

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

Naples, Florida

May 20, 2024

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 4 p.m. in **REGULAR SESSION** in Administrative Building F, 3rd Floor, Collier County Government Center, Naples, Florida, with the following members present:

CHAIRMAN: VACANT
VICE CHAIR: Meredith McLean
SECRETARY: VACANT
Michele Antonia
Kelly Hyland
Cpl. Sherry Rego
Laurie Harris

ALSO PRESENT: Cindy Delgado, Administrative Assistant, DAS
Tanya Williams, County Public Services Department Head
Danielle Sanchez, Management Analyst I, PSD Administration
County Commissioner Burt Saunders
Jamie French, Department Head, Growth Management
Amy Patterson, County Manager
Michael Stark, Director, Operations & Regulatory Management

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**
Vice Chair McLean called the meeting to order at 4 p.m.
- II. **Roll Call – Establish a Quorum**
A quorum of five was established.
- III. **Pledge of Allegiance**

[The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.]

Vice Chair McLean welcomed Commissioner Burt Saunders to the podium.

Commissioner Saunders told those present:

- He thanked everyone for their dedication in contribution to the care of the animals that are in the care of Domestic Animal Services (DAS) facilities.
- He recognized that there has been some turmoil during the last couple of weeks.
- He stated that it provides some incredible opportunities to ensure that the animals in the care of the County are properly cared for and that this is truly a no-kill shelter, and that we see only improvements from this point forward.
- The Manager at DAS has committed to fixing the problems that the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) were unaware of.
- He stated that he toured the DAS facility in January.
- He indicated that the perhaps the Ordinance of the DAS Advisory Board (Board) could be reviewed to get members more involved in some of the operations, to provide another set of eyes as to what goes on there.
- He again wanted to thank everyone and the volunteers caring for the animals.
- He reminded everyone that he always available to help.

Vice Chair McLean thanked him.

IV. Approval of May 20, 2024 Workshop Agenda

Ms. Antonia made a motion to approve the agenda. **Ms. Hyland** seconded it. The motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

V. Workshop Topics

Ms. Williams provided a high-level overview to those in attendance:

A. DAS Division Update

a. Facilities

- Over the last 3-4 weeks the current occupancy rate at DAS is 267 animals: 108 dogs, 157 cats (with over 50% being kittens), and 2 lizards.
- 69 kittens arrived at the shelter over the weekend. DAS is in desperate need of fosters.
- Staff have done a phenomenal job working around the myriad of operations that Commissioner Saunders alluded to that are occurring on campus. She stated that she may refer to the shelter as campus as it consists of six buildings.

- Members from Facilities, Growth Management (GMD), Internal Controls and Review, as well as various agencies/partners have been on the site every day over the past three and a half weeks.
- Staff have done a phenomenal job clearing the fence line in the preserve area, performing stormwater and irrigation repair, among many other projects.
- She encourages everyone to stop by if they haven't already done so.
- Staff are moving forward with the HVAC renovations.
- In the interim, staff have been cleaning and disposing of items broken or in disrepair.
- Inventories are being maintained and items are being stored properly.
- Staff are redefining their day-to-day protocols to ensure that items are put back in their proper places.
- There are two veterinarians on staff on a regular basis to perform surgeries and care for the animals to ensure the commitment of the County and Board to provide medical resources so that shelter needs are met.

b. Staffing

- The ten Animal Control Officers (ACOs) from DAS moved to Code Enforcement last week, and today is their official first day working out of Code Enforcement/GMD.
- Mr. French, who is present, can answer any questions regarding this move.
- Protocols are being adjusted at the DAS campus to accommodate the new workflow.
- This movement reduces the staffing count at DAS; therefore, staffing recommendations will be reviewed as the FY2025 budget moves forward.

c. Programs

- DAS has a new Behavior Manager on-site who regularly meets with the dogs to review their temperament to determine which are adoptable and which have potential to be worked with.
- Volunteers continue to step up and are a phenomenal asset.
- DAS is working to open every area to volunteers.
- Each day DAS is a bit more organized. Various resources both from Facilities and GMD are helping with the general day-to-day upkeep of the facility.
- The County Manager, Mr. Jamie French and Mr. Mike Stark are present at today's meeting to provide additional information.
- Mr. Stark is a part of the GMD team and has been onsite at DAS to assist with the logistics and will be taking a deep dive into the DAS budget.

