

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COLLIER COUNTY
DOMESTIC ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

Naples, Florida, April 12, 2023

LET IT BE REMEMBERED that the Collier County Domestic Animal Services Advisory Board, in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 6 p.m. in **REGULAR SESSION** in Administrative Building F, 3rd Floor, Collier County Government Center, Naples, Florida, with the following members present:

CHAIRMAN: Jim Rich
VICE CHAIRMAN: Kelly Hyland
SECRETARY: Sue Law
Dr. Robert March
Meredith McLean
Cpl. Sherry Rego
Michele Antonia

ALSO PRESENT: Marcy Perry, Director, Domestic Animal Services
Cindy Delgado, Administrative Assistant, DAS
Dan Rodriguez, Deputy County Manager
Tanya Williams, County Public Services Department Head

Any persons in need of the verbatim record of the meeting may request a copy of the audio recording from Domestic Animal Services.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Rich called the meeting to order at 5 p.m.

II. Roll Call – Establish a Quorum

A quorum of seven was established.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Rich said Al, a DAS volunteer, asked that we start doing the Pledge of Allegiance.

[The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.]

IV. Approval of Agenda

Dr. March made a motion to approve the agenda. Cpl. Rego seconded it. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

V. Approval of Minutes – January 17, 2023

Chairman Rich said the first version we got was 33 pages long. We had a substitute minutes taker. He read it several times because he couldn't understand it, then realized the minutes taker was trying to write verbatim minutes and it didn't work, so he called Marcy and told her that we would not be able to accept them. The temp agency who does the minutes reminded us that they had a substitute that day and that they would ask that they be redone (by the usual minutes taker). We now have a new version. He's read it if anyone wants to discuss it or approve it. If you haven't had time, we can delay that until the next meeting.

A discussion ensued and several members said they hadn't had time to read the revised minutes.

Chairman Rich made a motion to delay approving the minutes until the July meeting. Ms. Antonia seconded it. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

VI. Leadership Report [Marcy Perry, DAS Director]

Ms. Perry reported that:

- We're off to an incredible start this year. From our last meeting to our current meeting, we've developed Domestic Animal Services work rules. In the past, we didn't necessarily have them.
- We have work rules for the clinic section, the program section and field section and are continuing to work on them to establish protocols and processes that work best.
- We're halfway through this fiscal year and DAS is on its way to being the best shelter around. From October 1, when our fiscal year starts, until today, we adopted out 870 animals, which is huge.
- We've expanded our adoption program to include an off-site adoption area, Pet Supplies Plus off Davis Boulevard in King's Lake Square, where we have one enclosure. It's been about two weeks and two cats were adopted. We'll keep one or two there to see how it goes. We're working with management to see if we can expand on that with additional stores in Collier County.
- We've reunited 431 lost pets with their owners and transferred 643 animals to various pet placement partners.

- The top three pet-placement partners have taken a total of 376 animals from DAS since October 1. She thanked Meredith from Humane Society Naples for pulling the most animals. We're extremely appreciative. Broward County Humane Society is second, followed by Hope for Brevard.
- We have a transport going out to Brevard tomorrow that's taking 26 kittens. We're doing our best to take as many animals in and get them placed as soon as possible so we're not a boarding facility. We do our best as quick as we can, whether it's through adoptions, pet-placement partners or reuniting with owners.
- She recently had the opportunity to present at a BCC meeting, where she provided several updates about our incredible progress.
- We also met with SNIP Collier at the BCC meeting and had another meeting after that.
- What's become evident is that we need additional staffing to better enforce our ordinances to assist with day-to-day operations.
- On April 25, we have a potential item going to the BCC for an expanded officer request for three Animal Control Officers and one dispatcher and we're optimistic the request will be approved and we'll immediately start recruiting for those four position.
- We're working on the next fiscal year's budget. We're asking for two additional customer-service representatives, who will be mainly answering phones and assisting customers. That's very important because we receive nearly 50,000 phone calls annually. The average is 134 calls daily and that's why we have a need for an additional dispatcher and two customer-service reps – to better answer phones, assist customers and provide the exceptional service everybody expects.
- She thanked DAS staff, who are dedicated and have stuck with us from the start of this, when we restructured Domestic Animal Services to be what it is today and to continue down that path.

