

DRAFT – As Proposed by Grace Johns, Committee Chair, April 10, 2019

**Broward County Animal Care Advisory Committee  
Minutes of February 8, 2019 meeting**

A meeting of the Animal Care Advisory Committee was held on Friday, February 8, 2019 at the Broward County Animal Care shelter, 2400 SW 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL. Grace Johns, Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:17 am.

**1. Roll Call**

Present: Debra Parsons-Drake, Grace Johns, Danny Finkelstein, Wendy Schugar-Martin, Joanne Oyen, Michael Vadnal. Six Board members were present, comprising a quorum.

Absent: Dr. David Eich

Broward County Animal Care and Adoption Division (County): Alessandra Medri, Assistant Director; Lisette Murado, Committee Coordinator; Maite Azcoitia, Broward County Attorney; Wade Sparkman, Animal Care Business Manager; and Damaris Henlon, Broward County Attorney.

- 2. Public Input** – Rita Green made several comments regarding shelter operations that she has experienced including inadequate dog medical care, filthy dogs, and firing of volunteers. She believes that purebred dogs should be sent to breed specific rescue groups and volunteered to help establish relationships with these rescues but staff has not followed up with her.

Mayda Genser shared her recent experience reaching out to the shelter to find her lost 15-year old cat. Ms. Genser became frustrated that she could not get information in a timely manner from the shelter. She had to wait for the shelter to open and then looked at pictures. She said that the picture of her cat was barely recognizable. She was told by staff that the cat was given away. She later found out that her cat was returned to the neighborhood where she was found. She recommends that staff answer the phone when shelter is closed and that shelter hours should be extended to help people find their lost pet and to improve adoptions. People need to go to work and cannot be at shelter during regular work hours.

Jackie Sorrentino said she has been a Broward shelter rescue for the past 6 to 7 years. On January 23, 9 dogs were given 72-hour notice due to behavior problems. The shelter has never had this many behavior problems in dogs. All 9 dogs were rescued. She followed one of the dogs and that dog is fine now. In her experience, the dogs housed at the shelter are neglected and suffer from poor living conditions including cleaning dog runs with the dogs in them and filthy dogs. There is a lack of attention paid to these dogs including inadequate walking and enrichment. Then after all that, the dog is considered dangerous and subject to euthanasia. Seems very unfair to the dog. The shelter seems to have a staff shortage.

Karen Sands said that she supports what the others have said during this public input and shared her experience at the shelter. She said that Bella was killed after being posted for less than 72 hours. When Roz asked why she was killed she was told that Bella had 2

incidents in the play yard. However, according to Karen, Bella was killed 2 weeks after her last incident so no one knows why she was killed. Karen said that killing dogs with treatable behavior problems and illnesses is not “humane euthanasia”. The shelter environment promotes anxiety, aggression and fear. Dogs are not marketed. They have feces caked to them. She said she no longer trusts what the shelter director says. The community can provide ideas and funding and help but these offers are being ignored.

Committee member, Danny Finkelstein, said that he cherishes their voices and is concerned about these accusations. He said he had been listening to and trusting the new director. He wants to hear the public praise the shelter not criticize it. If these dogs were people being treated this way the police would be involved. Volunteers should have leadership positions.

Committee member Debra Parsons- Drake said that she appreciates and respects their public input today. She needs to look at both sides of these situations.

Committee discussion ensued regarding whether the committee should respond in writing to the public input. Chair Grace Johns said that the purpose of public input at the meeting is for members to listen and take the information into consideration as they make recommendations to staff and the BOCC. However, the committee will not be formally responding to each issue addressed during public input. Ms. Medri stated that staff are happy to respond to questions and wishes to be transparent. She said she believes it is good to listen to both sides of a story. Chair Johns thanked the four women for their input.

Chair Johns announced to the committee members that Mr. Byron Flores passed away recently and expressed her sadness and condolences to his family and shelter staff. She was looking forward to working with him as the new committee coordinator.