Vice Chair McLean stated that the Board had ideas from the last workshop of what they'd hope for once the ACOs were moved to Code Enforcement. She asked if there were any updates on how the ideas were being implemented.

Ms. Williams replied that staff would need more time to transition into the new workflow.

Vice Chair McLean asked how many moved over.

Ms. Williams replied that twelve FTEs were moved to include the ten ACOs, DAS Manager Danielle Jersey and the DAS Dispatcher Paul Macmillan.

Ms. Harris asked if they were all physically moving over to Code Enforcement.

Ms. Williams replied that the majority of work performed by ACOs is done from their vehicles; however, staff will have work areas in various locations throughout the County, including Heritage Bay, Horseshoe Drive and DAS.

Ms. Hyland asked if they were no longer DAS employees.

Ms. Williams replied that they moved over to GMD as of Friday.

Mr. French reported to those in attendance:

- His team was asked to go to DAS two weeks ago to revisit the sites and evaluate the situation.
- They observed that management was not being done correctly and he was asked to fix the issues.
- Upon reevaluating the site, he's asked employees from the County that specialize in site work to:
 - Clean out the preserve.
 - Create a fire break.
 - Fix the irrigation.
 - Secure the site.
 - Put cameras back up.
 - Repair the low station.
- Public Utilities and the Sheriff's Office have also provided assistance.
- The DAS budget will be reviewed and standardized by Mr. French's team.
- He's given his staff three months to complete this project; however, he hopes to be done in two months, as the County has doubled in permits recently and staff will be needed to process those requests.
- Mr. French reminded the Board that there was a zero-conviction rate prior to his team's review of the ACO reports, and over the last 4-6 months there is now 100% conviction.
- He's confident that substantial evidence will be gathered, reports will be cleaned, and staff will track cases more accurately.
- Staff will work with the community and the development industry that have reached out to offer help.
- The priority is to fix the buildings first by getting the air conditioners repaired and bring the facilities up to code.

- Mr. French wants there to be full transparency and asked for the Board to be patient as things are fixed.

Ms. Hyland asked how things will be the same and different with the movement of the ACOs.

Mr. French asked how operations were prior to the move so that he can compare them, because from what he saw they were never there. The ACOs were just dumping and running.

Ms. Hyland agreed and stated that they have been trying to fix these issues for many years, and this is where so much frustration came from. She wanted to know the procedure; who people will call to pick up strays; who calls for investigations, etc.

Mr. French replied that people will still contact DAS, who will then dispatch the issue to the correct staff to handle. He reiterated that staff are County workers not limited to a particular Department or Division. ACOs will operate in their vehicles in the same manner that investigators, code enforcement and sheriff's department staff work. Staff will have bull pens just as code enforcement and investigators have.

Mr. French encouraged the Board to attend Code Enforcement meetings.

Mr. French further explained that animals will no longer be dropped off at the sally port. He added that the cages there have been removed due to the lack of exhaust fans.

Mr. French added that the levels of service will not drop, but staff will be better trained on properly intaking animals. The procedure of how calls of concern are handled will remain the same.

Mrs. Antonia asked if ACOs will have certain areas that they're assigned to all the time, or will they be interchangeable.

Mr. French replied that it would be determined by the Code Enforcement Director, but they're looking at having a shared effort with code enforcement staff.

Mr. French added that the County has experienced a 2% population growth aggregately each year, and the code agency's level of service has not been established to handle whether it's a loose pet or a food truck vendor operating in a parking lot.

The County is reviewing its Annual Update Inventory Report (AUIR) and budget to determine what areas need to be addressed.

