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Department of Animal Services

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Tommy Gonzalez

Animal Shelter Advisory Committee

Minutes
May 8, 2019

1. Call to Order- Establish Quorum

A meeting of the Animal Shelter Advisory Committee was held at the Humane Society of El Paso conference room and was called to order at 6:07 p.m. by Chair Ken Margherio.

Board Member A.S.A.C.	Present	Absent
Dr. Guy Johnsen		X
Julie Rutledge	X	
Claudia Ordaz Perez	X	
Regina Wagner	X	
Yvonne Rosales	X	
Ken Margherio	X	
Charlie Moreno		X
Amanda Herrera		X
Barbara Candelaria	X	
Celeste Varela	X	
Edith Prado	X	

Animal Services staff present: Paula Powell, Maribel Karisch, Ramon Herrera and Ana Schumacher

Public present: List of attendees available upon request.

2. Approval of Minutes

Discussion and action on the approval of the April 10, 2019 minutes.

Julie Rutledge motioned to accept the April 10 2019 minutes; Eydie Prado seconded; all members voted in favor, and motion passed unanimously.

3. Chairman Remarks

Ken Margherio introduced the two new ASAC members: Celeste Varela and Yvonne Rosales. Celeste Varela has been working with county government for almost 17 years and will be representing county. Yvonne Rosales is a local attorney, who was born and raised in El Paso. She practices family law is part of the Lion's Club and saw a great opportunity to serve the community by being part of ASAC. Members were advised to bring their binders to next month's meeting for updating.



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He also announced that the Department of Animal Services and Animal Rescue League are collaborating in sponsoring four shot clinics. Two of the shot clinics will take place at the Tractor supply on the west side and the other two at the Animal Services Socorro Clinic. The first one will take place on May 11 at the Tractor Supply on the west side; the free vaccinations will be for the first 500 pets. Microchipping will also be available. Ken explained that these events could develop into a much larger project, where the Community Foundation and the EPMVA could potentially have a serious impact on disease control in the community by having larger scale vaccination events.

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

A. Member- Free Roaming Cats-
None

C. Rescue Agency/ Limited Shelter Report
None

D. County

Celeste Varela explained how there's so much need in the county and they have not been successful in their efforts regarding animal issues. She is excited to be part of the work that the city and county will be doing to reach mutual goals. Paula Powell added that there has been substantial improvements in the county. Impounds have decreased, the LRR has increased and the collaboration of city and county will help the entire community reach 90% LRR.

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Paula Powell shared more information on the shot clinics. The May 11th shot clinic will administer vaccination to 1000 pets, then on June 1st, the pets will get a booster at the Socorro Clinic. If the pets are taken to both clinics, the owners will receive a voucher for a spay/neuter. The clinics' goals are to handle community disease, population problem and to teach pet responsibility.

The Department of Animal Services will continue to follow their strategic plan through every communication. Paula reported the intake for April was very high at 2458 animals. There were 104 owner surrenders and 2146 strays. The stray at large continue to increase compared to previous years. Even though the outcome comparatives for April adoptions were down, she was very proud of the increase in the off-site adoptions that are held two or three times a week. Animal Services has also seen an increase in transfers due to the help the Humane Society and other rescue groups have given. Since the community has stepped up, the foster program has also grown and become very successful. There are currently 1036 fosters that could have otherwise been crowding the shelter or been euthanized. Animal



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Services has the largest number of fosters than any other shelter in the state. The program is working to transfer directly from foster without bringing the Animals into the shelter. The Finder to Foster program, which was developed Animal Services has seen much success.

The euthanasia history for April was 68 infectious, 40 on-infectious, 40 trauma which were due to hit-by-car. There were 35 for behavior and 17 from owner requested euthanasia for seriously sick and dangerous animals.

The LRR for April was 89.43%. The LRR for dogs was 89.60% and 89.19% for cats. The calendar year LRR was 89.48% and 85.59% for the fiscal year.

The shelter animal count LRR was 89.43% and 7.28% euthanasia for April compared to 87.44% LRR last year.

