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From: Diane Allevato [mailto:[DALLEVATO@marinhumansociety.org](mailto:DALLEVATO@marinhumansociety.org)]  
Sent: Tuesday, June 27, 2006 11:55 AM  
To: Gary Brown  
Subject: Proposed ordinance –owner/guardian

City Manager Brown,

Three years ago Marin County and its 11 incorporated cities changed all animal ordinance language to define the person legally responsible for a companion animal as the “owner/guardian.” The sky did not fall and life as we know it in Northern California did not come to an end. The courts are not clogged with lawsuits and animal care professionals are not harried.

However, the change was significant because it clearly communicated to our community that companion animals are not in the same category of property as cars and sports equipment. We have specific legal responsibilities as outlined in local and state neglect and cruelty statutes to nurture, provide medical care and keep safe that is more consistent with the responsibilities of a guardian than an owner. Furthermore it more accurately describes the relationship that people share with cats and dogs and other animals that share our homes and our lives.

In addition, the altered language usage gives rise to a heightened sense of moral responsibility.

The Marin Humane Society provides animal services to the County and 11 cities by contract and the language changes have facilitated our work and given resonance to our mission. It is a contribution that government can make to the wellbeing of animals that doesn't cost a dime.

I encourage you to follow your first reading with passage of the language of change.

Sincerely,  
Diane Allevato  
Executive Director  
Marin Humane Society