



OMAHA MAYOR

# 1 constituent who gets her licks in



ALYSSA SCHUKAR/THE WORLD-HERALD

Lily, a Labrador and golden retriever mix, peeks up at Mayor Jean Stothert from under her desk Monday at City Hall in Omaha. Stothert said the dog has been spending the day with her in the Mayor's Office, though it's only for a while, until Lily gets used to her.

## 9-week-old pooch settles in at Stothert's office

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The newest addition to Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert's office didn't take long to settle in.

In her first few days, she made friends in the Mayor's Hotline office. She figured out the quickest route from there to her own spot: down the hall, a right, then a left, and then another right. She got a

welcome write-up on the mayor's Facebook page, and people brought treats to celebrate her arrival.

She's still a little fuzzy on the location of the bathroom, but the others in the office don't seem to mind.

Lily, a 9-week-old golden retriever-Labrador retriever mix, was adopted by Stothert a week ago. Since then, the mayor has been carrying her in every morning, hoping that

time with the Mayor's Office staff will help ease the transition into a new home.

Stothert picked out the fuzzy brown pup just days after it was born.

She came from a City Hall connection: Fire Capt. Melanie Bates, who works as a grant writer in the Mayor's Office, also rescues dogs. Three days after a golden retriever

*See Puppy: Page 2*

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See a video of Lily the puppy's outrageous cuteness.

## Puppy: At courthouse next door, judge also brings a pooch to work

she was caring for had a litter of 10 puppies. Bates had Stothert over to take a look.

The mayor already has a 10-year-old Australian shepherd and three cats, but she decided she had room for one more animal.

"We just thought she was the cutest thing, and we didn't want her to go to anybody else," Stothert said. "So we brought her home."

Stothert's adult daughter, Elizabeth, took another puppy, and a Mayor's Office staff member adopted a third. Several others found homes, though a few were still up for grabs by Monday.

But Lily, the only brown pup in the litter, got a special distinction: "First Puppy of Omaha."

Despite the title, her life is fairly low-key.

Lily spends part of her days in the Mayor's Hotline office, where she has a corner for her blanket and toys. From time to time she'll curl up on the lap of a hotline operator while he takes calls. Mayoral staffers take Lily outside for bathroom breaks, and she takes the occasional field trip to other

offices in City Hall.

She has plenty of admirers who bring in dog treats; Parks Director Brook Bench recently dropped by with a pink puppy sweater. A Facebook post with a picture of the mayoral pup attracted some 9,000 views and more than 780 "likes" — far more than other posts on city news and policy.

When the mayor is at her desk, Lily curls up by her feet, occasionally gnawing on an orange stuffed monkey that makes squeaky noises. (Those noises recently startled visitors having a meeting at the mayor's conference table. "It's just my puppy," the mayor assured them.)

It's unclear if Lily is the first dog to have the run of the Mayor's Office, but Stothert said she doubts any of her predecessors kept a four-legged companion under their desks.

But it is not an unprecedented move in the government buildings along Farnam Street.

Next door, at the courthouse, Douglas

County Juvenile Court Judge Doug Johnson brings his dog, Finnegan, to work several days each week. Johnson says the English setter-standard poodle mix helps keep people calm during stressful court proceedings.

The mayor figured that if a judge could have a dog, it couldn't hurt to have one in City Hall, too — at least for a while.

"I think it's generally kind of thought that this isn't a place for a lot of animals, but I figured that for the first couple weeks, just until she gets used to me, she doesn't cause a lot of trouble," Stothert said. "So she just comes in with me."

The mayor said she'll begin leaving Lily at home once she's a bit bigger. For now, however, the mayor sees her as a welcome stress reliever for the office.

"She's like my therapy dog," Stothert said. "She's everybody's therapy dog here. I think. She does make everybody happy."

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