

Animal Control Advisory Board Minutes

October 19, 2016

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The Animal Control Advisory Board meeting was held at 4 p.m. at 777 E. Waterman, Wichita, KS 67202. Eight Board members and three City staff were present; 12 citizens attended.

Members Present

Teresa Burks
Chris Hagman
Judy Handley
Judy Hill
Stephanie Fisk McCurdy
Melodee Myers
Christy Rafferty
John Stevens

Staff Present

Capt. Brent Allred – WPD
Lt. Joe Schroeder - WPD
Janet Johnson – City Manager’s Office

Members Absent

Guests

Listed on last page

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Chair Stephanie McCurdy called the meeting to order. Minutes from the Sept. 21 meeting were approved 8-0.

STAFF REPORTS

Lt. Joe Schroeder, Animal Control Supervisor, provided Shelter statistics for September.

September reclaims (animals picked up by their owner)

- Dogs – 169 – 34% of total intakes
- Cats – 11 – 2% of total intakes
- Other – 1 – 3% of total intakes
- Total reclaims 181 - 18%

September transfers (animals taken by KHS or other rescues)

- Dogs – 290 - 59% of total intakes
- Cats – 233 – 48% of total intakes
- Other – 30 – 79% of total intakes
- Total – 553 – 54% of total intakes

September euthanasia

- Dogs – 36- 7% of total intakes
- Cats – 241 – 50% of total intakes
- Other – 7 – 18% of total intakes
- Total – 284 – 28% of total intakes

Judy Hill asked if the Humane Society takes any of the cats from the Shelter. **Lt. Schroeder** said yes, but right now they are reporting they are full and can’t take any more.

He said he ran the numbers for dog bites in dog parks and didn’t find any reported, other than the one he reported on at last month’s meeting.

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In terms of significant events at the Shelter, he said really the only thing in the past month was the situation with the Afghan hound that made the news. He said Animal Control received a call about an injured animal. Upon checking, they discovered the dog, which was in bad shape and was therefore transported to the contract veterinarian. He said the dog was badly matted and had a large wound on its front leg that was a result of a mat. He said the wound did have maggots and the dog was dehydrated. The dog was then transported to the Animal Shelter where it was given the medications that were prescribed. Shelter staff made arrangements for KHS staff to shave the dog the next day, but in the meantime a citizen got upset and contacted the Chief of Police, so the dog was taken to the Emergency Vet Clinic where it was shaved down. He said they removed over six pounds of hair from the dog. He said a warrant has been issued for the owner on a neglect charge. The dog was transferred from the Shelter to a local rescue who turned it over to Dr. Teresa Burks for additional treatment. **Burks** said the dog is in hospice care as it is around 14 years old, heartworm positive, has cardiac arrhythmia and most likely pulmonary metastases in its lungs. She said it likely doesn't have long to live, but it will be extremely well cared for during the remainder of its life.

Lt. Schroeder also reported on the field response rate, which was 95.3% for the month of September.

A citizen who lives in the County wanted to know what his legal obligations were concerning a dog that had showed up on his property. **Lt. Schroeder** said incidents that occur in the county are outside the jurisdiction of Wichita Animal Control, but that they could post a photograph of it at the Shelter in case anyone is looking for it.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Spay Neuter Committee

Teresa Burks, committee chair, said the committee is focusing on cats and pit bulls as those animals are the bulk of what is coming into the Shelter and being euthanized. She said the first meeting focused on pit bulls and they are working on putting together an education campaign. She passed out and reviewed a draft of a proposed rack card that provides information on the City pit bull ordinance, what owners need to do to be in compliance, as well as community resources that help with spay/neuter surgeries. She said they can be passed out door to door, or placed at various locations.

Burks said the committee is also exploring the use of billboards. She said the minimum they can do is five; the reduced cost to a non-profit is \$675 for a month. She said the downside is that if a full-pay client wants to use the same billboard, then we lose the billboard before the month is up. She said on the positive side they want to focus on low income areas, which aren't always desirable to other advertisers. She said the use of billboards has been successful for Spay Neuter Kansas. She reported they started the cat discussion at the last meeting. She said feral and sickly cats account for the majority of the 50% euthanasia rate at the Shelter. The committee would like to get the pit bull education campaign going within a month or so and by December or

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January get a “no littering” campaign going for cats because that’s the time period to prevent cats from having babies.

Judy Handley suggested they include phone numbers on the rack card, not just web sites; **Burks** agreed.