Mr. Rodriguez told the board:

- It's been a little over a year since we got together to determine what to do with DAS, which was in shambles.
- With your help, the help of volunteers and getting Marcy as a leader, we've all been able to change DAS and that's brought a lot of recognition. The staff is more committed than ever. Some have been here a long time, kept hope alive and wanted to see changes.
- We've turned the focus onto taking care of the animals as a priority and getting them into homes, whether they're animals that come in for adoption or strays found on the streets. They need care and medical attention and that gets taken care of quickly.
- County Manager Amy Patterson keeps a close eye on DAS and she asks me often, as well as Marcy and Tanya, "How are we doing over there? What else do they need?" She also visits. DAS has a special place in her heart because she's an animal lover and loves horses and dogs. More importantly, she understands the community need, so we've got great support.
- Ed Finn, his fellow deputy County Manager, manages the facilities portion of the job and he's working with me, Marcy and Amy to ensure DAS has the full attention and resources for its facilities.
- This week, we approved \$140,000 to replace the kennels' air-conditioning systems. He, Marcy and Tanya worked to get the county commissioners here for a tour to see the great work being done. They've heard from constituents and residents about the improvements.
- As Marcy mentioned, we're excited to bring the BCC a midterm request for staffing. As he said 1½ years ago, the goal was to first stabilize DAS, get the leadership in there, get the correct vision and focus on what the priorities were, then build a team. We've done that now and we're almost fully staffed.
- We're still looking for vets and are continuing to market that to try to find a vet. We have a very competitive wage.
- We're still short-staffed and Marcy was able to put the benchmarks together to convince our budget group that there's a need for three more officers, and cruelty cases were on top

of the list. Tom and Ms. Hyland were vocal about that. He doesn't agree with Tom's approach, but the need is there to get out, patrol and educate. With the new officers, we'll do that regularly, especially in the Immokalee and Golden Gate Estates areas, where there are many animals. By October, we hope the customer-service level will have been raised.

- Our director, managers and others were cleaning kennels and doing other tasks and even parks staff came to help. We've now stabilized the workforce and have got some really good people. We've raised the pay rates, what they deserve for the hard work they do to cover the demand.
- Each commissioner has asked how DAS is doing, do we have enough resources, do we know the priorities, whether it's investigating by cases, cruelty cases, etc.
- Three or four meetings ago, Marcy gave a wonderful presentation to the board to answer some of those questions. You have our full attention and this continues to be a priority for us.
- He thanked DAS employees, who ensure the facilities are clean and well maintained and that animals are taken care of. He also thanked Dr. March for all his work and influence, as well as all the other Collier County veterinarians, who always ask about DAS and say what a good relationship they have with Marcy and what a good job she's doing.
- He thanked the more than 260 volunteers for the thousands of hours of work they donated. We couldn't do what we're doing today without the volunteers' time and effort.
- As a former DAS Animal Control Officer, DAS will continue to be one of his priorities and it's one of his favorite divisions to work with.

Chairman Rich thanked Mr. Rodriguez, noting that the proof of the success of DAS is out there. There's no one there (in the audience). People don't show up to say what a wonderful job you're doing, they show up to say we have concerns about this or that and it has nothing to do with where we are or the hours. People will find their way here if they have an issue with something, so when there are fewer people here, that's because they're happy with what they're seeing going on.

He thanked Dan and Marcy for their support and for what they've done in the past year. It's more than he's seen in the last 12 years on this board, so we're very happy to be a part of that. This is a unique board because each of us is involved in some way with an animal organization or something to help animals. The board has had other people who like animals or want to do something about them, but they really didn't understand what the total need is, so this is a great board and he's proud to be part of it.

Mr. Rodriguez thanked Chairman Rich for his work identifying priorities and for keeping him and Marcy on track. There have been a lot of changes in the past 1½ years and he gives him a lot of credit for that.

Vice Chair Hyland asked what board members could do to show the BCC their support for the staffing requests.

Chairman Rich said that's already been done.