Animals going through trauma, are evaluated by the Vet techs, however in such cases where further evaluation is needed, the vet techs will face time the vets when necessary. PIMA Institute will take x-rays, when an animal requires one. Paula also explained that the increase of intake is a sign of Animal Services' success and the public feel more comfortable taking animals to the shelter.

Michele Anderson presented the PAW CAST and Paula extended an invitation for the Kitten Shower on May 10 from 5-7:30 PM.

Ken Margherio shared some LRR and euthanasia statistics from previous years. In 2017, the LRR was at 74% with euthanasia at 24%. Then in 2018, the LRR was 85%, euthanasia at 12% and currently the LRR is almost at 90% with an 8% euthanasia.

5. **Call to the public**

Linda Krasowski- Colony Managers

Patricia Johnsson- Citations to Colony Managers

6. **Main Agenda**

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

A1. Discussion and action on the abandonment, handling of complaints, inconsistencies/miscommunication, increase of neglect, failure to prosecute, lack of knowledge and education impacting the Community Cat Program

Regina Wagner gave a brief overview of the TNR program and process for the new ASAC members. She started her presentation by defining "abandonment" under the Texas Penal Code 42.092 which is a felony under Texas law and it includes any stray or feral cat or dog. Under the City of El Paso local ordinance Title 7, Chapter 7.08.020 on abandonment, it is unlawful for any person to abandon any animal in the city, so the TNR doesn't constitute abandonment since the cats are returned to the exact location. Regina explained that by trapping and releasing in different locations not only



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affects the free roaming cats but also compromises the entire Community Cat Program. Studies have shown that by removing feral cats from an area only creates available space for neighboring cats to move in which is known as the vacuum effect. In addition, it won't solve the cat problem. She mentioned about some cases where people have admitted to trapping and dumping cats to other areas and were not prosecuted. In September 2017, senate bill 716 increased the punishment for abandonment to a third degree felony that carries a two to 10 year imprisonment. She showed several photos of injured cats that were dumped and questioned, if the nation is outraged by puppies thrown in the trash, then why isn't the El Paso community outraged by the dumping and cruelty towards all these cats and kittens? She suggested and expressed the importance for the need of more public education on where to get help with these types of situations. Sun City Cats is going out, educating the public on animal related laws and reporting all animal cruelty. They are offering resources such as "Please look, but don't touch" for kittens and "Please don't leave me behind." The resources also include whom to contact with questions regarding cats. Regina also suggested having the Officers offer solutions and education rather than citations. Offering the positive of TNR and Community Cat programs to both parties on nuisance calls. She closed by adding that El Paso is being watched by other communities across the nation to see whether the TNR program works. City Council unanimously approved the changes to the city's code necessary for the implementation of the Community Cat program. The program was implemented more than three years ago with the participation of Sun City Cats, a TNR advocacy group, and has saved the lives of thousands of free roaming cats and kittens. The El Paso community is now leading the rest of the country in the cutting-edge of animal control practices and can do better to help stop the abandonment, cruelty and suffering of all community cats.

Paula Powell went briefly over the Animal 915 pamphlet that the Animal Welfare group within the Community Foundation is working on. The group is the collaboration of Sun City Cats, the Humane Society, all rescue groups, Animal Services and county. Animal 915 is a pamphlet that contains answers to different animal related questions and the objective of the pamphlet is for everyone to get the same information.

Representative Claudia Ordaz-Perez mentioned that she would be proposing for the city and county to join efforts in consolidating 311 at the Strategic Planning session. She explained that when the public requires immediate attention to a situation, it doesn't matter if they are from city or county. Her proposal is to have a community 311 system to help with the public education aspect.

- A2. Discussion and action on what to do as a Humane Education Subcommittee**
Barbara Candelaria explained that in the efforts of getting a Humane Education



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curriculum, the subcommittee has run into several obstacles such as the Texas Star Testing taking priority. She suggested going to the state representative to start a curriculum and integrate it in the Health or Physical Education classes. The classes could possibly be taken as an elective or integrate them into an anti-bullying training. Another possibility would be going to Charter Schools. Ken Margherio suggested having speakers go to schools and give a half-hour Presentation on animal welfare. Barbara added that it would be more effective incorporating these presentation to kindergarten and first graders.