Dangerous Dog Committee

John Stevens, committee chair, passed out a fine comparison sheet of charts that included information from Wichita and other cities of similar size. He said Dennis Graves, Animal Control Supervisor, gave a very informative presentation at the last committee meeting. He said they are spending time on identifying the problem so they will have a clear understanding of what the true issues are. He said early indicators are showing a need for additional staff to ensure owners who have a dog that has been deemed dangerous are in compliance. They also want to determine what the cost is for owners to comply with all of the requirements for keeping a dangerous dog, such as appropriate enclosures. He said neighborhoods continue to lose postal service due to dogs running at large and being aggressive with mail carriers. He said mail carriers have a right to go to work and not be threatened. The committee is also looking at how Animal Control prioritizes calls and discussing what level of service is appropriate for Wichita. **Stevens** said he doesn’t believe the City’s ordinance is lacking; he said what’s lacking is staff to enforce the ordinance.

Data Collection Committee

Judy Handley, committee chair, said the committee has nothing to report. The City is still working on getting all of the data back into Chameleon.

Stevens asked what the process is for requesting data: **McCurdy** said he should simply send an e-mail request to Janet Johnson and cc Judy Handley and McCurdy.

Action Taken: Receive and file.

McCurdy asked **Shonda Koob** from Midwest Single Source to come forward. **McCurdy** presented her with a certificate of appreciation and a small gift from the Board for her donation of time and printing costs for the Board’s public education effort. **Burks** also thanked Koob, as well as Board members Chris Hagman, Melodee Myers and Judy Hill for helping pass out the information at Woofstock.

OLD BUSINESS

Animal Cruelty and Neglect

After last month’s review and discussion, **Teresa Burks** made a motion stating “we have the laws, education processes and tools available to adequately assess cruelty and neglect cases; other than more staff, no changes are needed at this time.”

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Discussion following the motion led to a request for additional information. Board Member Judy Hill was to contact the San Diego Animal Shelter regarding the process they used to get their animal offenses re-classified to a felony level.

Hill reported that getting laws changed isn't as easy as it sounds and confirmed that the changes made in San Diego were a result of the state statutes being changed there. She said there are 35 states where animal cruelty is considered a felony. She also talked about the process of taking a cruelty or neglect case to Municipal Court, and related some issues regarding the Judges that had been reported to her.

It was confirmed that Kansas does have a felony animal cruelty statute – Magnum's law. **Hill** said it would appear it's not being enforced.

A citizen asked about a pit bull that Animal Control picked up that appeared to be a victim of dog fighting. **Capt. Allred** explained felony animal cruelty cases are assigned to a Detective who works with the Animal Control Officers to build a case, and then presents the evidence to the District Attorney's Office for formal charges. He said the biggest challenge is that they often aren't able to collect enough evidence to pursue felony charges. He said concerning the pit bull that was found at 9th and Grove, it had obviously been abused, but Animal Control hasn't been able to determine an owner. He said if they can't find an owner, they can't pursue charges. He said they are featuring that case on Crime Stoppers trying to get the public's help. He said they need information on who owns these animals, who is having dog fights, where they are occurring, why they are occurring, etc. He said animal cruelty isn't just a police problem, it's a community problem and the community needs to step up and report these illegal activities. He said WPD is happy to seek felony charges, but they have to have sufficient evidence to do so.

A citizen asked what kind of evidence is needed. **Capt. Allred** said an address, a witness report, anything helps. **Amy Heggstad** said a rescue had provided all that information to them on a dog that was being neglected and nothing was ever done.

Action Taken: McCurdy/Hill made a substitute motion to review the applicable fines and penalties under City Ordinance 6.04.035 A 1-8. Motion passed 8-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Dog park rules

The Board was provided the current rules for all three public dog parks, as well as the City ordinance that governs City dog parks. The Board was asked by a citizen to specifically consider the implementation of age limitations. Discussion ensued on the abilities of various age groups and their astuteness at interacting with dogs. **Burks** said she had concerns about toddlers who are the same height as a large dog. She said when a child's head and a dog's head are on the same level a child can be severely injured or permanently scarred if a bite occurs. **Chris Hagman**, who frequents the dog park, said he also thinks that small children getting trampled is a valid concern.

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Randi Carter said she takes her four-year-old to the dog park and since she's a single parent, she wouldn't be able to go to the park if she couldn't take her daughter.