Ms. Perry said part of the reason that we waited on the request was that at the last Advisory Board meeting, you voted unanimously for those positions. In the executive summary to the BCC, she wrote that the Domestic Animal Services Advisory Board unanimously supported the additional positions.

VII. New Business

A. Terms Expiring April 13, 2023

Chairman Rich said two board positions are expiring tomorrow. One of them is for law enforcement and the other is for an animal advocate. Included in the agenda packet are applications from two current board members, himself and Sherry. Technically, we still need to

be voted in. He's thrilled Sherry is here. In a short time, she's done a phenomenal job. We've had several officers and you're probably the most vocal in a very positive way. We appreciate that.

Chairman Rich made a motion to retain Cpl. Rego as the law-enforcement board member. Dr. March seconded it. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

Dr. March made a motion to retain Chairman Rich as an animal advocate board member. Cpl. Rego seconded it. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

VIII. Public Comments

Chairman Rich told speakers they have three minutes.

Susie Mehan told the board:

- DAS has done a nice job marketing.
- She follows Facebook a lot and noticed someone keeps saying that the beagles are out again. She doesn't like to see the word "again." Something needs to be done to that owner so this doesn't keep happening.
- It's the law in Collier County that dogs have to be on a leash. They're picked up and then they're out again. Can these owners be arrested?
- Why are they being allowed to continue this behavior? The owner needs to be fined \$1,000 on the spot because it happens again and again and again.
- There are two pitbulls out on 29th Street all the time.
- Some of the roaming dogs are pitbulls and shepherds. There are people driving around looking to take those dogs. Dog fighting still goes on here. There's nothing sweeter than a beagle.
- She noted that one beagle had a shaved area on his body.

Secretary Law noted that the beagle had probably just been returned from DAS, where he'd been shaved and spayed.

Ms. Mehan asked if they could increase fines if it happens again. The Animal Control Officer in the Estates will have his hands full with these dogs. The phone system also is antiquated.

Chairman Rich noted that DAS has a new phone system and is hiring employees to answer calls. We just have to set up the new phone system.

Ms. Mehan noted that she had to stop doing her real estate work at 3 p.m. to feed one of her colonies in North Naples to get here for the 5 p.m. meeting and still needs to feed a second colony in North Naples. Can we have the meetings at 6 p.m. again?

Chairman Rich said we're at the mercy of this room, when it's available, but that could change in the future.

Ms. Antonia asked why 5 p.m. was chosen.

Chairman Rich said this room isn't available at 4 p.m. If we're here after 6 p.m., money that could go toward dogs and cats and DAS needs would go to paying security officers here.

Ms. Perry said they have to pay staff overtime after 6 p.m. and pay security guards in this building. Cindy's salary would go into overtime.

Ms. Antonia noted that they were paying overtime when the meetings were at DAS.

Chairman Rich said this isn't debatable at this point.

Ms. Mehan said more people would attend the meeting if it was at 6 p.m.

Chairman Rich said it's not like we're here every week. They're doing what they can under the confines of the law. People have told him they aren't coming because they don't feel the

need to come anymore. The majority of people who used to speak here aren't coming because we've answered their questions.

Ms. Mehan asked where Brevard County was.

Secretary Law said it's near Cape Canaveral on the East Coast.

Ms. Mehan said she'd prefer if the DASAB meetings were held at the library.

Vice Chair Hyland asked if the meetings were at DAS, would money still come out of the budget?

Chairman Rich said the room they held board meetings in is no longer available. It's been turned into a cat room. This is short term. He has to travel from Marco Island and understands she has to travel farther.

Ms. Mehan said she's glad DAS is in Pet Supplies Plus in Kings Lake Square.

IX. Advisory Board Member Comments

Ms. Antonia said she didn't want to debate the time and place, but said it's very sad that we don't start later, at 6 p.m., so people can come to participate.

