

MINUTES  
Advisory Board to  
Memphis Animal Services

JANUARY 12, 2010

Present were:

Board Members:

Cindy Sanders  
Michelle Buckalew  
Allen Iskiwitz  
Janet Hooks, Ex-Officio

Carol Katz  
Jackie Johns  
Frank James

Visitors Included:

Concerned citizens  
Media

Michelle Buckalew called the meeting at Central Library to order at 10:05 a.m. (Board member Janice Vaughn was absent due to illness.)

Minutes of the December meeting were approved as corrected. The corrected minutes will be resent to the board.

Janet reported that a vet is doing rounds daily. The shelter is closed for training on the Chameleon software system and will reopen Friday this week. The shelter will attempt to utilize a paperless and bar code system.

Agenda Item 1: Standard Operating Procedures

Carol asked whether the policies and procedures manual had been finalized. Janet said that they are still fluid, but said there have been changes made to the intake forms, the adoption procedure, the coding policy, rescue groups, as well as other areas. Janet said the changes are contained in 20 or so different folders but she would get these together and mail to the board. Carol said there are two parts to the process: promulgating and implementing. As far as implementing, the board would not be as involved, but as to promulgating, Carol said that the board could be very helpful in this regard as far as review and suggestions.

Carol commented that upon a recent visit to the shelter, she found it very much improved. Janet said that it would probably be the summer before they can get all the changes that she wants implemented. The

employees are doing a good job. The new administrator will be coming in soon and will be finalizing practices and procedures.

Jackie asked about the Chameleon training. Janet said that inventory control of intake animals is now on the system. There will be four days of training. System will be able to do searches for animals at the shelter. Jackie asked about the ACL logs. Janet said that there is functionality to track ACL logs through the system. Input will be on a daily basis. Now the trucks are doing a paper log, but we are looking at using laptops on the trucks so that a picture can be taken and logs started on the truck. We're trying to go paperless, but until we are certain that all using the system consistently, we will retain some paper trails.

### Agenda Item #2: Accountability

Cindy said she is thankful for an administration that is finally using the Chameleon system. Cindy asked about the color-coding system. Janet said that a couple of additional categories are being tracked. Cindy asked whether there would be a tiered system with the ACOs. Janet said that the NACA training in March would start a process so that we can have a three-tiered system, with specialized officers investigating cruelty cases. Michelle said that ACOs that are doing a good job could be encouraged or inspired by getting compassion fatigue training. Michelle asked Janet if walking could be scheduled? Can the animals be given down time at night? Janet asked board to email her if they know any compassion fatigue training courses. Janet further commented that the web cams require lighting. Past 10:00 p.m. it is fairly quiet and lights have been dimmed. But this can lead to complaints from the public. Michelle said that in just 10 years, it is just a handful of employees have put down 150,000 animals. The sheer numbers make this a highly stressful job.

### Agenda Item #3: Egregious mistakes by employees (euthanizing wrong animal etc.)

Allen asked whether any employees have been disciplined or written up for the mistakes that have been made over the last month? Janet said that she has suspended two employees, one employee counseled, one employee written up / disciplined, and one other employee who will be sanctioned in some way, all in accordance with the union disciplinary process. Allen said some of the things that have happened at the shelter are outrageous. Allen asked whether the new system and the training will help the employees do a better job? Janet said that that is certainly the intent.

Employees have been given evaluation forms to rate the Chameleon training. This should show whether the employee is grasping the system and understanding what their responsibilities are.

Michelle asked whether we have just an Administrative Director or will we have a Facilities Operations Manager? Janet said budgetary restraints caused the position to be eliminated, but we are considering taking it to the council to be reinstated. Michelle noted that the Administrative Director having to be at city hall much of the time leaves the shelter without an operations manager. It is an important position. Cindy said that no shelter operates without a Facilities Operation Manager position. Janet said that she is the director of the division with seven other divisions under her. She spends many hours and after-hours at the shelter. Cindy said that Mayor Wharton said he would find the money for an operations manager and that it is hoped that he will indeed find the \$50,000 that is needed for this position. That is the administrator that functions with day-to-day operation of the shelter. Janet said it is her opinion that the position needs to be restored and it will have to go before the council with the Mayor's consent. Carol said that there is no question that the Administrative Director needs to be out of the shelter much of the time. Carol moved that we make a formal recommendation to the Mayor and city council to restore the position. Carol made a motion to that effect, Cindy seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

**Advisory Board Recommendation: That the Facility Operations Manager position be restored to MAS and that the budget be increased to reflect the salary for this position.**

Michelle will forward this recommendation to the mayor and city council.