- 3. Use of Money Held in Animal Care General Trust Fund** – Wade Sparkman, Animal Care Business Manager and Human Resources Officer presented the cash balances of the four Animal Care trust funds and provided a handout of these balances (Attachment 1). The four trust funds are: (1) General; (2) Sterilization; (3) Adoption; and (4) Victim. All four trust funds were described by Mr. Sparkman and discussed by committee members.

As of September 30, 2018, the General Trust fund has a balance of \$389,533 in the “Reserve – Revenue Stabilization” and a balance of \$77,218.16 in the “Professional Services – Medical”. Regarding the reserve account, discussion ensued over whether this money could be better spent since it has not been designated for any beneficial use. Ms. Medri suggested that the committee draft a letter to the BOCC recommending how this money should be spent. For example, some of the money might be allocated to the sterilization trust fund which is funded only through rabies tag registration sales.

Committee discussion ensued as to why there is not sufficient revenue in the Sterilization Trust Fund through registration sales. Ms. Medri said it is difficult to enforce as people move around the county. Mr. Finkelstein stated that this fund should be growing through registration sales not declining. Chair Johns stated that enforcement could be sought through emailing and texting pet owners. Mr. Sparkman stated that the County needs the person’s permission to email or text. Mr. Finkelstein stated that we cannot give up on enforcement

and that staff needs to find a smiley face way of enforcement. Ms. Schugar-Martin requested that tag registration sales become a discussion item for the next meeting. Chair Johns agreed.

Ms. Schugar-Martin said that she distributed revisions to the “Professional Services – Medical” procedures for reimbursement. She referred to them as “bylaws” and not a change to Chapter 4 – Dogs and Cats. Ms. Schugar-Martin asked Lisette to distribute her revisions to committee members for future discussion and Lisette agreed.

Chair Johns said that spending of the General Trust Fund and increasing rabies tag registrations will be discussed at every meeting until the issues are resolved. Ms. Azcoitia said that the discussion should also include guidelines regarding the reimbursement of veterinarian bills under the “Professional Services – Medical” category.

**4. Approval of minutes from the August 17, 2018 meeting (Attachment 2)**

Chair Johns presented an amendment to the August 17 meeting minutes. Ms. Schugar-Martin made motion to approve the minutes as amended and it was seconded by Ms. Oyen. The motion passed unanimously.

**5. Approval of minutes from the November 9<sup>th</sup> meeting (Attachment 3)**

Chair Johns presented an amendment to the November 9<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes. Ms. Schugar-Martin made motion to approve the minutes as amended and it was seconded by Ms. Oyen. The motion passed unanimously.

**6. Approval of Previously Proposed 2019 Meeting Dates of February 8, May 10, August 9 and November 8**

Mr. Finkelstein made motion to approve the previously proposed meeting dates and it was seconded by Ms. Schugar-Martin. The motion passed unanimously.

**7. Discuss and Approve Two Additional Meeting Dates for a Total of 6 Meetings in 2019**

Chair Johns proposed that the committee have two additional meetings in 2019 because of the many issues that the committee wishes to address. Committee discussion ensued and the following dates were proposed: March 22 and June 14. Discussion ensued regarding the impact of missed meetings on committee membership. Chair Johns said she would present that information at the next meeting. Ms. Schugar-Martin made a motion to approve the two additional meeting dates of March 22 and June 14 and it was seconded by Ms. Oyen. The motion passed unanimously.

**8. Discuss and Approve extending maximum meeting time to 2.5 hours from 2.0 hours**

Chair Johns proposed that the maximum meeting time be extended by 30 minutes to provide more time for issues to be presented and discussed. Ms. Schugar-Martin made a motion to allow the meeting to be extended to a maximum of 2.5 hours but the budgeted

hours should not exceed two hours. Ms. Oyen seconded the motion. Much committee discussion ensued. An informal vote to extend the time by 30 minutes was split 3 in favor versus 3 opposed. Chair Johns withdrew the motion and will address it again at a future meeting.

