



Department of Animal Services

MAYOR
Dee Margo

Animal Shelter Advisory Committee
Minutes
October 14, 2020

CITY COUNCIL

District 1
Peter Svarzbein

District 2
Alexsandra Annello

District 3
Cassandra Hernandez

District 4
Dr. Sam Morgan

District 5
Isabel Salcido

District 6
Claudia L. Rodriguez

District 7
Henry Rivera

District 8
Cissy Lizarraga

1. Call to Order- Establish Quorum

A meeting of the Animal Shelter Advisory Committee was held virtually at 6:02 p.m. by Chair Julie Rutledge.

Board Member A.S.A.C.	Present	Absent
Regina Wagner		X
Celeste Varela		X
Sandra DiFrancesco	X	
Mary Kay Rosenkranz	X	
Vacant		
Barbara Candelaria	X	
Vacant		
Elvira Stephanie Frias	X	
Vacant		
Julie Rutledge	X	
Alexandra Annello	X	

Animal Services staff present: Paula Powell, Maribel Karisch, Michele Anderson, Ramon Herrera and Adan Parra.

CITY MANAGER
Tommy Gonzalez

2. Approval of Minutes

Discussion and action on the approval of the September 9, 2020 minutes.

Barbara Candelaria motioned to accept the September 9, 2020 minutes; Sandra DiFrancesco seconded; all members voted in favor, and motion passed unanimously.

3. Reports-Support the City of El Paso's Initiative to Reach and Sustain a 90% or Greater Live-Release Rate by 2020

A. Department of Animal Services September update and statistics

Paula Powell mentioned that Animal Services continues to follow the six strategic goals to measure their progress. September's intake was 1,284, which increased steadily due to more stray pick-ups. September's outcome was 1,097 that included transfers, adoptions and TNR. She emphasized on the decrease of

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DELIVERING EXCEPTIONAL SERVICES



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the died-in-care and the shelter euthanasia that was the result of a healthier shelter population. There were 918 fosters at the end of September. The euthanasia history was at double-digit numbers with behavior being the number one reason for euthanasia. She also mentioned that traditionally, September is a high infectious disease month; however, infectious disease has drastically decreased compared to last year. There was a substantial decrease in the died-in-care as well. The majority of those that died were the foster neonates. The LRR was at 91.12% as one of the highest rates ever, with 90.13% for dogs and 91.86% for cats. The Calendar year LRR was at 85.96% and the Fiscal year 2020 LRR ended at 85.92%. The LRR is at 91.12% for the start of Fiscal year 2021. The Shelter Animal Counts LRR was at 91.12% with the euthanasia rate at 6.46% compared to 85.67% LRR in 2019. The Regional Live-Saving rate is at 95.42% that accounts for the animals that are alive in the community including at the shelter and in foster.

Ramon Herrera presented the PAW CAST.

Barbara Candelaria inquired about dog food donations. Paula explained that donations can be made at the shelter and any type of pet food is accepted.

B. El Paso County Animal Welfare Department September update

Lauralei Combs congratulated Paula Powell on the outstanding September statistics, especially for the cats. She explained that one of the biggest changes that she has seen so far with the County Animal Welfare Department is the number of animals taken to Animal Services. In September 2019, 310 animals were impounded compared to 68 in September 2020. Other changes include the number of animals returned to their owners. In 2019, one pet was returned to its owner compared to 18 in 2020. She also explained that the county has increased their rescue groups from 10 in 2019 to 79 in 2020. In the efforts to support Animal Services' strategic goal #1 *Reduce the number of pets entering Animal Services*, the county supports their rescue groups by reserving a surgery day for animals pulled by these groups. The surgeries are done at the Socorro Clinic that are held on a weekly basis for county residents. At the last weekly clinics, the county performed 56 spays, 32 neuters and administered 33 rabies vaccinations. There was also a distribution of pet food, leashes and collars. About three weeks ago the county purchased the data management system Petpoint for support on their daily operations. Lauralei Combs thanked all her rescue partners including the Humane Society for pulling animals. Lauralei explained that County Officers are taking steps by trying to find the owners before impounding animals. They are scanning animals, canvassing neighborhoods, making flyers and knocking on doors. The officers also have roles as adoption and foster counselors, rescue group coordinators and are being cross trained on how to vaccinate. Lauralei added that the animals that are taken to Animal Services are the sick/injured and severely aggressive.