Allen asked that due diligence be done with respect to filling these positions. Would the administration consider getting some input from the board or other knowledgeable animal people to assist in checking out the qualifications of applicants? It's very important that we get the right person and the history of selection has not been good. Janet said that human resources' process includes reference checks as well as background checks. The mayor appoints the Administrative Director's position. We have to allow the human resources department to perform due diligence and left to do their job. The Mayor has the final decision. An independent company performs reference and background checks. Allen felt that something fell through the cracks last time and hopes it doesn't this time.

Agenda Item #4: Adequate procedures to prevent euthanasia without notification of owners.

Cindy expressed her concern that the current procedures are not adequate in preventing mistakes being made in euthanasia. Cindy favored establishing a chain of custody that could be documented when there is a potential adopter. Is anything other than the color-coding system being used to document? Can there be a further review prior to euthanasia other than color-coded dots? Janet responded that it goes back to making sure that employees are conscientious about following the proper procedures. Where there is intent to adopt, if there is a medical or behavioral issue, we are having the vet contact the adopting person to discuss the problem. That is a policy currently in place.

Agenda Item #5: Release of intact animals.

Cindy said that release of an intact animal breaks city law even though a contract had been signed that the adopter would bring the animal back for spay/neuter within two weeks. However, the animal was being transported out of state and the adopter stated it was having the animal spayed/neutered in that state. Cindy said she had a problem with that since the release was signed knowing that the animal was not going to be brought back for spay/neuter. It's not good policy. Janet said in this particular instance the party agreed to have the dog neutered. Further, that they would have it neutered upon arriving at the destination. There are instances that happen with rescue groups that that latitude exists. Cindy asked if you are going to change the wording of that contract? Janet said that could easily be done. Carol said that in cases where the dog can be placed far away and it is a reliable rescue organization, then it makes sense to release it to be spayed/neutered upon its destination, even though the contract on its face is virtually unenforceable. Cindy objected to anyone signing a contract that is untrue. Carol agreed that the contract language should be changed.

A visitor spoke to object to any contract contravening the intent of the ordinance. Janet said this could be resolved by amending language of the ordinance. If this is an issue, where we need to get a dog rescued or adopted, we can have the ordinance language changed.

Cindy said she had received reports that the dog beds donated by the public are not being used properly. She went to the shelter and found personal ads for free dogs taped all over the shelter. The employees need to be made aware that this should not be posted in the shelter. Cindy reported that last week only six dogs were able to use the beds. They were overturned, wet, propped up against the wall, or covered with

feces. The employee said that he was told to prop the beds up to clean the kennels at 7:00 a.m. and he puts the beds back when he leaves at 3:00 p.m. The public invested thousands of dollars in these beds and they are not being used properly. The dogs are not there for long and it is a small thing to make their stay more comfortable. Janet said that the beds retain moisture, as they are hammock style. The employees were instructed to prop them up so they won't puddle up. Of course, they should go back to reposition after cleaning the cages. Janet said she will double check to be sure they are put back in position. Frank said that cages are cleaned during the entire day. Michelle said this goes back to willingness of employees to address the comfort of the animals.

#### Agenda Item #6: Cruelty Investigations.

Jackie said Cindy ordered documents relating to cruelty investigations through FOIA request and did not receive all documents. Janet said that she would get this for Jackie. Jackie said they are 800 calls behind. The documentation does not indicate whether these are cruelty or non-cruelty calls. Janet said the shelter is still in emergency mode and is behind on calls. Jackie and Cindy have been attending cruelty court cases with ACOs for the past two years. Jackie felt there needs to be more accuracy in defining what a cruelty case entails and more training for the ACOs. Jackie favors a tiered system for ACOs. Jackie passed out photos of instances of cruelty. MAS is the only agency currently prosecuting cruelty cases in Memphis.

Cindy said that the cases of people convicted of animal cruelty most often have other convictions involving crimes against people. Allen asked whether it was required that all ACOs go through NACA training. Janet said that certain ACOs would be receiving NACA training in March. She also has a committee looking at training ACOs and designated police officers in forensics to collect evidence at the site of animal cruelty investigations.

#### Agenda Item #7: Current intake/euthanasia rates.

Janet said that as of December 20<sup>th</sup>, there were 16,500 intake animals for 2009, with an 80 to 81 percent euthanasia rate. Janet will verify these statistics in an email to the board. Cindy asked for an entire Chameleon breakdown, relative to intake of dogs, cats, etc.

