



Department of Animal Services

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Animal Shelter Advisory Committee

Minutes June 12 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 6:10p.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 May 8, 2019 minutes.

Dr. Guy Johnsen motioned to accept the May 8, 2019 minutes; Charlie Moreno seconded; all members voted in favor, and motion passed unanimously.

3. **Chairman Remarks**

Ken Margherio mentioned that reminder letters are going to be sent out to shelters for their annual inspections. There are several ASAC vacancies that need to be filled from those members that have resigned or their term has expired. Members were asked to bring binders for updating. Dr. Johnsen was presented with an award for all his work and support to Animal Services and the ASAC.



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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-

Regina Wagner explained that caregivers are concerned that cats and kittens are being dumped in their colonies. She added that this dumping of cats or kittens is not beneficial to the program. Sun City Cats has begun an education program on TNR, to include workshops to help across the city and county so that the public can understand the program's benefits and resources available. This will help increase awareness of the community cat program. Individuals from Clint, Texas will be participating at the monthly Socorro TNR Clinic as they seemed receptive to the TNR program. Sun City Cats has TNRed over 1,400 cats so far this year.

B. Subcommittee

Paula Powell mentioned that the Title 7 subcommittee is ready to start their meetings. The public's first meeting will be held at one of the regular scheduled ASAC meetings and followed with one or two more. Paula Powell's goal is to have final recommendations presented to City Council by August so meetings will be scheduled as soon as possible.

C. Rescue Agency/ Limited Shelter Report

None

D. County Report

Celeste Varela mentioned that a conference is scheduled for Thursday, June 13 in Horizon. Several members from the city and county government will attend and speak to the future collaboration on the no-kill efforts and to reach out to the rural parts of the county in efforts of controlling the over-population.

E. Department of Animal Services

Paula Powell presented the PAW CAST for May.

After almost two years with Animal Services, this has been the hardest month for Paula Powell and no matter how difficult it becomes, the Animal Services goals remain the same. The intake for May was 2,810 compared to 2,652 in 2018 and 2,662 in 2017. The outcome comparatives were 2,457 for May 2019, 2,323 in 2018 and 2,288 in 2017. The foster program continues to be the highlight with 914 fosters currently out. Valentin Garcia and Crystal Herrera have done a great job at fostering kittens and puppies. Animal Services' foster program is the second largest foster organization in country. The euthanasia history for May was 162 infectious, 96 non-infectious, 38 trauma, 59 behavior and 9 owner surrender requested. Here are the died-in-care broken down by cat and dog: 39 cats and 8 dogs for contagious disease, 66 cats and 3 dogs for failure to thrive, 1 cat and 1 dog for non-contagious disease, 1 cat for trauma and 63 cats and 23 dogs for unknown reason. Half of died-in-care came from the shelter and half from fosters



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The medical team including Dr. Canupp and Valentin Garcia are having meetings to discuss each animal to find solutions on decreasing those numbers. Since the new intake protocols were implemented, disease at the shelter has also decreased. The LRR for May was 79.61%, 76.54% for cats and 87.66% for dogs. Paula Powell struggles with the decision to euthanize, but she and Dr. Canupp don't feel comfortable having an animal suffer. The Calendar year LRR was 87.51%, the Fiscal year LRR was 84.92% and the Shelter Animal Count Report LRR for May was 79.61% with a euthanasia rate of 12.17% compared to 81.99% LRR and a euthanasia rate of 10.43% for May 2018.

Dr. Canupp explained that the non-infectious percentage is more towards the older dogs and entails kidney and/or cancer. She is working on improving the categories since Animal Services has no access to blood work or x-rays. She is having to make the best guess by physical findings. Animal Services is working on an x-ray machine grant, however it also requires having a room and trained staff to operate. Paula Powell added that she has met with the EPVMA and will be submitting a proposal to receive assistance from private veterinarians to help with blood work and x-rays.

Regina Wagner suggested also educating the public on how to clean their yard after parvovirus contamination.

Dr. Canupp explained that she has seen at least two puppies about four to six months old that were aggressive and feral-like. Meetings are held on Tuesdays to discuss behavior issues and to find ways on how to save these dogs. This year Animal Services has seen fewer behavioral dogs compared to last year. Dr. Canupp added that she avoids euthanizing for one reason unless it's medically complicated.

Barbara Canderlaria inquired about recruiting veterinarians that have just graduated to help with the shortage. Dr. Johnsen explained that there are currently 16 vacancies in El Paso including Animal Services and local veterinarians have gone to recruit graduates.

5. **Call to the public**

Linda Krasowski- Pit Bulls
Patricia Johnsson- More Spay and Neuters
Marcia Margherio- Open Adoptions

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 Disease Control**

Ken Margherio began his presentation expressing how disease and disease control continue to be one of the major issues which he feels is not getting sufficient attention and asked the question, What are we dealing with when it comes to Parvovirus and Distemper? Distemper is a contagious disease that



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attacks the respiratory, gastrointestinal tract and nervous systems of puppies and dogs. Parvovirus is a deadly disease that attacks the gastrointestinal tract and the immune system of both puppies and dogs, is highly contagious and can survive for more than a year under the right conditions. Since prevention is the key for these diseases, that's why vaccination is critical. Disease has taken the lives of 10% of animals at the shelter, year to date. It is not only a city issue, but also a county one and to obtain the no-kill objective of 90%, disease control is vital. If parvovirus and distemper are preventable, why can't ASAC collaborate in the efforts to eliminate this problem that has been going on for years when the solution is prevention by vaccination. Ken Margherio questioned whether ASAC is making a difference in spite of following their strategic goals and he explained that ASAC is still focusing on several subjects and only making minimal impact. Four-thousand and eleven animals did not make it at Animal Services, and this number does not include those animals that were taken by rescue groups, adopted or those that were taken to local veterinarians and did not survive after getting sick. In the last five months of 2019, 836 animals have died at Animal Services, that's 10% of the total intake and the majority died because of illness. Over 5,000 animals have died in the last 18 months. Ken Margherio expressed how the community could continue to tolerate the loss of thousands of animals to preventable diseases which is the worst kind of cruelty. Several shot clinics have been scheduled in the efforts to control disease with the collaboration of Animal Services, Animal Rescue League and the Community Foundation. Between the last two clinics held, 845 animals were vaccinated. Some of the observations he shared from the clinics were how the pets were groomed, people waited patiently, were appreciative and inquired about the next clinics.

