



Forsyth County Animal Services Advisory Board

March 21, 2019

6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Forsyth County Animal Control Department
5570 Sturmer Park Circle
Winston-Salem, NC 27105

Bill Cowan, Chair
Priscilla Ivester, Vice-Chair
Janice Freeman
Tara Stebbins
Mitch Cromer
Terry Jessup
Amy Pugh, DVM
Cristina Griffin
P.J. Lofland
Joseph Chrobak
Andrew Martin

Members Present

P.J. Lofland
Priscilla Ivester Andrew Martin
Bill Cowan Terry Jessup
Mitch Cromer Amy Pugh

Staff Present

David Morris
Scott Bird
Tonya Ward

CALL TO ORDER

- The Advisory Board meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm by Bill Cowan. Staff stated Janice Freeman, Tara Stebbins, and Cristina Griffin had advised they would not be able to attend the meeting. It was noted that new member Andrew Martin was in attendance for his first meeting since being appointed in January. He introduced himself to the rest of the Board.
- *Approval of meeting minutes January 17, 2019*
MOTION: PJ Lofland made a motion to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Priscilla Ivester and the minutes were approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment

OLD BUSINESS

- *NC Debt Set Off*
Shelter Manager Scott Bird stated the Debt Set Off program has collected \$10,577 to date with more expected as tax season comes to a close. He said 2015-2017 has been submitted and staff has started working on 2018 citations. Priscilla Ivester asked if perhaps something could be posted on the County website showing the large amount that has been collected to date and highlighting the fact that Animal Services is working hard to collect on past citations.

NEW BUSINESS

- ***Discussion of Animal Services Board-Directed Initiative Report, Guest speaker Damon Sanders-Pratt***
Deputy County Manager Damon Sanders-Pratt explained that the County Commissioners had asked for projects including looking at Animal Services and researching different models. They spoke with other counties, collected statistics, and interviewed focus groups. The report was given to the Commissioners. Priscilla Ivester asked about the pros vs cons of each model. There was discussion of the models. Public Health model would provide more preventative education but no law enforcement. Animal Services is doing well now and could add more education to resolve that. The Sheriff's Office model would have more staff but those departments are not used to ongoing cases like those handled currently by Animal Services. It is a very different operation with 24/7 dispatch. Bill Cowan said this model would require large scale changes such as software. He pointed out that they are already involved if it is a criminal case so there isn't need. Andrew Martin said since he was new to the Board, he would like some clarification as to why there would need to be two separate organizations. Lt. Morris explained that Animal Services has both sworn and non-sworn officers which allows for different handling of calls. PJ Lofland pointed out that both police officers and deputies are not trained to deal with animals. She further stated that most calls are not criminal and do not need to be handled as such. Damon Sanders-Pratt stated that Animal Services is "not broken" and therefore doesn't need to be "fixed". He added that many calls do not require a sworn officer. There was discussion of the Sheriff being an elected official and therefore politics can come into play. Several Board members expressed concern with this and discussed the likelihood the people would try to influence the handling of cases. Damon Sanders-Pratt said no decision has been made yet and he is unsure how the process would even work. Mitch Cromer stated that Animal Services is doing a good job as is and doesn't need to be placed under the Sheriff's Office. There was a discussion of having Animal Services under the Sheriff's Office in Durham County vs. in Cabarrus County. Damon Sanders-Pratt pointed out that one of the main problems is citizens wanting laws enforced that do not exist, such as pet limits or having animals kept outdoors. Priscilla Ivester said Animal Services is a well run department and should stay as a stand-alone department, Mitch Cromer agreed. PJ Lofland said she would like to make a motion that the board vote to recommend Animal Services remain a stand-alone department. Terry Jessup seconded the motion. Five members voted yes and said they wished to recommend to the Commissioners that Animal Services remain a stand-alone department. Dr. Pugh said she wished to abstain from the vote until she had more time to consider all information. There was one no vote from member Andrew Martin. The recommendation passed 5-1 that the Advisory Board recommend to the County Commissioners that Animal Services remain a stand-alone department and not be merged into the Sheriff's Office or any other department.
- ***Rabies Clinic - March 23rd***
Staff stated that the first Rabies Clinic of 2019 will be held on Saturday March 23rd from 9-11 am, both one and three year vaccines will be offered. Low cost spay/neuter vouchers will also be offered by FCAS and FHS will be offering microchips.
- ***Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair***
A vote was conducted to determine the Board Chair and Vice Chair for the coming year. Board members voted and results were tallied by staff. Bill Cowan was voted Chair once again for the coming year and Mitch Cromer Vice Chair.
- ***Hearing Tribunals***
The docket and members for the Tribunal Hearings for March 28 was discussed. Staff noted that hearings are scheduled for April 18 but there is still a backlog of unheard appeals. It appears since FCAS has begun the Debt Set Off program, more citizens are filing appeals. There was discussion of adding an additional date on a Saturday when hearings could be held all day. The hearings would be in two sections - from 9-1 and 2-5. April 27th was suggested and the Board agreed on that date. Bill Cowan said he was available all day. Amy Pugh said she could come in the afternoon from 2-5. Andrew Martin also said he could come from 2-5. It was suggested he come observe on either March 28th or April 18th before serving on the Tribunal on the 27th of April. He said he would come one of the two days. Staff noted that his serving on April 27th would be conditional on observing one of the previous dates. Several other members said they would check their schedules and let staff know if they could serve on the 27th.

- ***Monthly Report***

Lt. Morris presented the department monthly statistical report for February 2019. Calls received are down slightly from February of last year but up year to date. Citations are also down slightly but this remains due to shortage of officers. FCAS hopes to fill those positions soon. License transactions are up year to date by a small percentage. Euthanasia is down 9% from February last year and animals impounded are down 20% year to date. In the new category of follow ups and assist calls there have been 2,442 year to date.

ADJOURN

MOTION: With no further business, Bill Cowan asked for a motion to adjourn. PJ Lofland made the motion, which was seconded by Amy Pugh. Bill Cowan adjourned the meeting at 7:26 pm.