Dr. March told the board:

- Most people can arrange a schedule and we have quarterly meetings now, so anybody can get here at 5 p.m. once every three months.
- A lot of people who came to these meetings aren't working and are retired. They were probably here because there were more issues, which are being resolved. He's not saying all the issues are resolved but 4, 5 or 6 p.m. won't make that much of a difference.
- Marcy is doing a great job.
- His veterinary practice is still doing a lot of animal care for DAS. Everyone we deal with, from Geri Lynn answering the phone to you making the bigger decisions, to all the officers who bring animals in and take them out, they're doing a great job.
- He wished them luck finding a vet. We're looking for at least one, so it will be tough to compete, but hopefully you'll find the right person who wants to do shelter work.

Ms. Antonia asked what happened to the vet who was supposed to start in June or July.

Ms. Perry said she was graduating in June and wanted to get more experience in a shelter environment and a mentor.

Ms. McLean asked if board members could get the minutes earlier than they do now. It's hard to remember what they said at a meeting three months earlier.

Chairman Rich asked if it would be possible to get the minutes the Friday before the meeting, even if the agenda isn't set. It would help all of us.

Ms. Perry said they can send them as soon as Cindy receives them.

Ms. McLean said we all get frustrated with people who lose their dogs multiple times but the animal welfare movement is changing to educate and help people, so maybe we need to start talking about programs that can provide more education and support when we see habitual offenders that aren't necessarily bad people. Sue was helping me with some dogs in my neighborhood that were continuously getting out, so we just need to start thinking as a community about how to support people who are having issues with their pets.

Vice Chair Hyland said she saw in the newspaper, Facebook and all over about a loose dog that killed one dog and injured another. You're all aware of that. Is there an update on that? What's the status?

Ms. Perry said that's a potential ongoing Dangerous Dog. It's currently under review for a

Dangerous Dog Declaration.

Vice Chair Hyland asked if there were any priors.

Ms. Perry said there were none. This is the first incident.

Vice Chair Hyland noted that there's another pet store in Collier County. Does anyone have an opinion on that?

Chairman Rich said the problem is that the Board of County Commissioners set a precedent by allowing the other one here, so they can't stop it. The reality is that the number of incidents they've had from abuse or anything, or from animals being adopted sick aren't any greater than from DAS or from the Humane Society. Unless there's a large number of something that's really obvious, there's not a lot we can do. This board can vote to go to the county commissioners and say we don't want them here, but we'd be shot down because the abuse factor is so small.

Vice Chair Hyland told the board:

- Commissioners wanted tighter regulation. It's not that there's physical abuse in the store, but the more stores that come in, for everyone who buys there, it takes away from adoptions.
- Here they're not guaranteed healthy, but they're selling them for outrageous prices. Having that here sets the wrong example. Having a pet store is wrong. It makes it seem like it's OK when we have such a huge problem here in the shelter.
- We can help by protecting dogs. DAS only inspects once a year and when the revisions were going to be done, it was going to allow for DAS to go in once every three months or whenever they wanted to go in and show up without calling.
- There's more that we can do. Everything seems to be going in the right direction with DAS, but there are things that we need to talk about and discuss that we can improve on and make better for the animals and their protection.
- With another pet store coming in, that makes three in Naples. Why do you think that they're going to keep coming here? Because they're allowed to come here. Everyone has a right to have a business, but we also need to set priorities for the animals, so having them is just making it seem OK and it takes away from the shelter and dogs here.
- Why wasn't this brought to our attention sooner? If we'd heard, maybe as a board we could have had the chance to discuss it and we could have gone to the commissioners to ask to put a hold on this opening until there are fewer animals that have to be adopted.

Chairman Rich said that wouldn't happen. When the BCC allows something like that, they set a precedent and has to allow them in. He absolutely agrees about increasing inspections. He understands she had a discussion with Marcy and she said once they have more staff, maybe they could increase inspections. We'd like to increase that.

Vice Chair Hyland said we need more protection for animals than we have now. Whatever we can do, we should do it now.

Cpl. Rego said she stops in at DAS and see people constantly cleaning kennels. Volunteers talk to her about each dog. She's not a cat person because she's highly allergic. But she checks out the cats and then has to wash her feet. People are waiting in line patiently, kennels are clean and outside the turf is phenomenal. It's great DAS got approved for the AC units and she hopes they can get three Animal Control Officers and staff, along with a vet. Is the Bissell (Pet Foundation) doing well?

