose by pet owners who no longer wanted to care for these animals.

Alligators, crocodiles, and venomous snakes belong in the wild. Even in captivity, they belong in spacious facilities that can meet all their temperature, UV, dietary, and medical needs. These animals are dangerous and cannot be trained by the average individual.

Red-eared slider turtles also do not make good pets. They are an invasive species and when released into the wild, compete with native species for habitat, food resources, nest sites, etc. Further, these turtles can easily carry salmonella bacteria, which can easily be transmitted to humans. Salmonella usually gives people a few miserable days of fever and diarrhea, but some end up in the hospital with life-threatening complications.

### Asks:

Replace a well-intentioned, but inhumane and dangerous reptile ordinance passed by City Council in 2019 with the safer and more humane one proposed by Humane Action Pittsburgh and Humane Animal Rescue. HAP's ordinance would ban ownership of these dangerous animals, except by properly accredited institutions. This means that the Pittsburgh Zoo would NOT be exempt from this ordinance until they restore AZA accreditation. ZAA is unacceptable.

## 2. Restore AZA Accreditation at Pittsburgh Zoo

In 2015, the Pittsburgh Zoo forfeited their AZA accreditation, which constitutes a material breach of their lease with the City of Pittsburgh. Even with several extensions, the Zoo has not come into compliance. They are accredited by the much lower ZAA, of which Barbara Baker, President and CEO of the Pittsburgh Zoo, is the Chair of the Board. This means Dr. Baker is in charge of accrediting her own organization, a clear conflict of interest.

The Zoo has amassed a stack of USDA violations. Recent citations include lack of sufficient barriers between animals and the public, cockroaches in animal enclosures, using dogs to control elephants by biting and charging them, critically inappropriate handling of animals, exposing animals to dangerous and toxic chemicals, and ill-equipped staff. Clearly, the lack of a meaningful accreditation is causing harm to the animals, employees - and potentially visitors.

Undercover investigations have found elephants pacing around tiny enclosures for hours, dogs close to the elephants (despite USDA citations), elephants kept indoors in conditions that could cause them foot and leg disease, dirty walls, and outdated signage claiming the Zoo is AZA accredited.

These factors in addition to separating bonded elephant pairs, fighting progressive and humane Pittsburgh ordinances, and a veterinarian referring to the Zoo as a "third world jail for elephants" have earned the Pittsburgh Zoo title of In Defense of Animal's "2019 Worst Zoo in North America for Elephants".

### Asks:

The City should require the Zoo comply with their lease and regain AZA accreditation. Their lease expires on December 31, 2022 and the new lease must have definitive and actionable damages for noncompliance.

### 3. Establish Animal Protection Task Force

Whether it's a bear loose in Highland Park, alligators roaming the Southside Riverfront Trail, or hoarding farm animals in the West End, Pittsburgh has widespread and diverse animal issues that need to be dealt with by the Police. While Officer Christine Luffey and several others have done a stellar job of protecting citizens and animals alike, they cannot do it alone and without ongoing training.

Many city governments across the world have recognized that animals need their voices represented in government by establishing an Animal Task Force. These task forces identify the specific needs of animals, research best practices, dialogue with affected parties, and make policy recommendations. HAP believes Pittsburgh should replicate and improve on the model of so many cities that have created these task forces.

#### Asks:

Establish an Animal Task Force including all branches of law enforcement and government: Mayor's office, City Council, Pittsburgh Police, Public Safety, 911 Operators, District Attorney's office, Humane Police Officers, and animal advocates. Cities throughout the US rely on teamwork to protect animals.

Designate a police officer at each zone as a community resource for animal issues within the city. There is already officer interest in this -- Officer Christine Luffey and Humane Action Pittsburgh can help facilitate training and education!

### 4. Humane Solutions for Pittsburgh's Wildlife

Raccoons and groundhogs are part of wild, wonderful Pennsylvania. Understandably, we don't want these animals in our homes, but there is never an excuse for animal cruelty. Humane solutions exist.

Pittsburgh has one of the most inhumane trapping and euthanasia programs in the country. Each year, thousands of animals are euthanized by Pittsburgh's Animal Care and Control - at taxpayer expense. Trapping these animals doesn't solve the problem and should be used only for life threatening emergencies, such as an animal in your living space. Not only would humane solutions help animals and create a lasting solution, but also save thousands of taxpayer dollars and the valuable time of our Animal Care and Control officers.

- Open trash containers attract hungry animals. Keeping a lid on trash containers is the most effective solution. Without food, the animal will move on.
- Animals seek shelter in abandoned homes or residences in need of repair.
- Most raccoons, groundhogs, and skunks post no risk of rabies.

#### Asks:

1. Hold residents responsible for trash clean up and use trash cans with lids. Educational materials can be provided to residents in violation that explain why proper trash storage matters. This is already part of city code.
2. Share Humane Action Pittsburgh's wildlife educational videos on humane harassment techniques.
3. Update Pittsburgh Animal Care and Control website to include humane, DIY solutions from the Humane Society of the United States's Wild Neighbors program. 311 operators should also have access to this guide.
4. Divert funds reserved for euthanizing wildlife to a public education campaign similar to New York City. Humane Action Pittsburgh has experts ready and willing to help with the education campaign.

## 5. Save the Bees... Save our Planet

You may have heard about the crisis facing the world's bee population. Hundreds of species of bees are on the brink of extinction. While the precise reasons are not certain, experts believe it's an unfortunate combination of several factors including loss of habitat, fewer food sources, and the use of pesticides.

Why is this important? Bees are pollinators, and pollinators are the very backbone of the ecosystem, ensuring that the very foods we eat continue to grow. If bee populations continue to decline and collapse at the alarming rate that they have been, it could very well mean the end of humanity as we know it. And that is no exaggeration. **No bees. No food.**

But there is something we can do. And cities around the world are stepping up to do their part. The tasks are so simple, it's an absolute no-brainer. And these efforts pay off. In Amsterdam, bee populations have not only stopped declining but are on the verge of recovery.

**Asks:**

1. Replace ornamental flowers already in the budget with those native to Western, PA that are identified the best food sources for bee populations.
2. Discontinue the use of those chemical pesticides deemed most detrimental to bees.
3. Support the development of a program led by teenagers, including at-risk youth, to install “bee hotels” in areas that don’t see pedestrian foot traffic or are sparsely population. Let’s teach the next generation of leaders about the importance of pollination.



*Submitted by the members of HUMANE ACTION Pittsburgh.  
Contact Vice President Natalie Ahwesh at [natalie.ahwesh@gmail.com](mailto:natalie.ahwesh@gmail.com) and  
(740) 317-1327*