



TULARE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2021
ZOOM MEETING

Meeting Called to Order:	1:02 pm by Patrick Hamblin
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ATTENDANCE

PRESENT: Amy Shuklian, BJ Motko, Damaris Menchaca, Donna Grigsby, Ivy Ruiz, Laurie Eberle, Mary Dieterle, Oma Mansfield, Patrick Hamblin, Tricia Stever Blattler

ALTERNATES PRESENT:

EXCUSED ABSENCE: Kim Gisler, Michelle Hart, Michael Cortez

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE: Bonnie Heasley, Bridgette Davis, Donna Sims

GUESTS PRESENT: Mary Jungwirth, Cassie Heffington, Eric Scott, Ameet Nagra, Delilah Schuller

PUBLIC COMMENT

Patrick moved Public Comment up to number 2. Delilah Schuller is an attorney with the Tulare County Public Defender’s office. They are a group of attorneys who represent indigent clients, meaning they can’t afford an attorney. So, their office is appointed to represent individuals who are charged with crimes. She took it upon herself to address this situation that recently happened in their office. They had a client who was arrested. Basically, he was homeless, and his dog was turned over to animal services and he is currently serving a few months in jail. He will be released in January, so this is not a long-term incarceration, but his dog was taken to animal services and her name is Charlene. They were told that she was going to be destroyed. One of their attorneys intervened and asked the other attorneys to raise money to save the dog. Her understanding was that she was going to be euthanized. This raised some issues, and she didn’t think it was their responsibility to raise the funds to save this dog. This doesn’t happen a lot, but on occasion they will have a client who has a dog and who does not want to relinquish the dog. They want to keep their dog, but they don’t have a place or anyone who can take care of the dog while they’re incarcerated. She’s trying to come up with a way to help these clients keep their dogs and have them returned once they are released from custody. They have owners. They’re not strays. They’re not predatory dogs. So, she’s trying to find out if animal services can keep the dog for an extended period of time. What sort of financial issues are involved in something like that? Is it a space issue? She’s here to try and work with animal services to come up with some sort of solution where they can meet the needs of these individuals and save their pets.

Patrick said thank you very much for taking the time to join us today and for your public comments. We do have two representatives from Animal Services. Mary who takes the minutes and coordination and she could probably incorporate some notes and then there’s Cassie who’s the Animal Services Manager. We do have representatives from some of the cities on our committee, but for the most part, all of matters that we address are with the county. He sees what she is discussing, and they definitely will coordinate having their county animal services reach out to her office if she would like to see what options are available.

In his capacity, when he was at Animal Services, he knows the longer stays within a shelter environment can take its toll on the animal. You run a high risk of illness because of the number of animals that flow through there, so that is a concern. When you talk with Cassie one on one she would probably be able to give you more information. It might be an opportunity to partner with organizations or even foster opportunities for these types of scenarios. We can put you and Cassie in contact with each other and see what we can do at the county level. We do have Ivy who is from the City of Visalia who may want to participate in conversations of that nature. But again, prolong stays in shelters can be detrimental to the animals, especially if they’re not used to being in small, confined spaces. See what options there are within our jurisdiction. Delilah said that’s what they need. They need some sort of starting point and



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contact person to prevent further situations like Charlene, so that no other pets are euthanized or destroyed, when in fact they do have owners who care about them. Who want them returned after they're released from custody. So that's my primary concern. Finding some sort of solution so that we don't encounter the same situation as we did with Charlene.

Patrick said definitely and with that being the focus of our county animal services and cities within to minimize the animals that are euthanized within our territory. That is great that Cassie is here and that you attended the meeting, so now hopefully you guys can start some dialog. Delilah said that would be great. Thank you. She appreciates that. So, how can she reach out to Cassie? Amy said that she will connect her to Cassie.

That is why Amy invited her here today. Because there's no way we could solve it today, but she wants her to know that they have a lot of foster agencies on board here and she wanted folks to know that. This is a situation that could be put on a future agenda but let's have her and Cassie get together first. She's not sure if it was our jurisdiction that this happened in. In the future we want to make sure no matter where it happens, that this situation doesn't come up again. As you all know, we're pet people and especially when pretty much your only companion is your pet. You know no home or anything else is even more important.

Delilah agreed and that's pretty much where they're coming from because sometimes for these homeless people, their pet is their life source and they're just trying to keep their life source alive. Okay, if she can just connect with Cassie and she greatly appreciate everyone's time and allowing her to speak. Amy has her contact information. Amy said that everybody on this Advisory Committee appreciates her concerns and what her office did to save that animal. Delilah said thank you and she appreciates it.

