



Council approves formal pact with Montclair animal shelter group



Mia, a Chihuahua, was able to get medical attention for her kneecap with financial assistance from the Friends of The Montclair Township Animal Shelter. COURTESY MONTCLAIR TOWNSHIP

The Township Council has struck a formal agreement with the Friends of the Montclair Township Animal Shelter, FOMTAS, whose financial support has helped pay the high medical bills for many seriously ailing animals.

FOMTAS, founded in 2012, often foots the bill for the extraordinary medical expenses of animals and other costs at the town animal shelter, contributing \$30,000 to it this year, according to a press release from Township Communications Director Katya Wowk Tuesday.

For example, earlier this year a 5-year-old Chihuahua named Mia was surrendered to the shelter with her pit bull brother Bronson, the press release said. The staff saw that Mia had an issue with one of her hind legs, and the diagnosis was a dislocated kneecap that can cause severe pain and swelling. The dog needed to see an orthopedic specialist and required surgery.

“Thanks to the generous support from the FOMTAS, Mia was able to undergo surgery,” acting shelter director Liz Morgan said in a statement. “She followed all post-surgery physical rehab instruction and is once again ‘four on the floor’ and has a pain-free life. What a wonderful gift for this little girl.”

The long-standing arrangement between the shelter and FOMTAS was formalized at Monday night's council conference meeting, by a resolution that authorized the township to enter into a two-year agreement with the non-profit.

Under the pact the township is still responsible for shelter operations, including care and maintenance of the shelter building, hiring staff and for services and expenses for day-to-day sheltering and animal control operations, the press release said. These include basic food and medicine, animal care, cleaning, office equipment and supplies.

FOMTAS, to the degree that it financially can, will continue to support shelter operations by continuing to cover extraordinary medical expenses, equipment and supply needs, as well as recruiting volunteers and producing shelter programming, according to the press release.



The Montclair Township Animal Shelter found Mia a home. LINDA MOSS/STAFF

"FOMTAS is enormously grateful to the Council for formalizing our relationship with the Township and the shelter," the group's president, Karen Sacks, said in a statement.

"This arrangement will allow us to devote the funds we have raised thus far to key shelter initiatives and kick-start our fundraising for other planned projects," she said. "We look forward to continuing to work with Liz Morgan - a true leader in animal welfare - the shelter's talented staff, and town officials, to help the deserving homeless animals in our town."

In addition to paying for special medical expenses, FOMTAS has also provided funding for education materials for the public; food, supplies and training assistance for the shelter animals being fostered; traps for feral cats to be trapped, neutered and then released; and other costs not covered by the shelter's budget.

FOMTAS raises money for the shelter through a gala event, grant writing, crowdfunding, and supporting and encouraging third-party fundraisers. This year some of the money went to hire a summer intern and a short-term veterinary technician for the shelter, according to the press release.

The funds also helped cover medical expenses, equipment and supplies, the cost of adoption fees for free adoption events, transport fees to bring animals to the shelter, and outside consultants, such as a behaviorist, hired to work with some of the animals.

According to the township, Mia and Bronson have both been placed in permanent homes because of the efforts of FOMTAS and the shelter's staff.