



TULARE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

THURSDAY, DEC 10, 2020
ZOOM MEETING

Meeting Called to Order:	1:03 pm by Kim Gisler
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ATTENDANCE

PRESENT: Amy Shuklian, BJ Motko, Damaris Menchaca, Donna Sims, Ivy Ruiz, Kim Gisler, Laurie Eberle, Mary Dieterle, Michelle Hart, Michael Cortez, Oma Mansfield, Patrick Hamblin, Tricia Stever Blattler

ALTERNATES PRESENT:

EXCUSED ABSENCE: Bridgette Davis, Donna Grigsby

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE: Augie Gonzalez, Bonnie Heasley

GUESTS PRESENT: Mary Jungwirth, Cassie Heffington, Marit Erickson

AGENDA / DISCUSSION: **Approve the minutes for October 8, 2020**

Discussion: Patrick asked if we had a quorum. Mary said we would need 10 people. Then we can proceed with calling the meeting to order. Kim asked if there were any questions on the minutes.

Patrick welcomed all of the new members to our advisory committee. We appreciate your taking the time to apply and then the time involved with these meetings so we try and keep it as short as possible. Again, we're here to benefit the Animal Services operations of Tulare County and to bring new ideas and to help support. Cassie provides updates as the Animal Services Manager. And then we also have ad hoc committees that we will go over later in the agenda. Again, I would like to welcome all of you. We're looking forward to the new members being a part of this. Especially with some of the great things that we have coming our way in Animal Services that Cassie and I will touch on a little bit later.

Motion:	Approve the minutes of the Advisory Committee meeting of October 8, 2020		
1st:	Patrick Hamblin	2nd :	Laurie Eberle
Vote	Yes: Unanimous	No:	

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

AGENDA / DISCUSSION ITEM: **New Business**

Renewal Applications: Patrick said this was just for those whose term was coming up for renewal and he believes that Mary sent those out. Did you get everyone in that you needed? And have they been submitted to the Board? Mary said that the only one she did not receive was Augie's and everyone else's renewal applications have been sent to the Board.

Kim asked Patrick if he wanted to introduce the new people now. Patrick said they could go around and have them introduce themselves. Michelle Hart is a member at large. She lives in Terra Bella and has been here since 2005 and grew up in Porterville. Michael is from Visalia and works for Fresno Unified. Tricia Stever Blattler is the executive director for the Tulare County Farm Bureau, which is a nonprofit. She represents about 1200 production members that have both livestock and crops and works on a variety of animal related issues here in the county. She personally joined this committee more so because of her interest and background and support of animal rescue. She has been a volunteer for about 8 years now with a couple of different groups including a breed based rescue in Fresno County for Labrador retrievers. You might see a couple of my fan club behind me. She has also gotten to know Cassie in her role this last spring. They started connecting more and she had the privilege of working with Cassie very closely during the recent SQL fire and worked in a support role to help with livestock evacuation. She comes to the committee with a kind of variety of different hats and roles and

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backgrounds but is very excited and supportive of Cassie and her team. She wants to contribute what she can from the Farm Bureau and from her personal role as a volunteer in the community and as a person who advocates rescue and spay and neuter. Kim welcomed all three newcomers and she appreciates their joining us on this mission.

AGENDA / DISCUSSION ITEM: **Update from Animal Services**

Cassie said she will not talk about the fire. Welcome to all of the new members. She is very excited to have new faces and like she has told this group before many times, please don't hesitate to contact me and ask me questions. If you need anything, just let me know. My cell number is pretty available, and you're welcome to email Mary and she can give you all of my contact information. So not much has changed since the last meeting as far as operations. We are continuing to operate despite the pandemic at fairly normal levels. We are concentrating our field services efforts on urgent and emergency calls but that's pretty much all the time allows because we have so many urgent and emergency calls. We are not turning away strays at the gate. We still have our gate closed as basically a triage place, but we are open to the public by appointment for adoptions and reclaims and everything else. Normally mostly doing licensing online and we are not declining people if they come. We are just doing everything basically car side with masks and social distancing.

Our biggest new piece of information is our spay and neuter clinic. We have actually put a down payment on the building and they are working out the details on the remainder of the donation, which should be completed probably mid-January. It's a six-week time from there for them to complete the build out of the inside of the modular building. We're already starting the groundwork here at the shelter for electric and septic, so everything is moving along really well and I'm excited that things are moving forward.

As far as statistics, Cassie started running some really preliminary year end statistics. It's still the middle of December, but so far our Oct live release rate was 92%, November was 90% and that was largely due to the fact that we had a large influx of animals with parvo and a large influx of animals who were very sick and very injured but we still had a 90% live release rate. And that brings our year to date so far just short of 90%, 89%. 2018 for comparison was 59% and 2019 was 66%. Euthanasia numbers from 2020 to 2019 are down 86%.