AGENDA / **DISCUSSION: Review and Approval of minutes from Meeting on August 12, 2021, and November 10, 2021**

Discussion: None			
Motion 1: <i>Approve the minutes of the Advisory Committee meeting of August 12, 2021</i>			
1st:	Laurie Eberle	2nd:	Donna Grigsby
Vote	Yes: Unanimous	No:	
Motion 1: <i>Approve the minutes of the Advisory Committee meeting of November 10, 2021</i>			
1st:	Laurie Eberle	2nd:	Donna Grigsby
Vote	Yes: Unanimous	No:	

AGENDA / **DISCUSSION: Approve a Resolution Allowing Remote Attendance at Future Meetings**

Discussion: Ameet shared her screen and gave a brief presentation on the resolution and why we are considering it again. Her colleague Eric Scott joined the meeting because she had to leave early. The purpose of the special meeting on November 10 th was to approve this resolution. AB361 went into effect in October of this year. This resolution will allow Brown Act bodies to continue to meet remotely. See Paragraph 7. Have to adopt it within 30 days and this Advisory Committee does not meet every 30 days. Will work with the Chair to make the necessary findings in January. Can ratify those findings at the Feb 10 th meeting which will allow us to meet via zoom again.			
Motion 1: <i>Approve a resolution Allowing Remote Attendance at Future Meetings</i>			
1st:	Laurie Eberle	2nd:	Donna Grigsby
Vote	Yes: Unanimous	No:	

AGENDA / **DISCUSSION: Comments from Advisory Committee Members**

Tricia wanted to say congratulations on the low cost spay neuter clinic. Looks like it's up and running and rescues are getting on the schedule and that's phenomenal great news. Laurie asked which rescue

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groups will be eligible. Cassie will cover this in her updates. Laurie mentioned that a few years ago she had some calls from the police department with the same situation and at that time she did take the companions in while they did whatever they needed to do. And then they came back and got their animals. The only problem she had afterwards, was that they kept coming in wanting more and more. BJ asked if they are looking at forming some kind of discussion or committee because she has some opinions about the process from the public comments. Animal Services will reach out and communicate with her to get more specifics. It's going to be managed at the Animal Services level and if Cassie comes and asks for any type of assistance or possible subcommittee or anything of that nature from this Advisory Committee, then we can address it at that time.

Amy wanted to thank Animal Services and Cassie. Over the last year, during their Board Meetings, they've had a monthly pet of the week. One of the folks attending the meeting went right down there and adopted Marianne. She found out yesterday that they had changed her name to Montana. Wanted to thank Cassie for doing that and she's hoping with her assistance and the rest of the Board, that they can continue doing this monthly. It's a great way to highlight all of the great things that Animal Services is doing. To highlight the importance of adoption and pet overpopulation.

AGENDA / DISCUSSION: **Update from Animal Services on Activities of Tulare County Animal Services**

Cassie has a lot of information but first she wanted to introduce the committee to their veterinarian, Dr. Myhal. She comes to us with spay and neuter surgery and experience and obviously a veterinary degree. She has spent the last several years doing dairy and herd medicine. We are absolutely excited to have her here. Everything has been going wonderfully. She's been brilliant and it's been great. She's had to witness some pretty interesting things. Her very first day was the first day that we started responding to the fires. It was a little bit of a rough start and she just kind of took it and ran with it. Did two surgeries on September 29th. Those were our very first two neuters. And we really started doing surgeries the first couple weeks of October. Have done 497 spay and neuter surgeries. We will hit surgery number 500 tomorrow. That doesn't count the amputations that she's done for shelter animals and enucleations on some kittens with some very nasty eyeballs. We've done numerous wound repairs and numerous splint applications. Our shelter animals are getting top notch care and she is so excited about it. For the spay/neuter surgeries, 389 of those were cats and a lot of those were feral cats. And 106 dogs and 2 goats. She is absolutely thrilled to have Dr. Myhal on board and wanted to introduce her to all of you.

Tricia wanted to say thank you that she also has a large animal background. She thinks that it services dual purposes for having a herd animal veterinary professional who can work with Cassie and her team with some of these livestock welfare questions that come into play. Obviously the Farm Bureau has gotten involved in some of that as well from a lay person standpoint. She really appreciates that we have a veterinarian that understands large animal medicine, livestock herd health and can help establish some rapport with our commercial operations when necessary. As well as do the critically vitally important work that she's doing and helping us get more pets ready for adoption.