Ms. Perry said Bissell is coming at the end of April. We've reached out to all the cat groups we're aware of that do trapping. If they do trapping during that time frame, we've offered to let them bring the cats to us.

Vice Chair Hyland said she wasn't finished. She asked Lt. Chris Goldhorn to come to this meeting, but he wasn't available. She asked him for an update because he said they were working on expanding the Animal Cruelty Task Force. She plans to meet privately with him. She's going

to speak to him about some educational things they could do in the community. If anyone has anything to ask him, she could pass it on and report that to the board at the next meeting.

Chairman Rich said he had an extensive meeting with him and his partner. They're very open to working with us. One of the problems we had before is they felt like they were always being challenged. If you have a meeting with him and approach it that way, he'd be very open. And if you come away with anything, absolutely bring it to the next meeting. That would be great.

Vice Chair Hyland told the board that if they thought of anything to ask Lt. Goldhorn, to email it to Marcy and she could pass it on to her. She asked how they could email information they want discussed by the board. She said she sent something once to be discussed and it wasn't sent.

Chairman Rich said it must be mailed to Ms. Perry or (her assistant, Cindy Delgado) and she could disburse it to board members.

Ms. Mehan said she called Lt. Goldhorn to report an incident and he got on it immediately.

Secretary Law told the board:

- She's thrilled that they're hiring four staffers and that more officers will be focusing on the Estates and Immokalee area.
- The phone system was a thorn in her side, so she's thrilled DAS is going to get that figured out. It's been a real headache and people have been complaining that they can get through, but then get put on hold and don't hear from anyone for 20 minutes. It's getting better and calls are getting answered.
- The new dispatch is going to be huge and will be a big help with the beagles. She's been working on that for a long time because no one in Palm River wants to fill out a complaint form. You've got to live there and see them and the form must be notarized. She talked to the owner every time they got out so she doesn't know what's wrong. The beagles were recently at DAS.

Ms. Mehan asked if the beagle owner has a fence.

Secretary Law said obviously not. Everybody in the neighborhood now has the owner's phone number and address because she provided it to them. Hopefully, they'll all start going directly to them and Palm River is getting very involved with it, so that's good. She and Marcy recently talked about issues we've had with the Sheriff's dispatch giving out wrong information, but she got right on that and the corporal is going to make sure they have the right information. He was telling people DAS won't pick up diseased animals. They must be a different county because that's not us. Everything is going well so she's very happy.

Chairman Rich told the board:

- For the Love of Cats is sponsoring another cat drive. A lot of people asked if the group would do something again and Marcy was able to contact someone at North Collier Regional Park because we need someone to send these things.
- We had 6,000 pounds of cat food last time, half from Dr. March and we went and picked it up. The other half came from supporters, who delivered the rest to my house. That's why he had a huge truck.
- We're trying to find an alternate place to be delivered and dispersed from there. They'll be receiving deliveries from May 22 to June 9, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at North Collier Regional Park.
- Distribution will be 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, June 18, and we have a list of everyone who picked up food last time, about 50 different people, individuals and organizations. He'll be contacting all of them. If you know someone who wasn't in on it last time, please tell him.
- He doesn't know how much food we're going to collect, but we plan to do it once a year.

Ms. Perry said Parks & Recreation Director Olema Edwards made it possible at North Collier Regional Park (on Livingston Road).

Chairman Rich said if anyone wants something put on the agenda, please let us know.

X. Adjourn

Next meeting: July 18, 2023

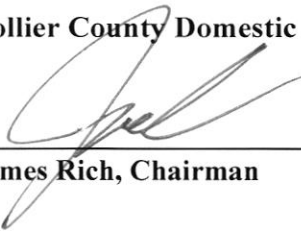
Time: TBD

Administrative Building F, 3rd Floor
Collier County Government Center

Cpl. Rego made a motion to adjourn. Secretary Law seconded it. The motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

There being no further business for the good of the County, the meeting was concluded at 5:49 p.m.

Collier County Domestic Animal Services



James Rich, Chairman

These minutes were approved by the Committee/Chairman on 07-18-23,
(check one) as presented _____, or as amended _____.