

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

February 27, 2026

City of Goldsboro
200 N Center Street
Goldsboro, NC 27530

Dear Mayor and City Council,

Alley Cat Allies is reaching out to express our concerns about some of the proposed amendments to Chapter 91 of the city's Code of Ordinances. Specifically, there is a proposed amendment to §91.18(C) that would create the possibility of criminal penalties for "cat at large" even if a cat caregiver is operating pursuant to an "approved Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program...under the supervision of the city or its authorized agent."

The original ordinance and proposed amendments seem to indicate that the city sees the benefits of TNR as the most effective and humane approach to community cats, yet the current proposed amendments would erect obstacles and potential criminal exposure for engaging in TNR.

Alley Cat Allies is the leader of the global movement to protect and improve the lives of cats. As the leading advocacy organization for cats, we work with lawmakers, shelters, and the public toward humane, nonlethal, and effective laws and policies that serve the best interests of cats and the communities in which they live. We offer the opportunity to provide our expertise and resources to the City of Goldsboro to defend TNR and community cats, or unowned cats who live outdoors.

Currently, Goldsboro law correctly exempts community cat caregivers who are "participating" in a TNR program from being criminally charged for "cat at large." Successful TNR programs also have explicit language clarifying that community cat caregivers shall not be deemed owners for purposes of the ordinance.

The proposed amendment in §91.18(C) removes that exception and instead says the "at large" prohibition "shall apply to community cats that are part of an approved Trap-Neuter-Return program..." Since community cats are unowned, they cannot live on the property of their owner and therefore would all be in violation of this ordinance. Given the language that suggests your desire to support TNR programs, we feel this likely was not your intent and strongly recommend rejecting these amendments to truly support TNR instead.

Well-intentioned ordinances can cause more harm than help if they create regulations and restrictions and, subsequently, penalties and liabilities against community cat caregivers. The most problematic TNR ordinance provisions are ones that create unnecessary burdens for community cat caregivers. Community cat caregivers are NOT the owners of the cats. They do not create or increase community cat populations. Rather, they are good Samaritans, and are the people most often on the front lines ensuring cats are spayed or neutered and vaccinated.

Laws requiring community cats to be leashed are also ineffective, impossible to enforce, and incompatible with TNR. If Goldsboro agrees to a leash requirement for community cats, it will result in cats being impounded and killed and/or the penalization of compassionate Goldsboro residents spending their own time, energy, and money to care for community cats.

Under a leash law, any cat not wearing a leash outdoors is a visible target. There is no reliable way to distinguish between a community cat, an owned cat allowed outdoors, and an indoor-only cat who is unintentionally outdoors. All of these cats will therefore be at risk, along with the people who care for them. Mostly, the penalty would fall on caregivers of community cats who, as established, are not the cats' owners but volunteers providing a community service.

Instead, the city is best served by supporting TNR without restrictions that hinder the engagement of the community to help cats. Through TNR, community cats are humanely trapped, spayed or neutered, vaccinated, eartipped for identification, and returned to their outdoor homes. TNR stops the breeding cycle so no new kittens are born, improves cats' health, and eliminates mating behaviors such as yowling, spraying, roaming, and fighting. TNR also reduces shelter intake and calls to animal services, providing immediate community benefits and saving taxpayer dollars.

For all the reasons above, Alley Cat Allies again urges the City to reject the proposed amendments. We urge you not to penalize the compassionate cat advocates of Goldsboro.

Alley Cat Allies offers support in policies that humanely and effectively address concerns you have. We are happy to provide any other information that would be helpful, and hope to hear from you soon.