

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF COLLIER COUNTY
DOMESTIC ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Naples, Florida, June 16, 2009

LET IT BE REMEMBERED, that the Collier County Domestic Animal Services Advisory Committee in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 6:30 PM in REGULAR SESSION at Domestic Animal Services Training Room, Davis Blvd., East Naples, Florida, with the following members present:

CHAIRMAN: Michele Antonia
Marcia Breithaupt
Dr. Ruth Eisele (excused)
Sergeant David Estes
Tom Kepp, Jr.
Sabina Musci
Jim Rich

ALSO PRESENT: Amanda Townsend, Director DAS
Geri Lynn Waterbury, Operations Coordinator
Hailey Alonso, Administrative Assistant
Kathlene Drew, Volunteer Coordinator

I. Call to Order

Chairman Michele Antonia called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

II. Attendance

Attendance was taken and a quorum was established.

Approximately 25 public citizens and media personnel were present.

A power point presentation was projected on a large screen for the benefit of all present.

III. Approval of Agenda

Marcia Breithaupt moved to approve the agenda. Second by Jim Rich Carried unanimously, 6-0.

IV. Approval of Minutes of May 19, 2009

Jim Rich moved to approve the minutes of May 19, 2009. Second by Sabina Musci. Carried unanimously, 6-0.

V. Old Business

A. Director's Report - Departmental Statistics and Reports (May 2009)

Amanda Townsend reported:

- Budget Preparation and annual evaluations were the main focus for the month.
- A community awareness project at Fred's Diner, reported by Kathlene Drew, was a success with a great turnout; three pups adopted and money for the Donation Trust Fund.
- June is Adopt a cat month. DAS is promoting 2-for-1 adoptions; the second one requiring payment of the license fee only.

B. Departmental Statistics and Reports

Statistics were displayed and briefly covered. Outcomes were discussed.

Chairman Antonia introduced Phyllis Estes who wanted to address the Board regarding reporting methods. She provided a copy of an older report which gave a breakdown of the *reasons* for each euthanization and asked that type of report be provided to the public and rescue partners.

Animal Control statistics – Staff will be working on a redefined program for more accurate depiction of the types of calls the Officers are responding to.

C. DASTF Update

Fund revenues were slightly down, as no fund-raising events were held in May. A detailed report researched by Hailey Alonso showed the amounts of monies the Trust Fund spent, what types of medical conditions were encountered and the

eventual outcomes for those animals. This report will be e-mailed to the DASAB.

Amanda Townsend explained how the Donation Trust Fund works for the benefit of the attending public.

VI. New Business

A. DAS FY 2010 Budget

Amanda Townsend gave a lengthy outline of the 2010 Budget and its processes. She explained the Department was asked to provide two budgets; one at a 3% cut (millage neutral budget) and one at a 15% cut (tax neutral budget). She reviewed the services provided by DAS and noted what would have to be curtailed or eliminated under each budget scenario.

She explained what a 15% cut would mean: (worst-case scenario)

- Projections of how many animals would need services, projected adoptions, return to owners and euthanizations.
- Number of positions that would have to be cut (9 + 1 vacated) including the Volunteer Coordinator position.
- A budget cut of \$390,000 – public outreach programs, educational opportunities, off-site adoptions and shelter care would be affected.
- Basically resulting in less adoption outcomes and more euthanized animals

She then explained what a 3% cut would mean:

- No functionality of the facility affected
- No staff cuts anticipated
- Discretionary spending limits

She also explained the mandated services under Florida State statutes and under the County Animal Control Ordinance. The services provided under the inmate labor program were also discussed.

Amanda noted the BCC Budget Hearings will be held at an all-day workshop on June 29 and 30 at which time public comment will be heard. The Agenda will be posted on the County web site. The public will be allowed to comment at that time. The millage rate will be set in July, ratified in Sept. for final establishment on Oct. 1, the start date of the next fiscal year.

Tom Kepp requested a listing of the number of fines issued and those actually collected.

Amanda will research and provide the listing.

VII. Public Comment

Speakers

Thomas Breithaupt had several questions regarding how many other County departments are facing the same cuts and did they have the same percentage of deficits? Do they use volunteers? Had other reductive measures such as furloughs and cutting wages been utilized?

Amanda Townsend responded that all County Departments are in the same

situation. Volunteers are used in many, but not all departments. Furloughs were not an option for DAS which utilizes each employee to the max already. In the Public Services Division, EMS is the only one with union employees.

Ben Rae asked for clarification on hearing dates and times that DAS would be taken up.

Amanda responded all the information will be posted on the County web-site.

Pamela Rae expressed fears that cuts in adoptions would hamper rescue groups, who would be overloaded. Taxpayer would be paying for euthanasia, rather than adoptions and would stop bringing animals to DAS. This would give both DAS and the County a terrible name. She encouraged everyone present to go to their Commissioners.

