

MINUTES
Advisory Board to
Memphis Animal Services

MARCH 10, 2010

Present were:

Board Members:

Cindy Sanders
Michelle Buckalew, Chairperson
Allen Iskiwitz
Jackie Johns
Frank James
Mathew Pepper, Ex-Officio
Janet Hooks, Ex-Officio

Absent:

Janice Taylor Vaughn
Carol Katz, Secretary

Michelle Buckalew called the meeting to order at Central Library.

Michelle introduced Matthew Pepper, MAS Director, to the board and attendees. Matthew expressed his excitement at being part of the community effort to make MAS successful. Michelle stated her support and that of the community. The new facility is projected to be operating in 2012

Michelle said that in future the agenda items will be posted on the MAS website.

Agenda Item 1: Inventory of ACO Equipment

Jackie said that regarding a cruelty case in court; the ACO could not take pictures because she did not have a camera. Matthew said that they are working toward a resolution of this matter. ACOs must be equipped in order to do their jobs properly. Jackie said that although cameras were donated two years ago, the cameras do not seem to be at the shelter. In future, according to Matthew, an inventory will be kept on items donated. Matthew will also furnish a "wish list" for what is needed.

Jackie also asked about the computer system for furnishing statistics on a timely basis. Statistics and tracking on a higher level is something that Matthew will be pursuing.

Agenda Item #2: Intake Forms

Cindy asked about expanding the intake forms to include more information, e.g., whether pet friendly, good with children, the reason for surrender; things that would make the dog more adoptable. If a litter is brought in, is the person willing to spay/neuter the adult dog? Matthew said that this would be better processed through the clinic (MSSN), but we can easily forward those people on to the clinic. Cindy said that there are people that will readily pay for spay/neuter at the clinic. She wants people to know that free services are available. Whether free spay/neuter could be made available in these circumstances at MAS will be investigated.

Cindy also asked whether there was a way that she can get a docket listing for pending court cases? It makes a huge difference to have the public present at cruelty cases. Matthew said it was probably possible, but was not sure of the logistics and will look into it.

Janet said that updates on the investigation regarding the suspended and charged employees are available through the City Attorney's office, Herman Morris, (901) 576.6554.

Allen asked about the policy that when employees are suspended yet remain on the payroll. (?) said that this is something that only the city attorney's office can address.

Agenda Item #3:

Michelle said that in 2005 the city sponsored a Healthy Pets, Water and Neighborhoods poster contest that generated very good publicity for the shelter. Grades 1 through 8 participated. Michelle said she would like to do this again during the month of May and hoped that the board would support this activity.

Michelle said that we will discuss the by laws at the next meeting.

Allen stated that the reason we have so few public in attendance is that the public feels we have a new director and the problems are being addressed.

Agenda Item #4: Using Credit/Debit Cards

Allen raised this issue again and said that the shelter remains on a cash basis. Using credit/debit cards would make payment for adoptions and redemptions so much easier for the public. There were two instances in which owners could not pay cash for redemption of their pets and the animals were put down. Matthew said that he does not know the status of this but thinks that this is a good idea and will find and report back at the next meeting. Michelle verified that the off site adoptions could definitely be increased with the use of credit/debit cards.

Mathew said that right now the shelter is focused on providing solid management and internal operations at the shelter. However, there are so many of the general public that doesn't come to the shelter that we need to go into the community with our services. We are not staffed to do that at the moment, but this will definitely be a future focus but can't say when. Allen said that the location of the shelter is a problem right now. The general public still looks at the shelter as a "dog pound" and the new location will be a plus. Matthew said that most cities have poor locations for their shelters, but if we can promote the facility with cleanliness and attractiveness we need to do it because that is the shelter we have right now. Promoting spay neuter and responsible pet ownership will go a long way to helping us all. Cindy asked about doing the murals that were discussed at least a year ago.

Allen also addressed the hours of operation. Can hours be expanded to accommodate more weekend hours and less during the week? Michelle said that the only shelter open on Sunday is Sunny Meadows and the Humane Society. Can MAS open on Sunday? Matthew said that is a good idea and has logic to expand evening hours and Sundays and lessen the weekday hours, if possible. Allen said that the extra hours would bring in money to the shelter. Matthew said that it is an issue of juggling the resources. Research will be done on this and more conversation worth pursuing. (?) said that the busiest hours at the Humane Society were from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., indicating that MAS could benefit from adding hours.

Allen brought up the 501c3 for the shelter. Matthew could not comment on this. (?) said that we do have capability to accept donations placed in a special account and used at the discretion of the "administrative board of the shelter," but donations are not tax deductible. Michelle said

that you can buy supplies for the shelter at PetCo and they will send to the shelter.