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4. Call to the public

None

5. Main Agenda

A. Research and Advise on Effective Ordinances and Policies to Improve Overall Health, Welfare and Safety for Animal

A1. Discussion and action regarding heartworm tests, treatment and heartworm disclosures by El Paso Animal Services

Kay Rosenkranz explained that several community members and rescue groups have asked whether Animal Services is performing heartworm testing. Paula explained that heartworm tests are performed by request only and, the test is not done on all the animals at the shelter, because of budget. In the case of a heartworm positive dog, Animal Services adoption counselors advise adopters to enroll in the Pethealth insurance offered and to seek a veterinarian for care. Kay added that several rescue groups are using an all-in-one test by the manufacturer Idexx and she would research the cost. Julie inquired about the number of test requested by adopters and on how other shelters handle heartworm. Paula explained that other shelters handle heartworm cases the same way as Animal Services and not one adopter has requested the test. Paula added that less than 3% of dogs at the shelter have tested positive and the cost for 30 tests is \$350.00. Julie explained that the Humane Society tests every dog at the shelter whether it's an owner surrender or a transfer from Animal Services. The tests are performed on every dog over six months and the positive rate is very low. The treatment given is dependent on the severity of the case and the funding available at the time. The treatment is for three months. In some cases, the dog(s) need to be fostered and treatment is provided. The Humane Society does not provide treatment once the dog is adopted. Dr. Guy Johnsen explained that there's not an endemic here in El Paso, however, in larger waterways such as in the upper and lower valleys, there has been some cases. The number of cases are rising due to the wild population of foxes and coyotes, and from the mobile community that brings animals from other locations where there's a high percentage of heartworm. He mentioned that Animal Services would have to determine whether there are significant cases to validate the cost of testing and treatment. He added that despite the many false negative results, the antigen tests are great. He suggested that Animal Services provide a disclaimer statement on the tests results. Kay added that she will share the information with the community and the rescue groups.

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A2. Discussion and action on community involvement and responsibilities related to stray animals and means of getting them back to their owners

Sandra DiFrancesco explained that she is looking at the best ways to reach out to the community while working closely with the shelters during the pandemic. She suggested making a public announcements offering the community guidelines for lost/found pets. The announcements would include: (1) Thanking the community for their support in reuniting pets with their owners and for fostering, (2) offer locations where animals can be scanned for a microchip, (3) assistance on becoming a foster with the support from Animal Services, and (4) A calendar of dates, locations and times for the Pet Food Pantry and to call 915-212-8735 for information on the Food Pantry and owner surrenders.

Julie added that ASAC needs to figure out how to relate the information to the community. Animal Services offers information on their website, however, the public could also be reaching out to the rescue groups that might not have accurate information.

Paula explained that information is shared through the website, the Next Door app and through everything Ms. DiFrancesco mentioned. Animal Services is on the media almost every day and are also reaching out to the neighborhood associations to help relate information. She added that she liked the idea of sharing information with rescue groups so that their websites have the accurate information. The Animal Services Website's Pet Resource page is updated daily with the COVID-19 operational changes and any changes in reference to lost/found reports. In September, Animal Services helped the community more than before and are expecting October to look much better. There are fewer complaints with 311 and city departments are communicating and relating information. Because of the operational changes, there are less adoptions and transfers which resulted with more animals at the shelter. Animal Services will be sending out a foster plea announcement to the community for help. Paula added that Animal Services will help out more with the lost/found reports. A resource page will be added so that rescue regroups can post accurate information on their websites and will work on the next door app more aggressively.

6. Future Agenda Item

1. Discussion and action on community involvement and responsibilities related to stray animals and means of getting them back to their owners.
2. Discussion and action on Go-Fund-Me Accounts regarding veterinary services.

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7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM

Sandra DiFrancesco motioned to adjourn; Barbara Candelaria seconded; all members voted in favor, none opposed, and motion passed unanimously.

Prepared by: Maribel Karisch

Approved by A.S.A.C. Chairman

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Julie Rutledge", is written over a horizontal line.

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