Amy asked if at some point could the Advisory Committee have a tour of the new clinic. Cassie said sure, there are some rules regarding gathering of committee members, but anybody who would like to take a look is welcome to come by anytime. Just text or call her and she will arrange a time for you can come and see. We're not open to the public technically, but she will gladly give any of the committee members a tour if they would like one. Patrick asked if they are looking at having any type of a ribbon cutting or grand opening. Cassie said yes. At some point they will do a ribbon cutting and grand opening. They just have to repair some of the outdoor structures that were damaged in the install and a couple of other things before we want to have a mass amount of public and media come in and stare at our building. That is in the works for probably the beginning of the year. She's also working with our largest donor to make sure that it's at a time that we can attend as well. Amy said this is such a great

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thing for Tulare County and we really need to showcase it. Cassie said they plan to open to the public in the middle of January, to open public appointments mid-January for at least one day a week going in. They have been doing some public surgeries; it's just on a case-by-case basis, solving some people's problems who have called into the shelter.

For example, she attended a town hall meeting in Seville. One of the items that was brought up at the town hall was an issue with feral cats at schools. So, we've been working with Martha there and she's been bringing in feral cats for fixing. We've had a couple of situations like that, while we've done some public clients and a lot of feral cats. Dr. Myhal was a brilliant hire, and she is so excited, and she is just a great fit for our team and has done so much for the animals in our care and also spay and neuter as well.

Patrick wanted to point out that on her first day we're in the middle of fires this year and she jumped right in and devoted the time that was necessary during the week and on the weekends to ensure that the animals coming into our care from evacuation areas were healthy and cared for and she didn't run away. Cassie wanted to back up and make sure that everybody was aware that our reclaim rate for incarcerated individuals who have animals at the shelter is the highest reclaim rate we have. We almost always are able to find a family member, a friend or somebody who's able to come and get the animal and we have funding through Friends of Tulare County to assist with fees when necessary. If there is no case of abuse or neglect then we have the ability to do that on a case-by-case basis utilizing some of our funding through Friends of Tulare County, so no pet is kept here over funding. She just wanted to make sure that everybody was aware of that.

In October we had 415 animals come in and in November we've had about 350. Both of those live outcomes are 88% and 86% so we're right about touching that 90% no kill mark. We're so close for the year to date and we're on target to hit about 4500 animals intake for the year and our live release rate is projected to be about 89.5% so she is really excited about that. One of the things affecting that is that we are starting to see for the last few months, an increase in distemper cases coming from our community. We have a distemper endemic in our community, and it is everywhere in our rural communities, so we have been seeing animals coming in that are potentially symptomatic. Dr. Myhal has been great with keeping up protocols. We do not have any positive cases in the shelter. We do not have a massive amount of disease in the shelter but that's because we're working really, really hard to make sure that it stays that way. We actually double checked our protocols with UC Davis and Koret Shelter Medicine program. We have had some phone calls with them, knowing that it's endemic in Kern County and Fresno County and Kings County. The doctor there said we are going far above and beyond with our disease protocols so she's very excited about that. We're also looking at the only real way that we're going to be able to prevent that is doing community vaccine clinics so we're looking at that for the future. She needs to check with the county on COVID protocols and things like that. They've doing some research on the hot spots. They also hired a new ACO and she's currently shadowing other ACOs.

For the month of November, they ran almost 500 calls for service. They've been averaging about 500 calls for service per month. They've had a huge increase in calls the last few weeks with 20 to 30 calls on the dispatch screen at any one point in time. So, it's taking them a little bit longer to get to non-urgent calls because there's just so many and there're so many sick and injured animals that are coming in just all the time. We are also going to be conducting interviews pretty soon for the Animal Services Coordinator position so the focus of that position will be on amplifying our adoption process now that we've expanded our animals and focusing on a volunteer and foster program. Creating and bolstering that in the new era post COVID or during COVID and outreach effort. This will be a progression and won't be everything at once, so we will have this person start out with one of those categories and work up to the remainder of them.

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Laurie asked if anyone has complained about arising toxicity or giardia. Cassie said there is always toxicity and giardia. The only way to get rid of it is to burn everything so it's always going to be there, especially giardia, so we always have cases of toxicity and giardia at the shelter. Laurie found it in one of their colonies. They have been dealing with it. Cassie said as far as scheduling surgeries to send her an email and she will get her worked into the schedule. She has an agency partnership agreement, basically it's just instructions on what you need to do, and everything is scheduled online through a volume client portal. You email her for appointments and then you enter all of the information. She has a couple of fosters that would like to be able to bring in feral cats to our clinic instead of driving way out farther.

Damaris asked for more information on the vaccine clinics. When she has more information on them and for her district, she can help in the coordination of that. She asked about the new position for the Animal Services Coordinator. Cassie said it ran from Nov 13–23. She is waiting for a list of qualified applicants who have applied. The applications are closed but it has not been filled yet.

