



Department of Animal Services

MAYOR
Dee Margo

Animal Shelter Advisory Committee
Minutes
August 12, 2020

CITY COUNCIL

District 1
Peter Svarzbein

District 2
Alexandra Annello

District 3
Cassandra Hernandez

District 4
Dr. Sam Morgan

District 5
Isabel Salcido

District 6
Claudia L. Rodriguez

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Henry Rivera

District 8
Cissy Lizarraga

1. Call to Order- Establish Quorum

A meeting of the Animal Shelter Advisory Committee was held virtually at 6:17 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	
Yansi Parent		X
Barbara Candelaria	X	
Vacant		
Elvira Stephanie Frias	X	
Vacant		
Julie Rutledge	X	
Alexandra Annello	X	

Animal Services staff present: Paula Powell, Maribel Karisch, Misty Monteros and Michele Anderson.

CITY MANAGER
Tommy Gonzalez

2. Approval of Minute

Discussion and action on the approval of the March 11, 2020 minutes.

Celeste Varela motioned to accept the March 11, 2020 minutes; Mary Kay Rosenkranz 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 July update and COVID-19 operational statistics

Paula Powell shared the DAS strategic goals. The July intake comparatives were 2,806 for 2018, 2,683 for 2019 and 876 for 2020. The intake of only 876 animals, was due to the community's life-saving efforts. The outcome for July was 715, with shelter euthanasia at 52 and died-in-care at 30. At the end

Paula Powell – Director

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of July, there were 942 animals that were fostered by the entire community, including the County during the COVID-19 closure. The euthanasia for July was 59 which included fostered pets. There were 4 that died from either parvovirus or distemper in July, making it the lowest number for died-in-care for infectious disease. The LRR was at 90.10%. The calendar LRR was 90% and the fiscal year LRR was also at 90%, compared to 65% during the first month of the COVID-19 closure. The shelter animal count was 90.10% with a euthanasia rate of 5.94%. The regional lifesaving rate was 94.23% compared to 88.74% in July of 2019. The regional lifesaving rate is the collaboration rate between the community and Animal Services.

Paula also gave specifics on the additional services offered to the community by DAS. In July, 5 new scanning sites were added. There sites are located at different parks throughout the city. There were over 250 lost and found reports created, which resulted in several pets being reunited with their owners. A ton of pet food was distributed amongst the community, assisting families with financial hardship in efforts to help them keep their pets home. For found and for those not able to keep their pets, there were 73 home base fosters available throughout neighborhoods. The Parks and Recreation Department, the County Nutrition Program and DAS worked together to assist 303 pets at the Senior Food bank during July. This event is ongoing on Tuesdays.

During the COVID-19 closure, there were operational changes that caused a dynamic decrease in both shelter and died-in care euthanasia. The shelter euthanasia from April to July was 238 compared to 1,185 in 2019. The died-in-care euthanasia for the same time was 121 compared to 569 in 2019. In spite of public complaint on the increased number of animals dying in the streets, that number has also decreased. Data collected from ESD's deceased animal pick-ups statistics, determined there were 1,249 pickups compared to 1,772 in 2019. In 2019 there was a total of 3,526 animal euthanized, died-in-care and deceased pickups compared to 1,608 in 2020. In total there were 1,918 less animals dying in the shelter and community. Paula also expressed the importance of the daily average animal inventory at the shelter. The inventory for July 2019 was 1,157 compared to 293 in 2020. By having fewer animals, there has been success in areas of DAS and the community. The community made a huge difference when it stepped up to support DAS during the COVID-19 operational changes. A total of 1,236 families participated during April. The field officers are also working 24-7, as bites and exposures are down as are the aggressive dog calls. Starting on September 1, 2020, DAS will focus on Community Cats with protocols. Intake will be by appointment, except for healthy cats in traps, underage, healthy or sick kittens without mommas. Intake will be from Sunday to Thursday. The shelter will remain closed, however, they will continue with their current ongoing services. For up to date information, check EPAnimalServices@elpasotexas.org. Paula Powell concluded by thanking the City of El Paso for all their support.

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Barbara Candelaria inquired on the distribution of pet food for those in need and about a spay/neuter program. Paula explained that the public can call 915-212-8735 and/or visit the website. The public can also pick up food at the Parks and Rec. several locations. Donations can be taken to the shelter while following the curbside protocols. DAS is also working on having surgeries at local veterinarians and has a contract with 3 local veterinarians to help with surgeries. She added that Texas veterinarians are also considering doing a spay/neuter-athon when it becomes safe to perform surgeries.

Tommy Gonzalez, City Manager, gave a recap of the Task Force that was created in 2015 to find processes for improvements. He asked the community to voice their animal welfare concerns so that solutions can be found. He thanked Paula for her leadership, her team and the ASAC for being a huge part in the no kill efforts. He also thanked City Council for their support to the cause.