(?) asked about the idea of having an "Angel Fund" to help people pay adoption fees. Allen said that donations allowing people to adopt free of charge are not a generally a good idea due to the expenses connected with owning an animal. Cindy said that the general consensus is that adoptions should be promoted but the adoption fee is but a drop in the bucket with the cost of owning an animal. Cindy said the spay/neuter issue needs to come first. MSSN would happily accept checks for this purpose. Frank said many people donated money for adopting animals, usually before Christmas. A list was given to each party who donated of those animals adopted out due to their contribution. Frank said that the shelter adopted out 300 – 400 animals right before Christmas. Cindy said read Cindy Wolff about giving animals at Christmas – not a good idea.

Allen asked whether the ACOs could be commissioned. Matt said he doesn't know. It depends on what powers will be necessary to do the job assigned.

Agenda Item #5: Spay/Neuter Meeting

Michelle announced that a meeting is scheduled next Tuesday at 4:00 p.m. at City Hall, thanks to Shea Flynn, concerning a mandatory spay/neuter ordinance. A strong showing will help the animals. Matt said he would be there. Cindy said that it is not a mandatory anything – it is a spay/neuter ordinance that is beneficial to a city that is euthanizing 18,000 animals a year. Bryan Mauldin suggested the board take a vote re their recommendation. A vote was taken showing advisory board support for the spay/neuter ordinance. LaSonya said the meeting will be held in council chambers and comments, limited to two minutes, will be taken from the audience. LaSonya also announced that the Kennel Operations Manager position had been approved by the city council. Michelle thanked LaSonya for being pro-active.

Michelle said the library location change for advisory board meetings was due to location and parking to make meetings more accessible.

The meeting was then opened for public comment. Bryan said there is a proposal for a state registry for animal abusers. She felt that MAS should monitor this registry for every adopter. Cindy said contact Leigh Ann McCollum in Nashville with USHS or Sherry Rout with SPCA to lobby for the bill. Bryan said that MAS requires a background check for adopters of pit bulls. However, her experience was that the dog was euthanized before

the background check could be completed. There must be an easier way. Cindy and Jackie said the cases could currently be looked up at JSSI. Allen said this information should be available at off-site locations and private animal sales. Jackie said the state registry would have violators of state charges only, felony level charges. Cindy said there very few felony violations so advised using JSSI, which includes misdemeanors as well. Jackie said that ACOs can only issue misdemeanor citations; that police have to be called to issue state citations. Cindy said pet-abuse.com is useful as well.

(?) asked Matt for the big picture in next few months. Matt said he is looking at getting strong leaders in place and then structuring written policies and procedures to hold people accountable to that structure. Basics will be what happens inside the shelter first, and then the outside community. (?) said she felt when the community sees good things happening at the shelter, they will pitch in to help.

In response to a question from Allen, Matt replied that the spay/neuter ordinance would only be effective as to how it is applied in the community. It can have some negative impact as well, such as people who won't take their animals to a vet in fear that they will be required to spay and neuter. How long before an impact on euthanasia is felt will depend on how the law is applied. Matt said that a collaborative effort with the community helps.

Matt said that he needs to know about any citizens' problems that they have in dealing with MAS so that he can correct it. Cindy reminded people to get the name of the person they spoke with, date and time of call. Matt congratulated the cat rescue people for their efforts in getting cats out of the shelter. Matt said that collaborative efforts are necessary, especially in applying for grants.

Allen reported that there is a person regularly selling pit bull puppies at Kirby and Winchester. He's called the police. Allen asked whether the ACOs could address that problem. Matt said that the ACOs are understaffed now to do the job, but offered to personally look for this person. Allen said that the man threatened to move to another location when confronted. Matt said that there is no discretion to writing a citation when a person is found selling animals roadside.

Jackie spoke to training opportunities. Matt said that training costs money, but we are looking to in-house training.

Bryan Mauldin spoke to partnering with the rescue groups. Matt said the rescue groups reflect favorably with the community. Cindy said it is collaboration with all aspects of MAS. If people went to court, they would scream to have our laws enforced. Michelle said, "It takes a village."

Our staffing levels are down, and we are behind on calls, but we're moving in the right direction, according to Matt. He said the shelter is accepting volunteers. Cindy said that the application process was changed under the previous administration and the background information required was onerous on any volunteer. Matt said that we need a volunteer program, but it needs to be structured as well. He wants to have a schedule set up and an expectation level.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
(In absence/transcribed from recording)

Carol Smith Katz, Secretary