The County will need to evaluate if areas need to be rezoned, as the population has surpassed 400,000. The County also needs to get to the root of the problem to hold people accountable, by evaluating the behavior of the property owner, and address the outstanding liens to determine if foreclosures need to be processed. The County also needs to educate and communicate to the public more throughout community outreaches and events.

Mr. French said that animal issues should be handled the same way, and that there should be follow up visits as is done with other code enforcement cases.

Mr. French is confident in Mr. Thomas Iandimarino, Director of Code Enforcement, and Mr. Timothy Crotts, Assistant Director of Code Enforcement, and their abilities, as they've shown major improvements in the code enforcement efforts.

Mr. French added that he will continue to follow up with the Board and encouraged members to provide him with a wish list.

Ms. Antonia asked for clarification, of the 26 code enforcement officers currently in the County. Does that include ACOs?

Mr. French replied no, and that there are also 4-5 other contractor/licensing officers, and he will continue to make adjustments under the direction of the County Manager.

Ms. Harris is excited that the ACOs have moved under code enforcement and the yard work that has been done is beyond amazing. She thanked the County Manager, Ms. Williams for all their efforts. The changes have been immediate and impactful, and everyone has noticed. She is thrilled with the enforcement side, as no matter how many animals come into their care, they keep coming and there is not enough staff or volunteers to handle the work. With enforcement being able to put liens and foreclosures to make people accountable and change their behaviors, hopefully it will help stop them from coming in. She added that spay/neuter programs in the field would also help to correct behaviors to lower the populations. She thanked everyone from the bottom of her heart.

Mr. French thanked everyone. It is his pleasure to work with such a great group of colleagues to help the animals and the community. He said that the Sheriff's Office has been amazing and he's worked with them for many years, as he grew up here. He wouldn't have been so successful with some of the community efforts without their help. He added that the business community and agency partners are also working to help with this cause.

Ms. Harris expressed relief that it feels as though everyone is on the same page now.

Vice Chair McLean thanked Mr. French for the update and asked for future updates on the transition. She asked how the Board can help support the enforcement movement, which has been a hot topic quite frequently, and how they can help to care for the animals in the County,

Mr. French encouraged the Board to be a part of the budget process.

B. Florida Sunshine Law

Ms. Williams reminded everyone that under the Florida Sunshine Law, members of the Board cannot converse together regarding any type of business brought before the advisory board, unless done so in public. Any communications sent out to the Board must be sent as one-way communications.

She added that a workshop on the Florida Sunshine Law could be scheduled with the County Attorney's Office if needed.

Ms. Harris asked how to handle matters concerning DAS.

Ms. Williams stated that if there are any pressing matters regarding DAS, Board members can communicate with her. A special meeting can be scheduled for discussion if needed, or the issue could be held over to the next meeting agenda. She clarified that Board members can talk directly with DAS or County staff.

C. FY 25 Budget – Priorities

[Draft copies of the FY25 DAS Budget were provided]

Ms. Williams reported to those in attendance:

- The DAS FY25 budget is provided to the County Manager’s Office and Board of County Commissioners. The fiscal year begins October 1.
- The high-level overview of the document includes:
 - The first page projects a budget shy of \$5 million for personnel services.
 - The 20.5% loss in personnel services is due to the movement of the ten ACO positions.
 - If the movement had not occurred, there would actually be an increase due to the fact that two veterinarians have been brought on board as well as adjustments for COLA per BCC direction.
 - Operating Expenses are above by 2.4% which includes personnel, operating, funds, donations and all other expenses to operate DAS (as noted on pg. 16)
 - Operating expenses is showing a 9.7% increase in FY25. DAS had a 14% increase to its FY24 budget, which totals a 25% increase in its budget over the past two fiscal years.
 - The money comes from other various Divisions across the County to bolster DAS, as they currently are a priority. Other areas have been cut to ensure that DAS is funded.
 - The program summary on page 15 is divided into seven components: Divisional Administration, Field Operations, Animal Shelter Services, Community Outreach, Veterinary Clinic, Neutered or Spayed Program and Special Medical Care.
 - Some DAS programs do generate a small amount of revenue through owner return fees, licenses and adoption fees; however, DAS is an expense to the general fund.
 - Several metrics within the budget are noted on page 16. The County looks at performance measures of programs such as: the spay/neuter, live release rates, compliance rates, licensing and volunteer hours.
 - DAS operates under three additional funds, listed on page 18. Neuter/Spay Trust Fund; General Donation Fund, which allows DAS to solicit and receive funds for improving the lives of the animals by providing enrichment and animal care; and the newly created Private

& Community Fund to support other health and medical services, other than spay/neuter.