Representative Alexandra Annello, inquired about the response on how the Parks and Rec. are handling found pets. Paula explained that it might be to soon, but there has been response. The Parks and Rec. staff have also been helping with enrichment, searching for pet owner's information and are training on handling animals.

B. Introduction of El Paso County Director of Animal Welfare and update on El Paso County Welfare Department organization, objectives and programs

Julie Rutledge introduced the County's Director of the Department of Animal Welfare, Lauralei Combs. Lauralei explained that during her first four months, she found out there was plenty to do and the first thing she did was apply for grants. She received a grant from Maddie's Fund to help the county with pet food, vaccinations and microchips. The department is working towards more community involvement and will no longer be just dog catchers. They are going to homes in the efforts on finding the pet owners. They are also offering fostering for found pets. The fosters will receive vaccinations, microchips and food until they are placed. Injured and aggressive animals are taken to DAS. The Department is also doing more animal cruelty arrests. To help with their no kill efforts, they just partnered with Petco and Maddie's Fund. They are also working in collaboration with DAS and are offering a free spay/neuter clinic on Wednesday, August 19, 2020 at the Socorro Clinic. There are some surgery limitations as far as size and breed, at the veterinarian's discretion. For information contact the Sheriff's office or go to spayneuter@epcounty.com. Lauralei Combs also mentioned that the Department of Animal Welfare is no longer under the Sheriff's Department. They are their own department with eight officers that patrol from Vinton to Fabens.

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C. Update on Humane Society of El Paso programs, policies, procedures and challenges with COVID-19

Julie Rutledge gave an update on the Humane Society's COVID-19 closure. She explained that in March, they unfortunately had to furlough staff and are operating with half the staff now. During the months of April and May, staff was taking care of shelter animals and supporting the fosters. In June, they started adoptions by appointment only in which 120 puppies were adopted. Adoptions for older dogs and cats started in July. The humane society has been able to schedule four appointments per day and so far all adoptions have been successful, except for three. As the result of the shelter remaining at capacity, intake has not begun. Their end-of-life services (euthanasia and cremation) started in late April, however, they are also by appointment only and curbside. Julie added that they are about ready to start the intake process, but now they are facing staffing challenges. They are currently working on creating an email appointment process due telephone issues. The email will be ready on August 13, 2020.

D. Update on Animal Rescue League programs, policies and procedures with COVID-19

Loretta Hyde mentioned that they are following COVID-19 protocols and their adoptions are by appointment only. The shelter remains at capacity, but continue helping other rescue groups with stray animals. They are in collaboration with DAS and are also transporting animals. They are doing their best to stay afloat while dealing with staffing challenges. Loretta added that in spite of these trying times, they have been fortunate to have many animals adopted.

4. Call to the public

Ron Comeau

Karen Washington

Lisa Vandermeulen

Maria Smasal

Maricela Salido

Mary Mackay

Bernadette Arenivas

Iliana Guzman

Elena Lemmon

5. Main Agenda

A. Research and Advise on Effective Ordinances and Polices to Improve

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Overall Health, Welfare and Safety for Animal

A1. Discussion and clarification on what services are being continued and what services are not being offered by Animal Services due to COVID-19.

Barabara Candelaria requested clarification on the pickup of strays during the COVID-19 closure, because 311 informed her they were not. Paula explained that she received several 311 complaints, however after proper training the issue has been resolved. Currently, DAS is taking standard of care calls, picking up sick and aggressive stray animals. They are not picking up healthy found pets. The finder can call 311 to create a found report. DAS will try to link the found report to a lost report and find the owners. The finder has the option to foster or take the pet to a foster home base in that neighborhood. The pets can be picked immediately, if they become aggressive towards kids or other pets. If these two options don't work out, the pets are brought to the shelter. Once a pet gets impounded, a pet becomes DAS property. Paula will schedule a workshop with rescue groups to clarify questions on found pets.

A2. Discussion and action on request by City and County Officials for temporary waiver of spay/neuter requirement for dog or cat adopted from a shelter (Title 10 Chapter 828 Dog & Cat Sterilization)

Julie Rutledge explained that in late June, she became aware of letters that were written by the mayor and county judge to the governor requesting to suspend spay/neuters for adoptions. The status of the matter is unknown, however, her concern is what will happen to the community if this request gets approved. She wants ASAC to be aware and address the concern. Julie referenced Title 10, chapter 828 on dog and cat sterilization. Paula Powell mentioned that the governor has not approved the waiver on sterilization. She explained that at the start of COVID-19, several shelter directors were concerned because of the restrictions on pet sterilizations in order to preserve medical supplies for humans. The letter was sent in March and most likely the governor won't approve, she added. Regina Wagner agrees that there needs to be a process in place, in case the waiver is approved. Julie suggested the ASAC write a letter to City Council recommending opposition to the waiver of sterilization for shelter adoptions. Motion passed.

