

# MINUTES OF THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Naples, Florida, June 14, 2024

LET IT BE REMEMBERED, the Domestic Animal Services Advisory Board in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 4:00 P.M. in a WORKSHOP SESSION at Administrative Building “F”, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Collier County Government Complex Naples, Florida with the following members present:

VICE CHAIR: Meredith McLean  
Michele Antonia  
Kelly Hyland  
Cpl. Sherry Rego  
Laurie Harris  
(Vacancy)  
(Vacancy)

ALSO PRESENT: Amy Patterson, County Manager  
Michael Stark, GMD Division Director  
James French, GMD Department Head  
Alex Cassanova, Management Specialist II  
Cindy Delgado, Administrative Assistant, DAS  
Tom Iandimarino, Director, Code Enforcement

**1. Call to Order**

**Vice Chair McLean** called the meeting to order at 4:00P.M.

**2. Roll Call**

Roll call was taken and a quorum was established with 5 Members present in the Boardroom.

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**4. Changes to June 14, 2024 Workshop Agenda**

*Ms. Antonia moved to approve the Agenda. Second by Ms. Harris. Carried unanimously 5 – 0.*

**5. Workshop Topics**

**A. DAS Division Update**

**a. Facilities**

**Mr. Stark** reported new enhancements and rehabilitations (painting, office space reallocation, etc.) were completed to the building with the goal of providing a more efficient usage of space.

**b. Staffing**

**Mr. Stark** reported:

- There are currently 28 full-time employees with 5 vacancies including the Directors position and 10 Key staff positions with 2 vacancies.
- An analysis of personnel will be conducted to determine the needs of the Department focusing on 3 areas: Front Administration, Operations Team and Medical Team.

**c. Programs**

**Mr. Stark** reported:

- The website was updated by Staff with assistance from consultants.
- The current inventory of animals includes 218 cats (144 kittens); 95 dogs and 2 rabbits.
- DAS looks to simplify the adoption process for guests via animal ambassadors

**Commissioners Saunders** addressed the Board noting preparation of the upcoming fiscal year's budget is underway and to notify the BCC of any concerns which may need to be addressed during the process.

**B. FY 25 Budget – Priorities**

**a. Personnel**

**Mr. Stark** reported:

- Staff conducted a review of the Fiscal Year 2025 budget and the Department will be requesting 4 additional full time employees.
- The positions include 2 veterinary technicians, a volunteer coordinator and an accounting supervisor to assist in managing the annual budget process, inventory, contracts, and cash handling.

During Board discussion it was noted:

- No capital expenditure is necessary to serve the new positions.

- DAS will determine whether the veterinary technicians or other Staff will lead the spay-neuter program.
- Evaluation of employee tasks and positioning will continue.
- As the viability of converting Key staff to full-time employees (if necessary) is evaluated, the budget has the potential for adjustment.
- Mid-year requests for additional animal care specialists may occur as assessments continue.

**b. Operations**

**Mr. Stark** noted the 10 Animal Control Officers will be transferred to the Code Enforcement Department.

**Mr. Iandimarino** reported in addition to enforcement activities, the priorities will include outreach and education (social media use, door-to-door service, etc.) to help reduce the probability of animals being sheltered.

During discussion, the Board noted a concern on owners with animals under DAS control being apprehensive to retrieve the pet due to paying the fees involved or other enforcement activities. Consideration should be given to implementing a one time “get out of jail free” program or other measures to address the issue.

**Mr. French** reported:

- The goal is to reunite the animal with the owners as soon as possible to reduce burdens on DAS.
- Staff are examining the fee structure and determining any changes required and if there are any other reimbursable opportunities for expenses (grants, etc.).
- The recent building renovations will help facilitate service and another goal will be to improve the public perception of the Department’s activities.

**c. Capital**

**Mr. Stark** provided the update the proposed 2025 budget includes:

- \$2.7 million for personnel
- \$2.1 million for operations
- \$50,000 for capital expenditures
- Revenue estimated at \$600,000 - \$700,000.

**C. Next Regular DASAB Meeting – July 16, 2024, 6 PM – 8 PM**

Staff noted there are two vacant board seats and positions will be advertised in accordance with County policy.

**Mr. French** noted investigation is underway to determine the most beneficial location for meetings which include consideration of the Growth Management Building conference room.

**6. Public Comments**

**Suzie Mehas** recommended a pet pantry be established in the building and the name and logo of the Department be changed to improve the public perception and image of the operation. Additionally, the County should ensure the suitability of the environment when reuniting the pet with its owner.

**Richard Conover** noted he is running for County Commissioner in District 3. He recommended developing a Collier County Anti Animal Cruelty Task Force focusing on public education, investigation, prosecution and enforcement of incidents. Additionally, an inmate/pet program should be instituted.

**Heidi Leibwein** expressed concern an appointment is required for spaying and neutering animals in the Trap, Neuter and Release Program – *Staff noted they are looking into options with the veterinary expansion program including the potential for a satellite office in the Estates area.*

**Ewa Font** noted most DAS animals are entering as strays, so the inclusion of population reduction measures such as a spay and neuter program are important for the County.

**7. Advisory Board Member Comments**


During discussion, the Board noted:

- Consideration should be given to reviewing the Ordinance to determine any changes required for hobby breeders and increased enforcement of other breeder’s activities.
- A public education program regarding the availability of the Department’s spay-neuter services would be beneficial.
- Anonymous reporting of animal welfare incidents is available through a County Commissioner’s office so an individual can make the complaint without fear of retaliation.
- Consideration should be given to developing a marketing plan for the operation.
- Any activities with an Animal Cruelty Task Force should include the Collier County Sheriff’s Office.
- The County has instituted a Cell Dog Program for qualified inmates.
- Animal surrenders to DAS are available but are a last resort due to space issues. Moving forward, consideration may have to be given to utilizing a 3<sup>rd</sup> party provider for the service.
- Future meetings should be convened on a consistent date and time so Staff, Board Members and the public may plan accordingly for the event.

**8. Adjournment**

**There being no further business for the good of the County, the meeting was adjourned by order of the chair at 5:45P.M.**

**Domestic Animal Services Advisory Board**

  
Merideth McLean, Vice Chair

These minutes approved by the Committee on 7.16.24 as presented X or as amended \_\_\_\_\_.