- DAS will be requesting the County Manager and BCC for additional FTEs above and beyond the current draft of the FY25 budget as expanded services to add more money and staff. This is subject to change.
- The FY25 budget was reviewed with the County Manager this afternoon, and the budget hearings will begin in June.
- More DAS budget discussions are anticipated to occur between now and June.
- The County Manager can provide more information about how the Board can best help prior to the June 20 budget workshop meeting.

Ms. Patterson reported to those in attendance:

- The Board can help with the budget by providing a voice of what has historically been done at DAS as well as the momentum now as the County moves forward.
- It would be helpful to know about the current staff, and what duties they were hired to do, and what they're actually doing.
- The County is trying to determine and understand what holes there are and the areas most in need.
- Staff need to look at functional ways to provide animal care, and improve adoptions and foster relationships and services.
- Another aspect of the budget is the spay/neuter program. The long-term goal is to develop a robust spay/neuter program with community partners in order to reduce the over population of animals.
- More education is needed to provide to the public to address concerns regarding the difficulty of accessing or paying for spay/neuter services so that they can bring their animals in for these services.
- The County is looking to putting money into local partnerships, such as For the Love of Cats, which provided a spay/neuter day to the community. Other organizations may be able to provide veterinarians and/or vet technicians to assist and possibly use DAS facilities for these services.
- This would help to alleviate DAS from housing and caring for the animals and finding them homes.
- The second proposal would be to set aside money for a satellite facility to handle the growth in the County.
- The County needs to maximize the current DAS location, while also looking at the growth particularly to the east. Another facility would help avoid animals having to be brought in from areas such as Immokalee or Golden Gate Estates.
- The County needs to dispel the fears the public may have regarding as to what happens to an animal when it's brought to DAS.

- Ms. Patterson shared that she recently fostered a dog that was microchipped, however, the owners never came to get him from DAS.
- Looking forward to the Board providing their input on the holes in the system to address the care of animals, the programs, and the staffing responsibilities.
- It will be a multi-year process to incrementally add more people, evaluate, develop robust programs, and hopefully divert animals away from the shelters by helping the community to keep their animals at home.
- It is hoped that DAS would be a last resort for the animals needing care, or that the animal is sick or injured.
- The County wants to continue to have a productive working relationship with the Board and at the next meeting to discuss how to present this information to the BCC.
- The Board's input needs to be included in the budget presentation that is to be made to the BCC.

Ms. Hyland asked that since the ACOs moved, would their staffing costs no longer be a part of the DAS budget.

Ms. Patterson replied that the ACOs would be included in the GMD budget.

Ms. Hyland asked if the training of ACOs would become the responsibility of Code Enforcement.

Ms. Patterson replied yes, and that some ACOs and Code Enforcement Officers have inquired about pursuing dual certification.

Ms. Antonia said that it is refreshing to hear that the County is seeking the Board's input, as for the many years that she's been on the Board it has not been considered, and they have some good ideas on how to help DAS.

Ms. Petterson thanked her and added that she will be asking for the Board's help regularly and appreciates their input.

Vice Chair McLean asked how many new staff members the Board should ask for.

Ms. Patterson replied that staffing will be under discussion and that she will be asking the Board before the budget workshops to further discuss for their input. It is anticipated that additional staffing will be a phased in plan.

Vice Chair McLean asked how many FTEs are there currently.

Ms. Williams replied that there currently are 26 FTEs.

Ms. Harris asked if the 9% increase in the FY25 budget includes new staff members being considered.

Ms. Williams replied no.