Motion was made by Celeste Varela for Julie Rutledge, on behalf of ASAC, to write a recommendation letter to City Council strongly opposing the waiver of sterilization; seconded by Alexandra Annello; all members voted in favor; motion passed unanimously.

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A3. Discussion and action on the City's current trap-neuter-return (TNR) program and a neighborhood feral cat situation

On behalf of Sandra DiFrancesco, Julie Rutledge mentioned that Sandra had some concerns over the TNR, Community Cats and feral cats, being subjected to abuse in a particular neighborhood. Regina Wagner explained that the community can call 311 and ask for the Cruelty Unit to report any cruelty situation. She added that these cats have always been in the neighborhoods, but now that people are working from home, they are noticing them more, and with the COVID-19 closure everything got backed up. Julie added that now that DAS is starting cat surgeries on September 1st, this will help the situation. She also mentioned that in early July, the Humane Society restarted the spay/neuter program and have performed 60-90 surgeries a week for feral cats, TNR and kitten litters. Regina Wagner shared some information on how removing kittens from their mommas, increases the mortality rate.

A4. Discussion and action on Title VII changes

Paula Powell thanked Ana Schumacher for her assistance on making the Title 7 changes. She explained that the first part of the changes was to cleanup the language and requirements of existing ordinances. The changes were done to the following ordinances: Zoonotic Disease Reporting (7.04.060); Veterinary care of City-owned animals (7.04.70); Violation -Penalty (7.04.080); Abandonment-Reporting Violations (7.04.080); City-Owned Animals (7.08.060); Use of Poisons Prohibited (7.08.070); Animal Regulation and Disease Control Department Services- Fees (7.08.080); Registration, Vaccination, and Microchip (7.12.020). Paula emphasized on the impact, the changes to the Veterinary care of city-owned animals (7.04.70) will do for the veterinarian (s) at the shelter. This change will allow a veterinary officer to act as a designated caretaker for the animals in care or control of Animal Services. With the large number of animals not reclaimed, the Abandonment-Reporting Violations (7.04.080) changes will now transfer ownership to Animal Services on the 7th calendar day. The new ordinance for groomers and grooming services will be effective on January 1, 2021. The changes are in Chapter 7.15; Article 2 and Article 3. The key points in Article 2 are: a groomer must obtain a certificate through a training course, obtain a groomer license, have a background check sworn statement and the license can be revoked or suspended. Some of the key points in Article 3 are: Shops are required to have certificate posted, have a list and background check of groomers, provide means for pet owners to observe the grooming process, confirmation of vaccinations and microchips for all pets and report all injuries and deaths. Article 4 (7.15.170) explains the Enforcement Authority, Article 5 is for Inspections (7.15.1800) and

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Article 6 is for Appeals (7.15.190.) A public hearing is scheduled for August 18, 2020 and meetings with groomers and grooming shops will run from September to January.

Representative Alexandra Anello mentioned that with the community's complaints on the lack of tethering laws, she wanted to inform the ASAC that she is interested in moving this concern forward.

Barbara Candelaria inquired about the type of certification course the groomers will be required to take. Paula explained that the certification course will be any one she approves and Ana Schumacher added that a CPR course will be part of it.

B. Promote Education and Engagement of Animal Health and Welfare**B1. Discussion and action on a recommendation to create a mobile pet pantry for individuals that are struggling financially during COVID.**

Julie Rutledge mentioned that Sandra DiFrancesco's was wanting to find ways to help people who are in need of pet food, but aren't mobile. Paula mentioned that the public can check the website or call 915-212-8735 for the food pantry. Pet food and supplies have been purchased with a grant that DAS received and is currently reaching out to neighborhoods. DAS is scheduled to visit the Chihuahueta neighborhood on Monday, August 17, 2020. The Neighborhood Association president has also reached out for assistance. Several Parks and Rec. locations are providing pet food and services with the help of volunteers. In addition, staff members, Animal Protection officers, Animal Care Attendants and Paula are also ready to deliver pet food and services if needed. Paula added that she liked the idea of a mobile pet pantry.

B2. Discussion and action on how to increase public awareness of the need to clean up after your dog

Member was not present

6. Future Agenda Item

None

7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:11 PM

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Celeste Varela motioned to adjourn; Elvira Stephanie Frias seconded; all members voted in favor, none opposed, and motion passed unanimously.

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Prepared by: Maribel Karisch

Approved by A.S.A.C. Chairman

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Rutledge", is written over a horizontal line.

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