

MINUTES
(CORRECTED)
Advisory Board to
Memphis Animal Services

DECEMBER 8, 2009

Present were:

Board Members:

Cindy Sanders	Carol Katz
Michelle Buckalew	Janice Taylor Vaughn
Allen Iskiwitz	Frank James
Janet Hooks, Ex-Officio	Jackie Johns

Visitors Included:

Concerned citizens
Media
Shelter employees

Special Appearance:

Lucy Shaw

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

Minutes of the November meeting were approved as corrected.
(Correction required insertion, page 3, "Michelle suggested that quarantine might be a good step before future offsite adoptions.")

Agenda Item 1: Understanding the purpose of the Advisory Board from the perspective of Director Hooks.

Director Hooks advised that the board is responsible for non-binding, informed guidance to, and as an advocate for, MAS. Internal operations regarding personnel, budgetary functions, and daily operations fall within the purview of those hired to do these jobs. It is the responsibility of the Advisory Board to give advice and be a bridge to the community, assist with developing goals and objectives, stimulate citizen involvement, evaluate existing programs, and identify grant opportunities.

Allen asked why, after the raid, the Advisory Board was not brought in? Janet said that the Mayor was looking for a new set of eyes and put together the Special Task Force (STF). That was short term; this is a long-term board.

Carol asked whether it was also the responsibility of the Advisory Board to be strong advocates for the humane treatment of animals at the shelter. Janet responded absolutely yes, but the board needed to be an ally of the shelter. Without advocacy of the shelter, public perception will not change. Carol said that the board always wanted to be an ally, but the shelter was a "mess." We could not ally with the shelter and at the same time advocate for the humane treatment of animals. She hoped that this is a new beginning. Carol also commended the Project Report prepared by Lucy Shaw.

Carol expressed her opinion that media spots be produced to help rectify the image and reputation of the shelter and give it credibility as a new entity and not the shelter of the past. Michelle said once the shelter has made significant progress, we should get media outlets together in a meeting to see what kind of opportunities exist for adoption, volunteer, etc.

Janet said that she appreciated the frustration that existed prior to her appointment but wanted the board to stay focused on the present and future operations of the shelter.

Agenda Item #2: Establishing a 501(c)(3).

Allen advised that the council approved a resolution allowing money to be donated to the shelter. He asked how long it would take to establish a 501(c)(3). Janet said that they are exploring this through the city attorney's office and will bring information to the retreat in January or to February's meeting. Donations include not only monetary gifts, but also gift certificates for adoptions, and donated supplies. A wish list will be posted on MAS website. Cindy questioned the wisdom of seeking donations to subsidize adoptions since pet ownership is expensive and a person considering adopting should be able to afford the fee. She felt that contributions toward spaying and neutering for present pet owners might be a better idea. The board will consider gift items. A visitor suggested that an opportunity exists on Facebook and Twitter.

Janet said Information Services was at the shelter relative to improving MAS website and the integration of the Chameleon, a software program that the shelter already owns. Training in this system will be provided to all employees in January. Janet said that it might result in a virtually paperless system. Information Services is looking into bar coding.

Michelle felt that uploading good photos of the animals to the website are key to adoptions. Michelle suggested getting volunteer photographers in the community to help in that action. Janet asked that individual board members go out to the shelter to see improvements that have been made.

Agenda Item #4: Special Task Force

Cindy asked about the vets under contract. Janet reported that Rebecca Coleman, D.V.M., is under contract. Two other vets, Dr. Tower and Dr. Snow, are donating their services on a regular basis. Cindy asked whether a vet with shelter medicine experience could be added to the staff. Janet said Drs. Tower and Snow consult with Lucy Shaw and Dr. Coleman but do not make shelter decisions. They are greatly appreciated because the shelter does not have another vet in the budget.

Allen asked whether the adoption fees could be kept in the MAS budget rather than general fund? Janet said that is not an option. Those fees offset the cost of medical services and operating the shelter.

(Special appearance by Lucy Shaw: Ms. Shaw stated that the shelter is in a healing mode. There are good employees there, committed people, doing a hard job. We are in the process of finding a director. Shelter structure is such that we need someone really proficient in shelter operations to run the shelter. The administrative role is 65 percent outside the shelter doing public interface with rescue, volunteers and adopting public. Michelle commented that every day it is a battle at the shelter to keep as many animals as possible alive, as well as to keep employee morale up. Ms. Shaw agreed with Allen when asked whether she thought the city was ready for a spay-neuter ordinance. Geo-coding has been initiated to match shelter calls to economic levels in the city. Homelessness, whether animals or people, is linked to poverty. Throwing resources at the problem of animal control will never solve it. Cindy stated that we should not forget those on administrative leave did not directly starve the animals, that the employees that did are still there and that we should never forget that.