Ms. Harris asked how many temporary staff members, or those hired through an agency, vs. full time are there currently.

Ms. Williams replied that there are 26 County FTEs and 8 staff that are contracted through Keystaff employment agency.

Ms. Harris asked if they would ever be considered to become permanent employees.

Ms. Patterson replied that the big factor in the analysis done for evaluating Keystaff and County employees is benefits. The conversion of Keystaff is on the table throughout the County since the staffing is more of a long term strategy.

Ms. Williams replied that the ratio of Keystaff and County employees would be 3:2 with 3 Keystaff positions equaling 2 County FTEs.

Ms. Patterson added that it is difficult to get regularity with Keystaff employees particularly with the housing situation. Throughout the County, staff are trained but then move on.

Ms. Harris sees the same people training the new people and it's difficult to train new people so often. It would be great to have more continuity with staffing.

Ms. Patterson agreed that it is difficult to manage consistency for the care of the animals with the influx of staffing.

Ms. Hyland asked how many full-time vs. part-time Keystaff are there currently.

Ms. Williams replied that all of the Keystaff employees at DAS are full-time.

Mr. French stated that there is a 30% savings using Keystaff employees vs. permanent FTEs. He added that another benefit to using Keystaff employees is that some do not want to work a 40 hour week, and it allows more flexibility of the time and hours that each employee is scheduled to work. In his experience, some Keystaff are hired seasonally or are retired and only want to commit to a short period of time, and some may stay on in that capacity for multiple years.

Another factor is the contribution to the FRS and long term commitment the County has with permanent County staff.

Ms. Patterson added that with the augmentation of staff, the flexibility allows for Keystaff employees to, for example, assist with kitten care so that County staff can focus on their specialized duties. The County needs to evaluate and determine a baseline level as to how many people are needed to provide care for the animals, however, it is good to have the flexibility to add additional staff for short term situations as needed.

Ms. Harris asked where the budgeting to fund the work currently being done at DAS with the renovation of building 5, the yardwork, the repair of the sprinklers, the cameras the AC, etc. is coming from.

Ms. Patterson replied that it is a combination of things. For example, Public Utilities staff were able to help with the lift station and camera systems. GMD staff helped with work with the building as well as with the work in the preserve and storm water. The money is coming from a restricted use fund and will need to be reimbursed. The County will need to move some money around to help with the immediate work that needs to be done with building 5.

The intense cleaning needed prior to the renovations of building 5 will need to be paid for from other sources, as that is not a part of the renovations which will be paid for with surtax dollars, which is currently at \$6 million. Discuss has been evaluating the cost effectiveness of whether to renovate or move the facility. The County need to stretch the dollars as much as possible and the A/C is the highest priority as well as redoing the floors, kennels, and cages, which are coming apart. The sally port renovations have been put on hold to discuss with the Board and BCC to determine how best to use the surtax money available. The work will be done in a phased in fashion. Future review will be done to reconsider portions of the stable area to determine if removal or restructure is necessary. There are also things that need to be done to the two adoption buildings for better function of space. The surgical area is also in desperate need for change. She is looking forward to working with the Board for their input on how to best spend the money for the necessary improvements that are needed.

Ms. Antonia asked where livestock are housed.

Ms. Patterson replied that the barn is still working at DAS on Davis Blvd. and currently is okay to house some chickens, a horse or a goat. The containment box stalls and pasture areas currently tend to get wet and are not good options for long term care, as the animals would destroy the property if housed for a long period of time. The County is looking at other options such as partnering in areas by the fairgrounds and with AG Control or contracting with area landowners to utilize their property.

Ms. Antonia is concerned as in the past livestock were generally could only be adopted through auction.

Ms. Patterson replied that she believes that the State Statutes regarding the auction of livestock generally applies to cattle. Generally, donkeys and horses can go to rescues.

Ms. Antonia asked if there was any way the County could work around the Statute.

Ms. Patterson replied that the County must follow State Statues; however, she will ask the legislative staff to see if there are any options and will report back to the Board.

