

Memphis Animal Shelter Advisory Board

Work Session, February 11, 2015

Present at work session: Dr. Stephen Tower, Chairman; Jill Madajczyk, Member; Taurus Bailey, Member; Jeanne Chancellor, Secretary; James Rogers, Administrator Memphis Animal Services; Jake Hayes, City Attorney's Office; Dr. Rebecca Coleman, Head Veterinarian, Memphis Animal Services; Dr. Shana Wall, Veterinarian, Memphis Animal Services

The meeting was opened by Dr. Tower.

Mr. Rogers presented the statistics for the past month. These will be posted on the web on the City website.

Mr. Rogers stated that the Shelter is trying to sustain a live release rate of 500 animals per month.

Dr. Tower asked how many animals come into the shelter already microchipped. Mr. Rogers said that number is about 5%. There was a brief discussion about the result of return to owner if all animals were required to be chipped. This would require a new ordinance that required a microchip just as spay/neuter and rabies vaccinations are required by law. Dr. Tower stated that he felt that requiring microchips would help increase the return to owner number.

The euthanasia substance logs were checked by Dr. Tower. He stated they seemed in order.

Dr. Tower asked about the surgery back log that started about December 1, 2014. Dr. Wall reported that the backlog started around the middle of December. Mr. Rogers stated that Yappy Hour all day Thursday and 12 – 2 pm on Saturday had increased adoptions.

Jeanne Chancellor asked about the fact that Mr. Rogers has originally stated that changing the hours would help the clinic eliminate a backlog and allow for animals to be pre-sterilized for adoption.

Jill Madajczyk stated that Janet Hooks, Director of Parks and Neighborhood had stated that the new hours were implemented due to staffing issues.

Dr. Tower asked why the backlog of surgeries is a continuing problem.

Jill Madajczyk asked if the Shelter is understaffed. Mr. Rogers stated that the Shelter can always use more employees, but the current staff is capable of caring for the animals currently housed at the Shelter under the capacity to care formula.

Dr. Coleman stated that the Shelter Clinic is staffed Sunday 7 – 3, Monday 7 – 3, Tuesday through Saturday 7 – 5. Dr. Coleman stated that the Clinic operates with a skeletal crew. The clinic needs 2 veterinarians and 2 technicians everyday so spay/neuter surgeries could be performed seven days a week. The clinic also needs dedicated kennel support to help move the animals as necessary so technicians assigned to the clinic are not using their time moving animals throughout the shelter.

Dr. Coleman stated that the clinic is critically short of technician help. Much more could be accomplished if there were enough technicians available for the clinic.

Dr. Coleman reported that Dr. Breland and Dr. McCann has been coming in as contract vets to help catch up the animals that are behind in surgery. The contract vets are paid \$400.00 per day.

Dr. Tower asked if there could be contract technicians for the clinic. Dr. Coleman stated that would help on days the clinic is short on help which is most days.

Dr. Tower asked if there is an action plan in place so getting up to 100 surgeries behind does not happen again. Mr. Rogers stated there is an informal plan in using contract vets when needed to help not get behind in surgeries. Dr. Tower suggested there needed to be a plan implemented when the clinic was behind 20 or more surgeries.

Dr. Coleman stated that a full staffing situation for the Clinic would be two veterinarians and two technicians per veterinarian. This would enable surgeries to be performed at a more reliable level. Jeanne Chancellor asked if there were always technicians available to help with surgery if a veterinarian is in the Shelter. Dr. Coleman stated that there is not always enough help present for surgery to take place.

Dr. Tower asked about contracting surgeries out as was done with the HSUS Pets for Lift grant. Mr. Rogers reported that the cost was preventative. Walnut Grove Animal Hospital was \$60.00 per animal, and prices quoted from MidSouth Spay Neuter was \$100.00 per animal. These prices do not make it feasible to outsource the spay/neuters required by law of Memphis Animal Services.

Jill Madajczyk asked what the difference was between the off-site surgery costs and the cost of hold an animal up to two weeks waiting for surgery. Mr. Rogers stated that there was no comparison of cost as it was just food every day for the animal. Jill Madajczyk stated that the ordinance may need to be amended to allow some releases especially to rescue groups without spay/neuter surgery for the animals going to the rescue.

Dr. Tower asked what other shelters do. Jeanne Chancellor stated that Tennessee state law allow for animals to be released from shelter with at least a \$25.00 deposit which is refundable when proof of surgery is returned within 30 days. However, Jeanne Chancellor expressed concern that many animals would not be sterilized and the deposit forfeited which would just lead to a larger population of unwanted pets.

Dr. Tower asked if the Shelter had considered releasing fertile animals to rescue groups who would have the animals altered before adoption. Jeanne Chancellor reported she believed this was against the ordinance as written, and she reported that there are groups who would not have the surgery done before placing the animals.

When asked what it would take to keep the clinic up to date on surgeries by Dr. Tower, Dr. Coleman stated they needed two veterinarians, 4 technicians to keep the 4 surgery tables working which is the only way to keep the animals done in a timely manner.

Mr. Rogers reported that most pets are being held through the review date. Dr. Tower asked what the average time an animal is held at the shelter. Mr. Rogers stated he could not give that number and would research the average stay of an animal for the next Advisory Board meeting.

Taurus Bailey opened a discussion about the fostering of court case dogs for the time they are being held pending the outcome of their court case. He stated this would help free up cage space, and the

animals would not have to stay in cages for months on end. Mr. Bailey stated he is discussing this possibility with the involved judges and attorneys.

Jeanne Chancellor offered that there would be a need to have good behavior evaluations of the animals, foster homes would need to be checked for secure fencing, and cost of the medical care of the animals would need to be addressed. At present time foster homes are responsible for all medical costs. Jeanne stated that sometimes the Court Case dogs need extended medical care which can be expensive.

A motion was made by Dr. Tower: The Board will pursue the fostering appropriate court hold dogs pending the outcome of the related court case. The motion was seconded by Taurus Bailey. The motion passed.

Taurus Bailey proposed that there be a committee of members of the public consisting of three to five members to communicate the public's concerns with the Advisory Board. This committee may be able to help with the lack of trust between the public and the Board and Animal Services. A discussion of this committee will be pursued at the Board meeting in February.

Dr. Tower asked if there had been anymore accidental euthanasias. Mr. Rogers reported that there had been no accidental euthanasias since December. Dr. Tower stated that he wanted the Shelter to take one day at a time and make sure that there are no more mistakes made in euthanizing an animal that has someone wanting to adopt or is already adopted.

Taurus Bailey asked about public relations campaigns. Mr. Rogers reported that Dr. Hall, Deputy Director of Parks and Neighborhoods is in charge of press releases.

Mr. Bailey asked if there might be an internship through U of M to help promote marketing for Memphis Animal Services. Mr. Rogers said he would check and see what help might be available.

Jeanne Chancellor made a motion the work session be closed due to time. The motion was seconded by Jill Madajczyk. The work session was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeanne Chancellor

Secretary