Amanda Townsend made note that adoptions would still take place through DAS non-profit partners. There would just be no public adoptions.

Janet Rossano asked if anyone had considered the impact on the County and the community in the dumping of animals. Her suggestions:

- The County needs to find other avenues than cutting animals services.
- The Public and the Department workers need to be proactive.
- Work more with rescue groups and increase volunteerism to save money
- Get the community involved. If you ask they will help.
- If people are willing to help, the County should get behind them to get the word out to the general public.
- Petition the Commissioners
- A moral responsibility is involved

Thomas Breithaupt agreed and expressed his frustration with his experience to get the IT Dept. to provide a daily “pet-of-the-day” on the web-site, even after offering to provide the Web-cam. He commented on the helpful and caring government workers who don’t get praised enough and those that belong on the “County Wall of Shame”.

Karen Acquard encouraged all associated organizations to get vocal, e-mail and phone their members to flood the Commissioners with their concerns, stating they are *elected* officials and will listen to the facts that:

- There is a difference between median plants and live animals
- There are only so many animals the rescue groups and individuals can take in and afford to care for.
- The irresponsible pet owners should be euthanized not the pets.

She also stated she is heading up the Howl-a-Day Jubilee to be held on November 21, 2009 and is looking for volunteers and vendors. Contact person will be *Geri Lynn Waterbury* at DAS.

Stephen Wright noted if pet adoptions were part of the Mission Statement there would be no question about cutting adoptions. He stated a possible scenario could be: If DAS will be only about health and law enforcement, conceivably, the Health Dept and Sheriff's Dept. could take over those functions, the non-profits could take over the pet adoptions and the County could do away with DAS altogether. He emphasized that DASAB has the responsibility to add pet adoptions to the Mission Statement.

Teri Lacastro, Animal rights advocate. Read from an article about a successful animal court case on animal cruelty in another county. She told about her own experience with an owner of a flea-ridden, chained-in-the-sun animal. Animal Control was unresponsive, stating there was no law against chaining an animal. She wanted to know why nothing is done about it and, what *needs* to be done to get dogs off chains. She stated Miami has implemented many helpful laws for animals, why not Collier? She was very concerned that no one will want to bring an animal to DAS if it's going to be euthanized.

Amanda Townsend responded that it was the full intention of DAS to have anti-cruelty and anti-chaining laws introduced into the Animal Control Ordinance next time it is revised.

Thomas Breithaupt suggested taking pictures or a video of such incidences and sending them to the newspaper. He also noted the County needs to see the cost of *not* doing something instead of just looking at the cost to do things.

Rose Scaresbrick requested statistics on how many animals are taken from DAS by various individuals and groups who find adoptive homes for them. She also suggested publishing the names in the newspaper of non fine-payers.

VIII. Advisory Board Comments

Sgt. David Estes stated that all Departments will have to cut spending. Money needs to be brought in before it can be spent, without emotions getting in the way. Everyone has a different opinion of what is important. He spoke about everything that goes into growing a community and reminded those present that the taxpayers voted on the tax reductions; the consequences are that services need to be cut. He encouraged the public to speak at the BCC Budget hearings and to come every month to DASAB meetings. He foresees the 3% will pass. He thanked them for their passionate interest.

Marcia Breithaupt suggested DAS become a partner with ASPCA's Mission Orange, which promotes increasing adoptions and eliminating euthanasia. *DASAB members wanted to learn more about the organization.*

Jim Rich stated he would find it hard to see DAS without adoptions. He has sent out 50 to 60 letters to various clients and groups already. He would like to see a five-year plan for expected animal population expansion.

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Tom Kepp stated a need to enforce the rules, charge fines, raise the non-spay & neuter fee as well as develop ways to enforce collections, like the DMV does.

Discussion followed regarding Community involvement and laws to deal with, both County and State.

Sabina Musci commented on the passionate discussions and the frustrations expressed against irresponsible pet owners by those who feel animals are family, when Laws and Ordinances consider them property. She stressed the importance of speaking out at the BCC budget meetings on the June 29th and 30th.

Chairman Michele Antonia encouraged everyone to participate in continuing to help the Advisory Board getting the word out to the public, to come to the DASAB meetings and tell the Commissioners to push for the 3% budget. She thanked everyone for their comments and interest.

Next Advisory Board Meeting is scheduled for July 21, 2009 at the Domestic Animal Training Room, Davis Blvd., Naples, Florida

There being no further business for the good of the County, the meeting was adjourned by the order of the Chair at 8:33 PM.

COLLIER COUNTY DOMESTIC ANIMAL SERVICES

Chairman Michele Antonia

These minutes approved by Board/Committee on _____ as presented _____ or as amended _____.