Vice Chair McLean stated that today's discussion will give the Board a lot to think about and brainstorm before the next meeting.

Ms. Williams reiterated that as discussions continue regarding the budget, if she or the County Manager need to send one-way communications to help the Board to formulate ideas they will do so.

D. Next Steps & Future Meetings

Ms. Williams reminded everyone that another DAS Advisory Board Workshop is scheduled for Friday, June 14. This will be the last time the Board will meet before the following Thursday's BCC Budget Workshop.

Cpl. Rego asked if that will give enough time to review any ideas the Board may come up with regarding staffing. What areas are most in need of staffing? Is there any guidance that can be provided on how the Board can best help?

Ms. Patterson replied that the Board should make their best guess for the budget workshop and a list of “asks” and initial thoughts by the June 14 meeting.

Cpl. Rego stated that she stops by DAS occasionally and encourages other members of the Board to stop by to see what’s going on and what staff are doing. She likes to talk with the volunteers and staff for their input.

Ms. Patterson asked for members to come by unannounced and to be sure to ask to see building 5.

Ms. Hyland remarked that the Board was never allowed to see some areas of DAS in the past.

Ms. Williams agreed that unannounced visits would be best, and that all areas should be available to see, with the exception of the medical areas if procedures are being performed. She will provide the Board with her work and personal cell numbers if they want to reach out to her. She would like to know if there are any areas that they are not able to access.

Ms. Hyland asked why in the past was the Board not allowed to visit all areas of the facility.

Ms. Patterson said there were a number of reasons that developed from urban legends, and she would be willing to discuss further offline. She added that areas were established to put animals on bite hold or dangerous dogs. Moving forward the County wants full transparency and no locked doors.

Ms. Harris was told by volunteers that animals brought in were not considered County property until after five days. Staff did not want to be responsible for any issues with animals in stray hold by potential owners if something were to happen to the animal during this time.

Ms. Patterson stated that building 5 needs to be held up to the same standards as other areas and should be accessible. She would like the Board to visit building 5 and provide their feedback.

Vice Chair McLean commented that Mr. French was approaching the podium.

Cpl. Rego asked Mr. French that with all the intakes in the sally port in the back, where are they being housed.

Mr. French replied that DAS or GMD staff who are in possession of processing the stray will know how to evaluate and secure the animal. There will be defined climate-controlled holding areas with a full list log and a full chain of custody. The County Manager or designee makes the decisions on how the animals will be processed under the guidance of the BCC. Levels of services will be elevated much higher than ever before. Some cages in the sally port will only be designated for medical under veterinary supervision.

Ms. Patterson stated that the Code Enforcement officers will be spending more time reuniting animals from where they came from rather than being brought to DAS. Obviously if there is cruelty or neglect involved, animals that would be a

different issue. Officers will provide counseling to educate the public on how to better secure and care for their animals.

Mr. French shared a recent code case that he's been working on regarding a horse owner who has too many horses and illegal structures who was spoken to. As a result, the owner has gotten rid of some of the horses. They are working with the owner to secure permits to bring the stalls up to code.

His team wants the opportunity to educate the public; however, if necessary, they will put a lien against the person's property. The safety of the animals is the priority.

He estimates that for every night an animal stays at DAS it costs the taxpayers \$30-\$40 per day. Any cost-saving dollars that can be captured would benefit the County and could be used to harden buildings, provide more educated staff and more community engagement, or a diversion to keep the overpopulation of animals low.

Ms. Hyland asked in cases of neglect or cruelty, who would handle the situation, the ACOs or Code Enforcement.

Mr. French replied that it could be one or the other or both, depending on availability and whoever is closest to respond. There are ten ACOs available. Inspectors and Code Enforcement Officers generally drive on average 80 miles per day. Management staff may also be called in to initially take pictures, etc. on a case. Currently they're working on a task force with the Sheriff's Department and Lee County for training.

Cpl. Rego added that everyone is working as a team, and there are multiple units working together to respond appropriately.

Ms. Hyland is concerned that evidence is collected correctly so that a case is not impeded.