Julie Rutledge mentioned that there are plenty of opportunities to give animal welfare presentation at schools, the challenge is getting the personnel to give the presentations. The Humane Society has partnerships with private schools and goes out once a month to give presentations. The kids are tasked in doing donation drives, enrichment toys and other things the shelter might need, and again the challenges are finding presenters.

Paula Powell added that the subcommittee could approach the Community Foundation. The Foundation has programs with the schools and on Friday, she will be accepting a donation from the Polk Elementary School kindergarten class that they collected through the "Give Back to the Community Program"

B. Promote Education and Engagement in Animal Health and Welfare

B1. Best Practices for Return to Owner

Paula gave a presentation on the Proactive Return-to-Owner Program explaining the reasons why El Paso has a high RTO percentage. The program started with a plan on how to get there and how to sustain it. Animal Services has gone through many changes and one being the Animal Protection Officers that went from enforcement to community engagement. Their metric measures have also changed from how many animals are brought to the shelter to how many RTO are made on the field. The RTO program started in July. After comparing RTO percentages, it was found that the LRR percentage correlates with the number of RTO's. In addition, to comparing cost, there were 4292 RTO's in 2018 which equated in the avoidance cost of \$944,240.00.

The RTO program is based on the Strategic planning, fire station checks that has helped return pets to their owners without entering the shelter, microchip events were held every Sunday for a year, targeting areas where animals were impounded from. Reclaiming fees were also waived if pets were reclaimed within 48 hours. The RTO process was improved by pulling a daily list of microchipped pets. The Finder to Foster program was developed and has been very efficient. There's been more Animal Protection Officer engagement by performing microchip target canvassing. The marketing team has been great by staying proactive. There are still improvements made to public education where the officers are trying to help the community instead of issuing citations. An Animal Protection Partners Academy was developed for the city, county, Ft. Bliss, Tigua and Animal Cruelty Unit to have them all be on the same page and continue the education out in the field. Paula also, mention the new *lost and found* app that's still in the works. The program has had an impact in the community by building trust, educating, empowering the community, getting families reunited, pets feel loved and many happy endings.



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Ramon explained that has visited senior recreation centers and has been advertising adoptions in the Thrifty Nickle, but TV news still seems to be preferred by the older audience.

B2. Leadership Insights

In Paula Powell's presentation on Leadership Insights, she gave ten tips based on her personal feelings that helped her become the leader that she is in Animal Welfare and the City. These are the tips:

1. *Never forget that you are just an employee.* No better than any other, but just one of them.
2. *Think about what you are going to say before saying it.* Sometimes to sit and listen is the better option; you might just learn something.
3. *If you find yourself having to remind everyone all the time that you are the Director (leader) and you are in charge, you're probably not.* Someone else is making the decisions.
4. *You have to work very hard at being more informed and less emotional.* Develop a plan with the team and make the time to do research and be more informed.
5. *If you can't have fun every day, then you need to go home.* A leader is in charge of morale and has to be positive all the time.
6. *Don't be the feared leader, it doesn't work.* Employees and leaders should be seeking for guidance and mentors.
7. *Do not do anything negative over text, email or social media.* Assume that whatever is written on email will be on the cover of the El Paso times and Facebook.
8. *It's Ok to be nervous. All of us are.* You need someone you can confide in.
9. *Take the time to keep yourself relevant.* You are the informational portal and must continue to be a lifelong learner.
10. *Be physically fit! Gain your personal power and confidence.* A healthy employee is a productive employee. Their well-being will spread throughout the organization.

7. Future Agenda Items

None

8. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:27 PM

Eydie Prado motioned to adjourn; Julie Rutledge seconded; all members voted in favor, none opposed, and motion passed unanimously.

Prepared by: Maribel Karisch

Approved by A.S.A.C. Chairman