Donna G asked about when the clinic was going to open to the public. Cassie said most likely, the last week of January. They are still waiting on Patterson Veterinary to sign a PSA for us so they can come and look at our anesthesia machines. Our doctor would like them to look at our anesthesia machines even though it's not legally required. Ethically she would like them to look at them prior to us opening to the public full time. The holdup is Patterson not the county and we are working on getting them to sign the agreement so they can come out and service our machines.

The clinic will be open to all the public. Tricia asked about the scheduling. Cassie said there will probably be a three-to-four-month delay getting in for the public simply because we can only do 25 to 30 surgeries in a day, depending on the makeup of the clients and time. She knows there will be so much more demand than that and they will probably hold a day for rescues and our shelter animals. The plan would be to schedule public only two days a week until we can handle the check-in and check-out process. That will be the last piece of the puzzle and we really need to work out the logistics, especially regarding COVID. Needing to do it like a drive-up basis. They're still working out some of those logistics, so they won't be doing public every day. Our computer system actually allows us to set up capacities for the days and open up certain appointment slots for the public to be able to schedule themselves. So, the majority of the appointments will be made online.

AGENDA / **DISCUSSION: Education**

Discussion: Patrick asked Mary if this was looking at forming an education committee. Mary didn't remember exactly. It had been on there before and she just left it there. Donna G said she hasn't met with anyone in the last couple of months. Patrick believes they had some concerns or ideas from other members who are not present. Donna G thought we were putting everything off until after the clinic opens and we couldn't do a whole lot with education during COVID. Tricia has some high school FFA ag programs that are looking for volunteer opportunities and most of those kids are pretty good animal science assistant types, and she will contact them once we reopen. Patrick said we will touch on it later. Hoping that at our next meeting that the clinic will be open to the public at that point and we'll have a better idea on what some of the needs would be for education and outreach and also for the volunteer piece.

AGENDA / **DISCUSSION: Update from Ag Advisory Committee on Deceased Animals**

Tricia thinks that they're at a standstill. They've presented their information and talk to the County Supervisors. Not sure where they are going next. The Ag Advisory committee has not met now for a couple of months so this will probably come back up in a spring or summer conversation. When it gets really hot, they start seeing some challenges with the deceased animal problem in the county, especially

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on the large animal side. There is a livestock pass going to the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday. It's not specifically related to small animals. Looking at a discretionary pass for commercial livestock producers.

AGENDA / DISCUSSION: **Update from Ad-Hoc Committees**

Patrick mentioned that Mary emailed everyone who's term is up. To get your applications back to her if you haven't done so already so they can get them before the Board of Supervisors to have those reappointed who are wishing to continue on in their role for the February meeting.

Membership: None

Volunteer: None

New Committees: None

AGENDA / DISCUSSION: **Suggestions of Committee Alternates**

Discussion: None

AGENDA / DISCUSSION: **2022 Schedule of Meetings**

Discussion: Patrick said it was kind of nice to look at a calendar of events and only have six meetings that we're going to have to coordinate. For 2022, it'll be February, April, June, August, October, and December. BJ asked if there was some consideration of doing in person meetings ever again. Patrick said this was covered with the special meeting. They are still having significant space issues that would be able to meet the requirements, but at some point in time, we hope to be able to go to an in-person meeting structure, especially whenever the law expires. Donna G asked if they are having any in-person meetings or is everything still zoom. Patrick said for the most part, even their internal meetings are likely to be zoom. Amy said the Board have been meeting the whole time but limiting the amount of people. The Homeless task Force she chairs is not meeting in person. Tricia said the County Ag Advisory Committee meets 3-4 times a year in person in the Chambers.

The Board meetings are actually moving to Human Resources because the whole administration building is being remodeled. Patrick said that one of the key things to remember is that a lot of their rooms and stuff are no longer conference rooms. One of the rooms is their public health education materials creation and distribution point. Other ones are now where they are storing testing supplies that they have to distribute to their community partners. So, their conference rooms are no longer conference rooms at this time, as long as they continue to be the primary point of COVID 19 response. We hope to go back to in person meetings. For the time being, we will continue with zoom meetings until we get to a point that we're able to have a room large enough to provide social distancing space and everything else.

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

Discussion: None

AGENDA / DISCUSSION: **Adjourn meeting @ 1:54 pm**

Motion: *Adjourn Meeting @ 1:54 pm by Patrick Hamblin*

1st:	Laurie Eberle	2nd:	Donna Grigsby
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Vote	Yes:	No vote	No:
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