Cpl. Rego suggests the Board to give the team time to transition under Code Enforcement as they are undergoing training to solidify the process on how the different groups will work together.

Mr. French added that prior to the last six months 100% of the cases were thrown out as they did not have substantial competent evidence to support the cases. However, over the last 4-6 months, there has been 100% conviction. They will not take a case forward unless they can convict.

Vice Chair McLean asked if there were any other comments before moving on to public comment.

VI. Public Comment

Vice Chair McLean reminded everyone that Robert's Rules of Order would be followed and to be fair and respectful of time public comments will be limited to three minutes.

Ms. Ewa Front announced that she is a Collier County resident and from a taxpayer's perspective she wanted to thank all involved for their hard work. She stated that it is beyond exciting the changes that have happened at DAS and she

would like to point out several options for funding. She contacted the Community Foundation of Collier County, which is a non-profit organization that has helped For the Love of Cats, Humane Society, Naples Zoo and SNIP Collier. She would like to see DAS on the list. She added that the University of Florida offers a shelter medicine department and have \$100k grants available. She indicated that these grants could be used by DAS to fund services such as low cost spay/neuter. Her second point was regarding the situations with kittens in the County. It breaks her heart to see so many homeless animals out there and would like to see the trap and release program expanded, and for DAS to work with other local organizations already in the field.

Ms. Heidi Liebwein asked if an animal cruelty officer with the Sheriff's department to be included on the Board, as they would have inside information.

Cpl. Rego replied that there is one sergeant that works in the division on animal cruelty cases; however, she was unsure if there would be a conflict of interest.

Ms. Patty Teulet stated that she's a DAS volunteer and thanked everyone as they've waited for years for these changes to be made and is not sure how it went on this way for so long. It's a breath of fresh air. She wanted to address the issue of locating and removing abused animals such as from backyard breeders, cock fighting, etc. She would like an animal abuse hotline to be created for the public to use anonymously. She stated that many people are uncomfortable to provide their contact information when reporting a neighbor. An anonymous hotline would help to catch these abusers quicker. She also mentioned that whenever she hears about dog bites at the shelter that it appears to be from inmates. She wondered why staff don't take the dogs outside so their cages can be cleaned as the inmates are not educated enough or familiar with the dogs to handle them.

Ms. Antonia agreed that people should be able to call anonymously, and it used to be that way. However, years ago when Commissioner Nance was on the BCC it was changed. She added that currently people need to call their Commissioner, and then the Commissioner would report the issue.

Ms. Susie Mehas welcomed Laurie to the Board and indicated that she had several items to address. First, she would encourage Mr. French to have ACOs to have cat traps in their cars. She added that 99.9% of the conversation today was about dogs and that cats were only mentioned once. Also, there was a call about an injured cat in Golden Gate City and the animal control officer did not have a trap, so a member of the rescue group is going there to hopefully catch the cat. She is happy that the sally port issue is being resolved as high heat is not good for cats or dogs. Another vitally important concern is that no friendly cat should be put back on the street. She added that they do not know how to take care of themselves and many times the rescue groups are called and it's never a pretty story. She wants to commend DAS for their wonderful social media, but again, more social media is needed for the cats. She was told by one of the dog people that there was no one to do the social media for the cats.

Ms. Mehas addressed Cpl. Rego regarding Facebook accounts that the Sheriff's office has only one person assigned to the animal cruelty task force.

Cpl. Rego replied that there are several detectives, however, there is one sergeant assigned to oversee animal cruelty cases.

Ms. Mehas stated that as a realtor, she's seen the population of Collier County grow by 100,000 people during 2020-2023. She feels that more of the taxes they pay should be allocated to DAS, as more people bring more problems.

[The timer indicated that 3 minutes were up]

Mr. Chuck Danielian offered to give his 3 minutes of time to Ms. Mehas.

Ms. Mehas thanked him and stated that when she was highly involved with the Humane Society and a new building was being built, one of the best things they did was to include the veterinarian in the remodeling/renovating process. She encouraged the DAS to allow the vets to provide their input so perhaps better ventilation, etc, could help lessen future medical costs.