**9. Staff Presentation: Programs Addressing Kitten Season**

At this point there were only 17 minutes left until the 2.0-hour meeting time limit would be met. Ms. Schugar-Martin asked if this staff presentation could be made at the next meeting so that she could address item 11 of the agenda titled “Memorandum to Mayor and BOCC from Bertha Henry regarding Best Friends Shelter Report”. Committee members agreed. Lisa Mendheim agreed to provide the kitten season presentation at the next meeting.

**10. “Memorandum to Mayor and BOCC from Bertha Henry regarding Best Friends Shelter Report”**

Because this was an agenda item proposed by Ms. Schugar-Martin, Chair Johns yielded the floor to her to make her presentation. The main points of Ms. Schugar-Martin’s presentation are as follows.

- a. There is no plan by shelter leadership to address the Best Friends recommendations.
- b. The memorandum states that recommendations (3) and (4) were completed but Ms. Schugar-Martin disagrees.

Regarding Recommendation (3), Ms. Schugar-Martin stated that she has seen dogs being hosed down in the kennel and cages are being cleaned with the dogs inside them. These procedures are not best practices and spread disease. A recent parvo outbreak caused some dogs to be euthanized. She said there is simply not enough staff to properly complete this recommendation.

Regarding Recommendation (4), Ms. Schugar-Martin stated that in her observations there is no “every dog, every day” at the shelter. The staff hiring had not even been completed at the time this memo was written. There is still insufficient staff to properly take care of the dogs.

- c. Three of the four priorities are not being addressed: Animal population management; adequate staffing; and increasing positive outcomes. There is no plan in writing to address these issues, including goals, procedures, SOPs, and emergency contact info.
- d. There is no coaching or guidance regarding how to address these priorities.
- e. This committee should recommend to the BOCC that the County hire a professional management company to provide the management skills and training to humanely operate an animal shelter. Existing skill sets of staff should be supplemented through training. There are over 200 dogs at the shelter with two to a run. There is not enough staff and management efficiency. The shelter is too top heavy. Not enough shelter workers. Only 8

part-time and 2 full-time kennel workers is not enough. The staff needs to be re-organized to address the important issues.

f. Why isn't the County downloading animal no kill sheltering programs off the internet. It is easy and free.

g. Why did the County shift implementation of the TNR program from DPC to internally. DPC was only charging \$20 per cat to trap, fix and return. How can the County do this for less money?

Mr. Parsons-Drake stated that she would not support any effort of this committee to make a management recommendation to the BOCC such that the County should higher a management consulting firm to re-organize the shelter.

Ms. Schugar-Martin replied that four items need to be addressed by the committee: (1) employee status; (2) reaching out to rescues; (3) embracing transport partnerships and (4) address the bullying of volunteers.

Ms. Oyen shared her experience trying to find Bella and the other 72-hour dogs in the shelter and could not find them. No staff was around to ask. The front desk did not know where they were. It turns out they had been moved to isolation. She was told that the director was in the building but she could not find her. Many of these problems would be solved with more trained staff. You need people paying attention to notice an infected ear and to play with a dog. Dogs need attention. Ms. Oyen requested that the committee continue to discuss the Best Friends report at future meetings and would like to discuss improved customer service at the shelter.

Ms. Medri said that County hiring includes steps that together take a long period of time to complete and it is out of the director's hands. Mr. Finkelstein replied that this is not an excuse for poor dog care practices. He asked why does the shelter have these problems when there are many volunteers willing and able to work at the shelter?

Ms. Schugar-Martin requested that all items on today's agenda that were not discussed today be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

## **11. Adjournment**

Ms. Schugar-Martin moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Parsons-Drake. The motion passed unanimously. The time was 1:25 pm. The next meeting will be held on March 22, 2019.