The question was broached as to whether incidents that occur at dog parks are being reported. Some of the Board members surmised that incidents likely go unreported. **Capt. Allred** explained that for police, dog park rule violations would be a very low priority and police would respond to more serious calls first, so often, by the time they are able to respond, the offender has left the area. He said he would be willing to authorize overtime pay for an Animal Control Officer to spend some time monitoring the dog parks and reminding users of what the rules are. He said before changes are recommended he thinks the Board should do some more research, possibly including a survey. **Hagman** said he receives frequent complaints about problems at the Meridian dog park, but even when police are called, the person has typically already left the area. One of the primary issues identified was that of regular users feeling like they have ownership of the park and that they can dictate what the rules are.

The Board discussed doing a survey and talked about using tools such as Facebook and Nextdoor.com to distribute it.

Action Taken: McCurdy/Burks made a motion to conduct a survey to gather public input on issues related to dog parks. Motion passed 8-0.

PUBLIC AGENDA

Scheduled items

Cheryl Taskinen, Friends of Felines, responded to a TNR concern that was presented to the Board during last month's public agenda. She also said she attended the last spay/neuter sub-committee meeting and they have maps of "Hot Spots" where the biggest areas of concern are for impoundment of dogs and cats. **Taskinen** requested that the advisory board form a TNR committee to review the hot spot areas, compose a solution and get acceptance to do a pilot program.

Action taken: McCurdy/Handley made a motion to form a TNR subcommittee. Motion passed 8-0. Handley agreed to chair the committee and Christy Rafferty will co-chair. Names of potential committee members need to be e-mailed to McCurdy or Handley.

Off Agenda items

George Theoharis said at the last dangerous dog committee meeting Dennis Graves gave a report that included the number of dog bites compared to the number of dogs deemed dangerous. **Theoharis** said he was surprised to learn it was such a small amount – only around 7%.

Arlene Piatkowski said she is associated with K-9 Rescue and has rescued Rottweilers for many years. She explained how she was required to carry insurance that cost about \$5 a month. She said if someone has a dangerous dog on their property and they don't disclose that to their insurance company, that can be considered fraud and they can be turned in to their insurance company.

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Amy Heggstad said the statistics Theoharis referenced are misleading because the way the ordinance is written, an attack can be something as simple as a puppy scratch or a dog running after someone.

Kimberly Pugliese announced that Midge Grinstead, Human Society of the United States, is holding a public meeting at 6 p.m. Oct. 25th at the Central Library to discuss the 2017 legislative agenda.

Board Agenda

Issues and Updates

McCurdy asked the Board if they wanted to receive the Environment Court docket that Johnson had sent them. The Board agreed they would like to have the information; **Burks** asked if they could also receive the outcomes. **Johnson** said Municipal Court doesn't do dispositions like District Court does, but that she will send them what is available. She said if there is a specific case the Board is interested in she will get the information for them.

Judy Hill said she would like to change the meeting time. She said the building is available and there are only 13 people at the meeting. She said there are a lot more people who would like to come, but they can't leave work early to do so. She said the meeting should at least be moved to 5 p.m. She said the Board isn't getting feedback and people don't know what's going on. **McCurdy** provided some background and said the meeting is early so that City staff can participate without incurring overtime pay. **Hill** said staff could leave after giving their report. She made a motion to change the time of the meeting to 5 p.m. Motion died for lack of a second.

Hill said the City needs a hot line to report dog fighting and dog abuse, similar to a suicide line. **McCurdy** said we have Crime Stoppers. **Hill** said she doesn't think that's what the Board needs. **Capt. Allred** said it's more about getting the word out and there will be a Crime Stoppers segment running regarding dog fighting.

Hill also said the Board needs a Facebook page, and she volunteered to administrate the page. She said it would be a great way to communicate what the Board is doing. **McCurdy** said Facebook has been discussed and the City Communications Team was consulted. She said they denied the request because City Boards don't have Facebook pages. If they did, they would have to be administered by a City staff member and would be subject to all of the City regulations concerning social media.

Several Board members said they post the meeting agendas on their personal FB page.

Burks gave Board members flyers that were left over from the Woofstock event for distribution.

Action Taken: Receive and file

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Adjourned

Guests

Debra Miller Stevens

Arlene Piatkowski

Shonda Koob

George Theoharis

Ken Lockwood

Kevin Barnes

Cheryl Taskinen

Amy Hegstad

Randi Carter

Kimberly Pugliesine

Tammy Johnson

Shelley Wilkinson