Michelle said she worked with Bonnie Brown, director of Nevada Humane Society, and through flexibility in shelter hours and 20<sup>th</sup> century thinking; she has been able to knock the euthanasia rate down by over 80

percent. The numbers can be turned around. Carol stated that she doesn't think a municipal shelter can be compared with a humane society that has discretion in refusing intake animals. In her opinion, only spay and neuter by the community will reduce euthanasia rates in Memphis. Carol further stated that this can be done by ordinance or more realistically, through education and low or no cost spay and neuter programs. Michelle said that is only one of the tools in the tool chest.

Janet Hooks had to leave, but stated her opinion that only spay and neuter and adoption programs utilized to their fullest capacity could reduce the numbers of euthanized animals.

Following lengthy public comment, the meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Smith Katz, Secretary

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The meeting was open for public comment at 12:15 p.m.

Frank James, in response to comments from the public, stated that the board does not and should not have any input with the hiring of an Administrator for the shelter. Public comment disagreed and said that it is an "advisory" board.

Comments included but were not limited to suggestions that the attitude of the general population in Memphis is the problem and only mandatory spay and neuter will change the dynamic. Low cost and no cost spay and neuter is a key to mandatory spay and neuter. Grants are available but the money is not available unless it is used according to terms of grant and documented. Carol stated that the opposition in this city to mandatory spay/neuter was overwhelming when it was suggested.

A member of the Mayor's special task force stated that they have not had a meeting since the initial meeting in November.

Janet addressed the public and asked for time to work to resolve the issues, and continue to work with us. Basic things are in place now – the long term strategic things will take more time.

Brian Mauldin asked about the overlapping responsibilities of the special task force and the advisory board. She wanted both bodies concurrently to request a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance from the Mayor and city council members. Janet said that there is a mandatory spay/neuter pit bull specific ordinance currently being considered by the council. Cindy insisted that the Mid-South Spay and Neuter non-profit organization be represented on the Mayor's special task force.

Janet strenuously denied that two employees who were hired as part of Second Chance program were causing any problems at the shelter, as was stated by someone in the audience. Janet said that there are only two employees at the shelter that came through Second Chance. Ms Mauldin said employees hired through the second chance program should not be put in positions where security issues are a factor.

Regarding a request for email addresses for members of the advisory board, Janet advised that this information, as well as dates and times of the meeting, and terms of the board members, will be posted on a website that is being set up for the advisory board. Managing the email for the website is an issue that the advisory board will need to take up.

Public comment included having more accommodating shelter hours. Michelle said that her friend, Bonnie Brown, is doing this. Jackie commented that a unionized shelter does not have as much flexibility.

Allen spoke on how to get a mandatory ordinance before the Mayor and council. Jackie said that it is the public that is the problem. Michelle called on Carol Word to speak to the issue. Mid South Spay Neuter is dependent upon public support as a non-profit organization. Certain grants can only be obtained by the city for low-cost spay and neuter. She urged the city to seek these funds. The city can then contract with a non-profit to fulfill the obligations of the grant and it has done so in the past.

Michelle and the others urged for coordination between the board and the special task force. Jackie and Cindy said that they had sent a request to Mayor Wharton through Director Hooks that the Mayor would make spay and neuter part of the routine PSA that the Mayor does. Several councilpersons are extremely open to mandatory spay/neuter.

Tara Thompson objected to breed specific spay/neuter ordinance. Education should be the focus. Carol said that the reason that Janet favored breed specific legislation is because we can't get anything else through. The general public disagreed with this position and felt that a

mandatory spay/neuter ordinance could be passed. Carol said that the key is getting grants for low-cost spay neuter programs fulfilled through our only non-profit now doing this. Cindy said that the board should send a letter stating that we favor a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance.

Comments included discussion of the roadside ordinance. Public comment was that the law is not being enforced. Cindy advised not purchasing the animals to find them homes, but rather contact the police and note the date and time and officer's name and demand enforcement. Enforce laws that are on the books! Jackie said there is a misdemeanor fine of \$50.

Jan Courtney spoke to the issue of the Rottie and pups that were euthanized. Carol said that unless there was an adopter for the animals, it is within the discretion of the shelter. Someone said that there was an adopter ready and willing to take the mother and pups, but no one could produce evidence of this. Public complained that the response of the shelter was to euthanize. Allen said that the puppies were never born.

Ms. Mauldin had a list of agenda items for the next meeting, as well as a number of motions that she wanted the board to make. Michelle said she would take the items under advisement and take up those deemed appropriate at the next meeting.