First calls for service. Despite the pandemic from January to November, our officers have run 5500 calls and that's between one to four officers. That's an average of 500 calls a month or about 125 a week or about 20 to 30 a day. So, we are still running massive amounts of calls.

Kim asked if the building was going to be on the east side. Cassie said it will be directly in front of the road right across the parking lot from her office window next to the cattery. That made the most sense for the septic system and the electrical, because it is right in front of the electrical to run a line down and it is graded appropriately to get to the septic system. And the cat house stays where it is. Kim said you're not taking any cats right now? Cassie said we take sick and injured cats and cats that are too young to care for themselves or are not able to care for themselves. Such as a very old cat or a cat that is obviously owned by someone and has a microchip. Basically, we are taking cats on a case by case basis, but we are not taking healthy community cats right now. The point would be to utilize the clinic to do a community cat program in which we would take those cats in intake and fix them and put them back. That is the plan.

Patrick has been working quite a few hours on getting everything in place in order to move forward with accepting the donation. The primary donation and the donors are working tirelessly and are actually trying to secure additional donations to come from the Bay Area so that we can successfully launch the

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clinic. We should be opening up recruitment here in the next week or two if all goes well for the veterinarian position. Once we get things finalized and are able to make the payment towards the modular building, then they will start building that out. We are going to start looking at a press release to announce this is coming soon to Tulare County and then to also highlight a lot of the amazing things that have taken place over the last few years and then the award this last year. Again, it has been a struggle because our focus is primarily on COVID at this time.

We had the new people introduce themselves and we should go through here and have each individual introduce themselves. Patrick is the Division Manager and the agency representative and he oversees Animal Services. They report to him and he used to be the Animal Services Manager until they were fortunate enough to recruit Cassie over from Kings County and bring her on board to take his place. The spay/neuter clinic has been a dream of theirs for about six years and it is coming to fruition and they are looking forward to it. He gives Cassie a lot of credit because in addition to managing what she has been doing and keeping things moving forward. Through COVID and a supply chain interruption Animal Services has been key in producing and distributing disinfecting wipes and disinfecting sprays to county departments. So great job to everyone at Animal Services and Cassie for her leadership. As far as the marketing piece, he thinks that is something that will be coming soon. Right now, the public information office and all of the materials going out are addressing all of the shifting changes to county operations and to the ongoing pandemic. So, they haven't been able to dedicate time to start developing the press release and all of the additional information that will be distributed as we move forward with this clinic.

Kim said that they are doing such amazing things there. She will be happy when everybody else gets to hear about it too because you always hear about the bad stuff and this is really good stuff. Cassie you definitely deserve a hand clap and a big thank you. Cassie said that they have an amazing administration through HHS and with the Board of Supervisors and there was no way they would have been able to do this without them. She looks at the progress they've made in the last year. Everyone has been so supportive and made things work. She is very appreciative of Patrick and Rob and the Board for Supervisors for allowing them to take chances and help make a real difference. Prior to Patrick coming on board as the Animal Services Manager this place always had a terrible reputation. Cassie grew up here. In the last six or seven years things have really turned around. Cassie said she cannot take even half of the credit and she has an amazing staff who are just absolute troopers and march through everything. Kim said it is nice having Patrick on the Advisory Committee Board and Amy on the Board and they are right in the middle of everything. Give us the support that we need. Everyone introduced themselves to the new members.

AGENDA / **DISCUSSION ITEM AND POSSIBLE ACTION: Update from Ad-Hoc Committees**

Marit mentioned that if the committees are too long standing then they run into a concern with the Brown Act, that they're not really being ad hoc committees. If they are not meeting, then they are not needed. We ought to get rid of them until an ad hoc committee is truly needed. Kim asked if they needed to vote on that. Marit said yes, if they are going to disband anything. Patrick mentioned before they take any action, he had a suggestion. As they go through the holidays and will be reconvening in February, would we like to provide each of the new members the opportunity to get additional information on the bylaws and then also what these ad hoc committees do. Table this until February as today's like a new meeting and we've got new members and stuff. It's just an idea for conversation among the group. It will give us a solid timeline on what we are going to be doing with the spay/neuter clinic because we may need to look at this advisory committee. To create an ad hoc structure to help us with education and outreach specific to the spay/neuter program that will be launching. There's just a lot of things going on. And more so with the introduction of the new members who may just want a brief overview of what each committee was established for and then provide a two-month period for people to get involved. Then when we reconvene in February, we would be able to determine which ad

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hoc committees we want to continue and which ones we want to disband. Just an idea that he had. Kim said that is a good idea. Marit agreed. Laurie asked if they had to vote to postpone this until the next meeting. Marit said they were okay.

Our current Ad-Hocs:

Education and Outreach: Formed to try and put together educational materials and to identify outreach efforts that we can do within the communities and to shed light on all of the challenges that our county faces on a whole, from population to strays.

