

MINUTES
Advisory Board to
Memphis Animal Services

OCTOBER 13, 2009

Present were:

Board Members:

Earnest Alexander, Ex-Officio

Carol Katz

Michelle Buckalew

Janice Taylor Vaughn

Allen Iskiwitz

Frank James

Janet Hooks, Ex-Officio

Jackie Johns

Michelle called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

Ernie promised to take up the ongoing city hall parking problem with the future Administration.

Before proceeding to the first item on the agenda, Ernie requested that he be given advance notice of agenda items prior to the meeting in order to adequately prepare to address them. (Today's agenda items were received earlier that morning.) It was agreed that agenda items would be sent out one week in advance; that is, the Tuesday prior to the regular meeting on the second Tuesday. It was further agreed that Robert's Rules of Order will be implemented beginning at the next meeting. Carol will bring copies of the Mission Statement and Procedural Rules to the next meeting as well.

Item # 1. Letters from Roseann Keen concerning MAS staff and operations, as well as Ernie's letter in response, were read aloud to the Board. Ernie said that although he was not present to verify the allegations of Ms. Keen's letter, he apologized to her in his letter. However, he said that he witnessed an incident(s) of rude behavior and has conducted four sessions of customer service training of employees since then. He will be following through with training at the Learning Academy.

Jackie stated she thought Keen's solution of extra cages to allow timid animals to be fed was a good one. Ernie agreed, and said that over one month ago he brought in cages from the Paws & Whiskers van for just this purpose. This solution has already been implemented. Regarding staff complaints: Jackie opined that public employees are held to a higher performance standard than private employees because the tax-paying

public feels that it pays their salaries. The public will often be quicker to criticize a public employee.

Ernie said that a full staff is back on schedule with a five day workweek which should help smooth shelter operation.

Item 2. Allen wanted to know the status of employee evaluations. Interim Director Keenon had, at an earlier meeting, said that the union contract did not provide for employee evaluations. Hooks clarified this at the last meeting, stating that the union contract did not prohibit employees from being evaluated and that employee evaluations were underway. Allen said that he understood the difficulties that employees at the shelter faced and the job was not easy. An employee could easily be "desensitized." However, he asked whether an employee would be discharged for a low evaluation. Ernie said that the grievance procedure had to be followed. Carol explained that evaluations could be used for remedial purposes to help employees improve their performance, but not for discharge purposes. Jackie said that union employees, both public and private, are subject to evaluations in every situation she knows. Janet said that the Administration will be performing employee evaluations. The evaluations will show where additional training is needed. Discipline will be forth coming where there is documented evidence of infractions of MAS policy. Discipline will be undertaken in accordance with the grievance procedure of the union contract.

Item 3. There was a groundbreaking for the new shelter facility last month. Ernie said that an email was sent to the staff. Those who were not scheduled to work were invited. Volunteers were also notified by email by the Volunteer Coordinator. Celebratory events such as this, retirement events, etc.; we would like to have the entire staff present, but the shelter can't be closed. It must remain in operation and it is a 24/7 operation.

Item 4. MAS received five invitations to attend the Shering Plough Seminar. Last year the supervisors and vets attended this seminar. Since the invitation was limited to five only, Ernie felt that this year some of the line staff should attend. Janet felt that the decision as to who should attend is discretion of management and not subject to Advisory Board overview. Allen had put it on the agenda because there are sanitation issues at the shelter and the seminar addresses shelter sanitation issues. He was not aware that the invitations were limited.

Janet requested a board retreat to formulate Advisory Board guidelines and bylaws. All members were in agreement and Janet said she will send an email with proposed dates for the retreat.

Item 5. A copy of MAS Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) was furnished to Carol after she made several requests. Michelle felt that every member should have received a copy. Ernie stated the city's legal department had cleared the manual.

Janet said that the Shelter receives many complaints and the Advisory Board needs to focus on solutions, not complaints. Michelle related that there are three problem areas that continually surface: (1) inhumane treatment of animals, (2) poor attitude of employees, and (3) lack of accountability. Further, for our Director and Administration to succeed we need good policy and procedures in place. These issues have remained unresolved over the past year and that is why they continue to be on the Board's agenda.

Janet said she sensed a frustration by board members and would like early input regarding items to discuss at the retreat. Michelle related the success that Animal World is achieving in New York City by having community involvement in their public shelter.

Items 6, 7 and 8: Previously addressed.

Item 9. Jackie stated the importance of public attendance at hearings involving cruelty cases. Judges notice if no one attends hearings for the animals. Ernie stated that MAS has improved prosecution of cases involving animal cruelty by training vets and technicians in the presentation of these cases. Carol asked how to locate the hearings when the case name and/or number are not known?

Jackie questioned why, when dogs were held long-term for court cases, the bond requirement was not imposed. Ernie explained that a \$2,000 bond is required from the owner when a dog is picked up and must be held for a court case. MAS sends a certified letter to the owner, advising him/her of the bond requirement. In 9 out of 10 cases, the owner surrenders the animal to avoid paying the bond. If owner-surrendered, when the case is over the animal is evaluated for adoption or euthanasia.

Ernie advised that Comcast is currently coming to the shelter once a week for photograph animals for adoptions that appear on its program, "Pet Adoptions on Demand."

Meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Smith Katz, Secretary

Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 10, 2009, at 10:00 a.m. at City Hall