He also explained that a project plan could be created from the data collected at these clinics to facilitate funding for a more city wide and comprehensive program with the support of the Community Foundation, the EPVMA, Animal Services and rescue groups. He further explained that disease control is currently the most important objective to save more lives and encouraged the ASAC to become an active participant in the program and make it the number one priority while continuing to address other issues. He concluded by expressing how there's a serious disease situation in the community and immediate action must be taken now to achieve long term results because together, we can save more lives.

There was extensive discussion on making disease control the priority focus. Some members were divided and suggested making spay and neuter a priority instead. Ken Margherio explained that vaccinating is less costly than spaying and neutering, and after working together on the first project, then it is possible that the Community Foundation can help fund the next project.

Motion was made by Ken Margherio to make disease control a top priority focus of this committee. Focus on one specific objective if we can, to make an impact on as oppose to focusing on everything. Does not mean that we are not still responsible to our statutory duties. Does not mean we can't discuss other subjects. Does not mean other agenda items won't be on the



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table. It only means that we will focus on this as a primary animal topic.
Seconded by Charlie Moreno.

Ayes: Julie Rutledge, Celeste Varela, Edith Prado, Dr. Guy Johnsen, Ken Margherio, Charlie Moreno

Nays: Yvonne Rosales, Barbara Candelaria, Regina Wagner
Motion Passed.

A2. Discussion and action on displacement of cats due to construction of water retention pond.

Regina Wagner explained that 70 cats would be displaced once their home is taken away for the development of a water retention pond. The home for these cats is an area located in the northeast that was used for the first TNR pilot program site in which El Paso received several PetSmart Charity grants. She expressed concerns on where these cats are going. This area is their home and cats are territorial. She explained in detail the weather elements, location, and the dangers if these cats are not cared for. The bloodbath that would happen in the streets if the plan is not in place prior to the cats losing their home. She also explained that among the 70 cats, there are sub-colonies and one structure would not be feasible for all of them. Their current home has many areas for shelter. When the city asked the property owner to care for the cats from another colony due to the restaurant not wanting them, the property owner stepped up to help the city.

This area went through the original TNR pilot program with Animal Services which began the community cat program we know today. Due to its success, El Paso received PetSmart Charities grants. Regina Wagner explained that she had tried reaching out to city representatives and the El Paso water utilities staff with no avail. She asked Paula Powell on the situation status. Paula Powell explained that she was in the meeting last year with Regina Wagner and was told by the water company that the land behind the fire station was going to be used for the cats. In addition, Paula Powell explained that the cats were not going to be displaced, on the contrary, a structure was going to be built for them to live in. At the same meeting, Regina was asked to make a proposal with examples of structures and what was needed to care for these cat which she submitted and is still waiting for a response. In her proposal, she mentioned that the adjacent property to the current property is the best for the cats' new community as long as shelter, water supply and accessibility to care for the cats' daily needs are provided and all is completed before any demolition begins. Ideally, El Paso water utilities would leave the current property and start the pond at the end of this property and leave the structure alone.

She shared several examples of shelters and shades as well as trees and shrubs for hiding. She offered suggestions on the willingness of making this a positive experience and working together to have a great outcome for these cats which is a positive for El Paso.

She also explained that a water source, fencing, a locked gate for safety and trashcans for cleaning are needed. She explained in detail that the cats must be moved slowly to the new area before demolition, if they have to move. Regina



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Wagner added that the property owner's biggest concern was the cats' welfare and her intention was to leave the property for a cat shelter upon passing. Paula Powell mentioned that from the last meeting she attended, they agreed to keep the cats, not displace them. She will be attending a meeting next week with the El Paso Water Utilities and until then, she will have more information. Ken Margherio suggested an ASAC member attend the next meeting and Paula Powell recommended Regina Wagner as she knows the situation. Regina made a motion for updates, however legal advised that ASAC cannot ask Animal Services to do a task. Dr. Johnsen and Ken Margherio suggested making an endorsement on the situation, however, ASAC can only make a position statement to City Council. Paula Powell added that the last she heard, there was not a problem and to wait on the motion until after the meeting with the water company.

B. Promote Education and Engagement in Animal Health and Welfare

B1. Discussion on how to address animals trapped in trees and high places

Regina Wagner explained that the public is having trouble getting a straight answer on who to call regarding getting cats down from a tree or a high place. The recent death of a cat that was on an electrical pole sparked the question on why doesn't the city have a protocol for these type of cases. She suggested for Animal Services and the Fire Department work together to form a response plan to prevent any person or cat from getting injured. Dr. Johnsen suggested contacting other shelters on their best practices for these situations. Paula Powell will work on this and added that it's a good idea to add this information to the 915 pamphlet.

7. Future Agenda Items

None

8. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM

Charlie Moreno motioned to adjourn; Dr. Guy Johnsen 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, likely of Ken Margherio, is written over the "Approved by A.S.A.C. Chairman" line. The signature is in dark ink and is somewhat stylized.