Volunteer: Formed to try and recruit volunteers and at this time, we as a county are not bringing on volunteers in areas that are not pertaining to COVID testing or ramping up for vaccination distribution. Our primary focus with volunteers is in that area. So, the volunteer committee is kind of on hold, but ultimately it was to recruit volunteers to assist at the office and with any offsite events.

Membership: Is a come and go committee and depends on the number of vacancies and whether or not we need to review any applications for consideration to be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for appointment to this committee.

New Committees: A standing item in case we have an idea, or something comes up that we feel we can address in a short period of time and then the possibility of the ad hoc committee regarding deceased animals.

Possible Ad-Hoc Committee regarding deceased animals: Damaris said it is something that she doesn't know much of. How much of a problem it is in different areas. Would like to at least offer people information about what to do when they have a deceased animal. If we could have that information more readily available. She knows in the rural areas it does seem to be a problem. And maybe we can look towards solutions of how we can better facilitate avenues that people can take their deceased pets to, so they are not just thrown on the side of the road or in a field.

Tricia said there is a side of that that migrates into agriculture because there is also a tremendous amount of problems with livestock disposal. Both at a commercial level when we have emergencies declared for heat. We get some issued with dead horses and dead livestock being dumped because there's very few legal options for disposal. When rendering plants shut down or refuse certain species due to other restrictions, we really end up with a significant problem in the agriculture community which clearly also spills into the domestic pets part of your pet industry and community. It really is a challenge. Sheep and goats can't go into rendering. Most horses, if they have been treated with a euthanasia drug, also can't go into rendering. Dairies and beef cattle operations usually have a solution for the disposal of carcasses except in time of extreme heat events and then they are sometimes given an emergency exemption to provide onside burial composting of mammals, which usually is not allowed in California. So, there are a variety of issues with the disposal of animal carcasses small and large species that end up being a problem for Ag and Cassie's office. They get the bulk of those calls. Believe it or not, a lot of people mistake the Farm Bureau as another form of a governmental agriculture regulatory or animal control type of office. So, they get a variety of calls that there's a dead bloating horse on the side of the road and dead dogs and dead goats and all kinds of dead things.

It is a challenge every summer. Animal Services, County Ag Department, the Farm Bureau. We struggle with this issue about animal disposal and particularly livestock carcass disposal. I am willing to be a part of this ad hoc committee. We probably need to deal with this in a more significant way. And we need an alternative that works for both large animal disposal and the intermediate needs when there are emergencies. This is definitely something I would like to make sure it gets attention and that we get the right people to the table. There are other county agencies that need to be involved in this conversation, the road yard, Cassie's team, ag commissioner and the Farm Bureau.

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AGENDA / DISCUSSION ITEM AND POSSIBLE ACTION: **Approval of Committee Alternates**

Discussion: Kim asked if the new members know that you can have an alternate to show up for a meeting when they can not. Patrick said he would touch on that as well. He said the Advisory Committee was something that when he took over Animal Services, felt needed to be created as an external committee that would prepare reports to the Board of Supervisors. This was based on the history of Animal Services. So, with Marit and others they developed the bylaws and then the structure, knowing that everyone's schedules are very hectic at times. Each voting member is allowed to identify one alternate who could serve in their capacity, if they are unable to attend a meeting. They also carry the voting rights of that individual during that meeting. If you wish to identify an alternate that will represent you in those situations, you can present their name at the meeting in February. Marit could cover how that process takes place. In the event you have a conflicting meeting, or something comes up and you want to send an alternate because you do not want to miss out on a topic that's being discussed. You have the ability to do so under this advisory committee structure. Marit said it was more of an issue when we were meeting in person but it's also nice because we were struggling for a while to have a quorum so having the alternates available if needed was helpful.

AGENDA / DISCUSSION ITEM: **Announcements and Correspondence**

Discussion: None

AGENDA / DISCUSSION ITEM: **Additional Member Comments**

Discussion: Tricia added a link to an article to chat that she wrote about Cassie and Animal Services during the fire. That sounds like a nice thing. Patrick said that Mary could download or print a copy of it and have it incorporated into the minutes because he takes that as a correspondence or a communication that is a part of this agenda. Tricia said she can send a pdf file of the article to Mary. She believes there is opportunity for relationship building and collaboration and helping make our agriculture and animal agricultural community supportive and aligned with some of the same value statements and goals of Animal Services. She was really proud to write this piece because it kind of gave her a neat opportunity to brag about what Animal Services does. They've been given a lot of challenges this year, like preparing disinfecting wipes for the rest of the county and they don't always get a lot of pats on the backs. Cassie's live release rate and all of the other things that go on at TCAS really are valuable and because the agriculture community is a big part of the county's incorporated constituency. There was a lot of great things going on in September as part of this terrible fire tragedy and she got to highlight just a few of them in her newspaper.