Ms. Mehas stated that she was pleased to hear that the budget has three funds to help support DAS. However, she stated that some of the rescue groups wonder why DAS is having to raise funds. Do other County Departments need to raise funds? Many of the rescue groups are scrapping for every dollar they can get to put food in their shelter and beds under the animals, but why does a County facility need to raise funds. She added that she is available to assist any organization to help the animals and recently helped to collect towels and bedding for the animals. She just wanted the Board to be aware that the rescues have these questions.

She thanked everyone and said that they are all doing a great job.

Mr. Al Schantzen is a concerned animal lover and watched the recent BCC meeting and the proposal of adopting an animal cruelty registry that is under review by the County Attorney and Sheriff's Offices. He said that this registry would be beneficial so that staff would have access to know if a potential adopter is on the "do not adopt" list. He's concerned about the database being kept up to date if there is only one person at the Sheriff's Office assigned.

Vice Chair McLean thanked everyone for their comments.

VII. Advisory Board Member Comments

Ms. Antonia heard a lot of really good things today and is hoping this is a new chapter at DAS. She would like to know how the Board could be more involved. She's hoping they could meet monthly instead of every three months. She really would like the meetings to be held at 6pm so that more people could attend as it's hard for people to come to a 4pm meeting as many are working. She feels good about what she's heard today and is looking forward to seeing some really good changes.

Cpl. Rego is looking forward to what's to come.

Ms. Hyland is happy to hear about the changes that are coming to light after people have been trying to make these changes for all these years. She agrees with Ms. Antonia regarding monthly meetings and having them at 6pm. She likes the idea of a hotline for the public to make anonymous calls rather than calling a Commissioner to

report the issue. She thinks the animal cruelty registry is a great idea and is curious about the enforcement. She wondered what is allowed by law for following up to check on someone who is on the list to see if they have any animals, as people can acquire them through backyard breeders, etc. How do we know if someone has an animal they are not supposed to have?

Ms. Harris agreed with Ms. Hyland on having enforcement on the registry. She is thrilled with the Code Enforcement move/collaboration. In regards to livestock, she mentioned that the County used to have a facility in Immokalee, and could temporarily team up with SNIP to put any livestock there. She asked if the Board is being tasked with a list of ideas to give to the County Manager for the budget meeting. She made some notes about what was being asked and wondered if it should be compiled and sent to Ms. Williams.

Ms. Williams replied if the list is pertaining to this year's budget in addition to the staffing and topics the County Manager has brought forward, and if they are not being discussed at tonight's meeting, then it should be sent to her to vet with the County Manager. Those items can then be discussed with the Board at the June 14 meeting.

Ms. Harris asked how the agenda will be created for the June 14 workshop.

Ms. Williams replied that she will work with Vice Chair McLean to have the agenda prepared ten days prior to the meeting so that it can be distributed seven days prior to the meeting.

Vice Chair McLean apologized for not welcoming Ms. Harris to the Board at the beginning of the meeting. She was nervous as this was her first meeting to conduct. She echoed some of the topics discussed and agrees that the Board should go back to having monthly meetings, and also having the meetings at 6pm. In the past she recalls many staff and volunteers would be present at the meetings. It would be beneficial for them to be present to provide their input during these discussions, as they are at the shelter on a daily basis. She stated that she heard Mr. French's comments about the 100% conviction rate, and she's hoping that many of the cases provided people with the help they needed to get them where they need to be. She works on a daily basis with people who are struggling and trying to do the right things, and she's hoping the ACOs and Code Enforcement officers find ways to help provide support to people and their pets before they get to those convictions. She understands that some of them need to happen, but maybe there are some that don't. She wants to find ways that all the organizations can work together to give support to the community.

VIII. Adjourn

Vice Chair McLean stated that with there being no further business of the Domestic Animal Services Advisory Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Collier County Domestic Animal Services



Meredith McLean, Vice Chairman

These minutes were approved by the Committee/Chairman on 7.16.24
(check one) as presented , or as amended _____