

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

September 10, 2026

Mayor Personti and Elsmere Town Council
11 Poplar Avenue,
Elsmere, DE 19805

RE: Opposition to Restrictive, Impractical Language in Ordinance 693

Dear Mayor Personti and Members of the Elsmere Town Council,

Alley Cat Allies is reaching out to express our opposition to provisions of Ordinance 693 that would impose unfair burdens on community cat caregivers, establish unreasonable requirements that are incompatible with community cats and their care, and impede Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), the only humane and effective approach to community cats.

We strongly oppose registration requirements, licensing fees, cat colony limits, and forced socialization attempts of community cats. While the ordinance may be well-intentioned, the unnecessary and arbitrary language included is counterproductive to the goal of increased TNR efforts in the town. We urge you to reject Ordinance 693 as written.

Alley Cat Allies is the leading advocacy organization working to protect and improve the lives of all cats. Founded in 1990, we have promoted evidence-based, non-lethal, and compassionate cat programs centered on TNR for decades. Alley Cat Allies regularly works with lawmakers, animal shelters, and the public to improve their communities through laws and policies that serve cats' best interests.

We offer our expertise and resources to the Town of Elsmere to amend Ordinance 693 and ensure that TNR can operate to its full potential while safeguarding cats and their caregivers from penalties.

Registration is a Restriction Which Causes TNR Programs to Fail

Mandatory caregiver registration and licensing fees are unnecessary, time and resource-consuming, and can negatively impact TNR program participation. These requirements create uncertainty among caregivers because of the potential for ambiguous enforcement.

Registration also requires compassionate citizens to disclose personal identifying information about themselves and the cats they care for, which creates concern about public harassment. As a result, registration discourages TNR participation.

The community cat caregivers of Elsmere who already devote their time and money to improve the community for both cats and people should be supported, not hindered by red tape.



Colony Size Limits Are Incompatible with TNR and Community Cats

A limit on cat colony size is an unreasonable requirement that is impossible to enforce. Community cat caregivers did not create the outdoor cat population, and they do not and cannot determine how many cats live in a given area. They simply provide care to the cats who have already claimed a specific outdoor space as their home.

Holding caregivers responsible for circumstances beyond their control and subjecting them to potential penalties for providing a compassionate community service is unwarranted.

Additionally, a colony size limit raises significant concerns about what will happen to the remaining cats if a colony exceeds the arbitrary six-cat limit.

Community Cats Are Not Adoption Candidates

Community cats are generally not socialized to people and therefore are not suitable candidates for adoption into indoor homes. Forcing community cats to be confined indoors for an extended period in an attempt to socialize them would only subject them to extreme fear and stress and is likely to fail.

Requiring community cat caregivers to surrender or attempt to rehome community cats is inhumane, unsafe, and unnecessary. Community cats are strongly bonded to their outdoor homes and live happy, healthy lives outdoors. TNR, which by definition returns community cats to their original outdoor homes, should be the primary approach.

Reject Ordinance 693 Today

If the ordinance is enacted with the restrictive provisions as described, the risk of undermining sustainable TNR programs will be significant. We urge the council to reject Ordinance 693 as written and enact a version that removes these provisions and includes language that will truly protect the community cats and caregivers of Elsmere.

Alley Cat Allies offers our support to amend Ordinance 693 to more humanely, effectively, and appropriately recognize and support TNR, community cats, and caregivers. We stand ready to provide additional information and guidance to the council on this matter.

Sincerely,

Maggie Slezak, *Research and Community Change Manager*
Alley Cat Allies