AGENDA / DISCUSSION ITEM: **Suggestions for Future Agenda Items**

Discussion: Kim asked if they were going to talk about the deceased animal situation and the ad hoc committees. Tricia said that if they anticipate that the scope of this ad hoc committee related to deceased animal disposal would be a broad enough reach into the conversations that are prevalent in agriculture? Should she invite county ag to look at forming an ad hoc committee that might study this jointly? She kind of wants to make sure that the ag piece and the large animal livestock piece gets its fair share of attention. Is this is the right body for that? She'll take it through the county ag committee to have that conversation as well because we deal with it every single summer. So, she would like to make sure that gets some real traction before late spring and it gets hot.

Patrick said that maybe there's an opportunity for a joint venture here because it's not just looking at the large carcass disposal for agriculture. From the time that he was at Animal Services and then now with Cassie there, they get continuous calls throughout the year, whether it's summer or winter and it pertains to sheep and goats. They fit the size of domestic animals such as a dog so people automatically think that we have the magical phone number to call for the disposal of these types of carcasses. And

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so he thinks it's something that we can definitely look at and it might be a recommendation to the other committee that you serve on that they create an ad hoc committee as well. Kind of approach this jointly because our rendering facilities that we've used in the past are the same ones that you utilize in the ag industry. A lot of the challenges that we face, especially when it comes to horses are because of the changes to the rendering facilities and we're still stuck with what are we going to do, whether it's a dog or a goat or a horse.

What do we do as a county and it's not going to get better. He has a feeling that they're going to be facing more and more challenges moving forward like with the domestic animals that Damaris has brought up. It has been a challenge that we face on a continuous basis. He lives in Kings County and it is something that they deal with. It's going to be a daunting task on the domestic side. And he thinks the ad hoc committee is definitely a good idea to look at because it's going to be key in education for the community and what we can do. As for Animal Services, there's going to be huge costs associated with it if we have a major influx of deceased animals coming into the facility. Then we're going to have to address how we handle those deceased animals. It is something that we need to take a serious look at, and he thinks it's an excellent recommendation for the committee. If we just hold off until that February, then that will provide these new members a chance to decide whether or not they want to be on a disposal of carcass committee. Or if they want to go with an education and outreach committee. It is something that we need to take a close look at, and Tricia faces the same things. So, most definitely it's something that we need to address come February on the development of that committee.

Oma asked what other counties do with this. Tricia said they are all struggling because of the guidelines, particularly on large animals. Mammalian flesh can not be composted in California due to water quality and air quality regulations unless we're operating under an emergency declaration related to an extreme heat wave, where we have the expectation of a high mortality rate. And then we can give these temporary exclusions or exemptions at least in the livestock sector, to compost on farms and bury their deceased. Particularly goats and sheep, since they can't ever go into rendering due to different disease pathogens that they're trying to exclude from the rendering chain. It really is an issue.

Every county Farm Bureau and every county animal control every year is scratching their heads in the absence of a heat emergency. What else are we going to do with carcass disposal? She would really like to see the Farm Bureau as a policy making and public influential organization work on some type of statewide goals or policy guidance documents for how to give county ag commissioners and animal control authorities more flexibility to handle these situations. There really isn't that kind of guidance statewide that she's aware of. As far as the domestic animal side of things go, other counties handle it pretty much the same way we do. Fresno County picks up deceased animals that are on the roadway. Animal control picks up when they have the time, but they run a lot like we do. Very, very short staffed, a lot of area, small amount of people and you're not allowed to transport deceased animals at the same time as live animals. Fresno County has a rendering company that comes and picks up their deceased animals. TCAS has an incinerator on site. The incinerator can only fit small deceased animals, the batch cannot exceed 800 pounds and we can't burn wool. So, we can take some smaller goats, but we can't do sheep and Kings County is the same way. Their load limit is 500 pounds. However, it's a different incinerator.

Marit mentioned that the discussion was getting pretty deep into something that wasn't really on the agenda. Her suggestion is to put it on the regular agenda for next time. In addition to the question of the ad hoc committee or you could set up the ad hoc committee now to start talking about it in a smaller group. We would need to have the opportunity for the public to be involved in the discussion. So, we'll just wait until February to continue. Damaris said that by February people can decide what committee they would like to be on and then they could decide on the deceased animals. Who are on



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the committees? And then also, what are the guidelines for those ad hoc committees? We can get everybody who wants to be on a committee on a committee and then go from there.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGENDA / <input type="checkbox"/> DISCUSSION ITEM: Adjourn meeting			
Motion:	<i>Adjourn Meeting @ 1:59 pm by Kim Gisler</i>		
1st:	Laurie Eberle	2nd :	BJ Motko
Vote	Yes: Unanimous	No:	