Janice asked how did the shelter run out of food? Ms. Shaw said that a proper inventory system was not in place. She said they never ran out but supplies ran low. Carol said that the volunteers brought food to the shelter because there was none. The preliminary report was impressive but it is now almost a month later. Carol asked whether the board could sit down with Ms. Shaw and find out where we are now and present our ideas. Ms.

Shaw said that was up to Janet. Cindy requested a board meeting informally with Janet and Ms. Shaw.)

Allen wanted the unincorporated areas to bear their fair share of the cost of the shelter. Janet said those areas don't have facilities and we must provide. Cindy said the number of dogs coming in from outside the city is very small. Frank agreed.

Agenda Item #5: Cruelty Investigations

Cindy said that cruelty investigations needed to be restarted. Janet said that the shelter is still in an emergency mode, but when a report of a serious nature comes in, MAS responds. Jackie said that an adequate number of animal control officers should receive NACA training. Frank said that the shelter had more than two employees NACA-trained in the past. Cindy said that NACA training is coming up in 2010 in Nashville. This training is critical for animal cruelty investigations. Janet said that MAS would train employees to the ability of budgetary constraints. Jackie reported an animal cruelty case involving dog fighting in Whitehaven that was discovered by Bartlett police on August 11. Bartlett called MAS. No citations were written because MAS did not advise Bartlett to pursue any charges or return their calls regarding the case. Bartlett charged 14 felonies of dog fighting and 11 felonies of aggravated cruelty (state charges) after speaking with Jackie. MAS did not pursue criminal charges through the court system even though MAS was housing the animals and footing the bill.

Janet will be working with the city council to revise the \$2000 bond ordinance. The problem is recognized and being addressed. The police department is cross training with MAS to evaluate cruelty cases.

Michelle pointed out the dog fighting reward program that Los Angeles D.A. and HSUS are working on that was written up in California newspapers. There is now a 24-hour tip line that they have implemented in Los Angeles that could possibly be duplicated/utilized in Memphis considering that Memphis ranks as one of the worst cities for dog fighting statistics.

Cindy said job performance, seniority and training should be the criteria for job promotion. Janet said the promotion process is administrative and will be governed by city policy and memos of understanding which guide promotions.

Carol asked whether a final report would be forthcoming from Ms. Shaw. Janet said that as soon as she and the Mayor receive this, she would furnish it to the board. If the board has any suggestions or recommendations to incorporate, please email them to Janet for consideration.

Agenda Item # 10: Shelter management and communication between the board, the shelter and the city.

The position for Administration Director is currently posted on the website. Allen asked how much background investigation is being conducted? Janet said they check references, do due diligence before the position is offered. Carol asked whether the position of shelter operations manager would be offered? Janet said that this involves restructuring and MAS will need funding before that position can be restored. Thus, that position is not posted. We are evaluating all job positions as part of this restructuring. The volunteer program is being revised. Policy regarding rescue groups is being reviewed. Janet asked for the board's suggestions, and will distribute any collected suggestions to the board at large.

Agenda Item #9: Board Retreat.

Michelle asked whether the board meeting could be consolidated with the retreat. Janet said retreat could be in lieu of the board meeting, but that is the collective decision of the board. Janet suggested the board select a program and use the retreat to revise the program. Michelle stated that the reason for the retreat has to be clarified. Janice thought the retreat would best be used to teach the board how to collectively work together. Jackie referenced the list of recommendations that she had compiled for Janet. Jackie will send to other board members. Janet wants to use the retreat to fine-tune our focus and chose a particular program setting out policy and procedure and the implementation process. Spay and neuter, coupled with more adoptions, are the only ways we will fix overcrowding at the shelter.

Janet moved that there be no board meeting in January. Motion seconded by Frank. The Motion passed and the board voted to hold a retreat on January 12. Janet said that she would try to have a facilitator attend the retreat.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Smith Katz, Secretary

Retreat: January 12, 2010. Janet will coordinate the time and place.