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Nassau County Comptroller Jack Schnirman Releases Follow-Up Review of Town of Hempstead Animal Shelter Financial Audit

Follow-Up Review shows that while a majority of Comptroller's Office recommendations appear to be in the process of implementation, a key recommendation has not been addressed.

Comptroller's Office renews its call for the Town of Hempstead to conduct an independent review of the Shelter's animal care policies with subject matter experts.

MINEOLA, NY – Nassau County Comptroller Jack Schnirman announced the release of a follow-up review of the Comptroller's Office Financial Audit of the Town of Hempstead Animal Shelter. The follow-up review finds that the Shelter has not conducted a critical operational review recommended in the initial audit report which is necessary to address residents' reported concerns about animal care. The Shelter has addressed the majority of recommendations concerning the financial review reported in the initial audit or appears to be in the process of implementing those recommendations, including a modification to the Town's local laws in order to address internal control issues. The audit released in June 2019, initially launched and then temporarily stopped under the previous Comptroller in 2017, also found that the Town of Hempstead Animal Shelter did not track taxpayer and donated dollars; did not properly monitor spending; and identified a number of internal control weaknesses that increased the risk of fraud, waste, and abuse.

The original report included 13 findings, resulting in 37 recommendations. Of those recommendations, the follow-up review found that approximately 50% have been implemented and 35% appear to be in the process of being implemented. The other recommendations, including an independent outside review of the Shelter's animal care policies with subject matter experts, have not been addressed by the Town.

"Audits can drive results, and this is demonstrated clearly by our new policy of releasing Follow-Up Reviews. It is encouraging to see that a majority of recommendations specifically addressing the financial component of the audit appear to be in process," said **Nassau County Comptroller Jack Schnirman**. "However, as of yet, the Town has not taken our recommendation that there should be an independent review of its animal care policies and practices conducted by subject matter experts. The sheer volume of complaints going back for many years and prior administrations illustrates that the well-being of animals is of great concern to the public. The Town needs to address the concerns of its residents with direct action."

Earlier this year, the Appellate Division 2nd Department of the Supreme Court of the State of New York ruled that the Comptroller's Office is within its authority to conduct not only financial audits, but also operational audits. The Court, citing the County Charter, found that the Comptroller's powers and duties go beyond the verification of financial records and internal controls. Following this ruling, and the implementation of many of the recommendations, the Comptroller's Office renewed its call for the Town of Hempstead to conduct the independent review with subject matter experts.

"As I said when we launched this audit, our Office doesn't have veterinarians or animal experts," concluded Schnirman. "What we do have is a team of financial professionals who spent thousands of hours combing through hundreds of documents and put together the financial report that we released last year."

The follow-up review is part of a new policy implemented by Schnirman to conduct follow-ups of all audits to ensure that audit recommendations are being implemented. While the follow-up found that many of the recommendations have been implemented or appear to be in the process of implementation, a key recommendation is not being acted upon.

Follow-up reviews and audits are available on the Nassau County Comptroller's website, located at <https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/Audits>.

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