



TULARE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2022
ZOOM MEETING**

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

ATTENDANCE
PRESENT: Amy Shuklian, BJ Motko, Damaris Menchaca, Ivy Ruiz, Laurie Eberle, Mary Dieterle, Michael Cortez, Michelle Hart, Oma Mansfield, Patrick Hamblin, Tricia Stever Blattler
ALTERNATES PRESENT:
EXCUSED ABSENCE: Donna Grigsby
UNEXCUSED ABSENCE: Bridgette Davis, Donna Sims
GUESTS PRESENT: Mary Jungwirth, Cassie Heffington, Eric Scott, Denise Simmons

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGENDA / <input type="checkbox"/> DISCUSSION: Approve a Resolution Allowing Remote Attendance at Future Meetings			
Discussion: Eric said there's still the findings from the state that COVID is a risk to the public and social distancing is both recommended and useful in preventing the spread of COVID, so the findings are still in place. If the Board of this committee wishes to still meet remotely, then it would be advisable to pass AB 361 Resolution and would be necessary since we are meeting via zoom at the moment.			
Motion:	Approve a Resolution Allowing Remote Attendance at Future Meetings		
1st:	Laurie Eberle	2nd:	Tricia Stever Blattler
Vote	Yes: Unanimous	No:	

PUBLIC COMMENT
None

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGENDA / <input type="checkbox"/> DISCUSSION: Review and Approval of minutes from Meeting on April 14, 2022			
Discussion: None			
After the vote Patrick asked County Counsel if the raise hand feature is possible instead of having to do a continuous roll call. Eric didn't see any issue with that. Patrick said if everyone is in agreement with that. That'll be the new process instead of sitting here going through the roll call of every single member. We could just raise the hand if it's a yes. If it is under the reactions, it should be the bottom item.			
Motion:	Approve the minutes of the Advisory Committee Meeting on April 14, 2022		
1st:	Tricia Stever Blattler	2nd:	Amy Shuklian
Vote	Yes: Unanimous	No:	

<input type="checkbox"/> AGENDA / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISCUSSION: Discussion of and Election of Secretary			
Laurie said she is resigning as a member. She is moving out of the state of California the beginning of September and in our audience there is Denise and she is the new President of Love of Animals. She has already submitted the request to take her place. She said she can either stay the rest of the meeting or she can leave the meeting. She could stay one more meeting so that Denise can be approved if needed. Patrick said they still have to go through the process. Everything is still going to have to be approved by our Board of Supervisors. In order to ensure they have a quorum, he asked her to stay. They will try and get Denise's application processed and everything in place prior to the next meeting which will be in October. We can look at the next meeting for electing a new Secretary. Laurie told Denise about that position and what it entails. It's just reading over the minutes of the meeting and if there's any corrections. She doesn't have to write anything down unless she wants to jot some notes. Patrick said once they officially transition, since she is still active through this meeting, then they will get everything in place and get her application to the Board of Supervisors, if that is determined by the membership committee which they still have to meet.			

TULARE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGENDA / <input type="checkbox"/> DISCUSSION: Creation of a By-Laws Ad-Hoc Committee			
Discussion: This is something that they've talked about in the past. Patrick thinks there are some key adjustments that they need to look at making. We are unable to fill the position from the Resource Management Agency and we would like to adjust some of the other positions that we have difficulties filling or getting anyone to apply. So, at this time, do we have a motion to create a By-laws Ad Hoc committee? BJ made the motion. We will be looking for members to participate in that By-Laws review and revision process. Since he was one of the original ones with the assistance of County Counsel, he has no problem being part of that committee as well. Damaris said she is willing to volunteer for that. Patrick said it will not take a lot of time because that process is something that they work with County Counsel on. It will just be like doing the review of the red line. Michaelle said she is willing to help too.			
Motion:		Approve the Creation of a By-Laws Ad-Hoc Committee	
1st:	BJ Motko	2nd:	Tricia Stever Blattler
Vote	Yes: Unanimous	No:	

<input type="checkbox"/> AGENDA / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISCUSSION: Comments from Advisory Committee Members			
<p>Michael mentioned that he lost a dog named Daisy back in June during a freak storm. They were told that she was a runner when they adopted her about 7 years ago. They did all of the right things, posted both county and city since they live a mile from the city limits. Then he was thinking that if a dog was found on the side of the road. So, he contacted the city, and they told him their process and what their staff do when they find a deceased dog if there's a tag. With a chip, they make an effort to contact the owner. He contacted the county to see what their process was, and he was told this is the way it is. That the road crew picks up deceased dogs on the roads. He asked them what they do if there's a tag or chip and she said chip or not, we don't do anything and move them on the side of the road. He would like to know what the process is and if there's any way, even if it takes fundraising to buy equipment for the county to give the road yard scanners, he's willing to lead the effort, but just to put the animal on the side of the road so there's traffic safety and if there's a tag or chip and make no follow up effort to the owners, it's disheartening. He just wanted to share his experience. Other people might have different experiences, but this was his. If we need to raise money for chip scanners for road crews, he is willing to lead that effort to maybe change that practice.</p> <p>Cassie said both the road department and Caltrans bring them their deceased animals they pick up on the side of the road to the shelter and they scan every single animal prior to putting them into their freezer. If there's a microchip or a tag or a collar, we personally contact you. Michael said what the lady shared with him is that they are only concerned about the road and they put them on the side of the road and don't recover them. Cassie said that the road crew brings them deceased animals almost every day. Michael is hoping that what they shared with him was wrong and he was pleased to hear that that's not the truth and that gives him some comfort. Cassie said that the road crew and Caltrans brings anything that is found in the county to them and that everything is scanned for a microchip and all owners are notified. Michael asked if someone could call their front desk for the road yard for whoever answers their phone and let them know. He is glad to hear they gave him misinformation.</p> <p>Cassie said she would have her dispatchers call the road yard and make sure they're giving out appropriate information. She is not sure if there are situations in which they just move the dog to the side of the road, but they do bring them animals on an almost daily basis.</p> <p>BJ said she was at the coast earlier this summer and there is a group of people that are trying to get something as a statewide legislative issue that would provide scanners for road crews. She doesn't know if there are any legs to this movement, but if there is a website she will try and get ahold of that information and get it to them.</p>			

TULARE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

Michelle said she was told by a road crew that if the animal is in a grove they won't pick it up. There was some dumped in a grove in garbage bags. If it's on the highway then it's the highway patrol. Cassie said if it's on the highway, Caltrans picks it up. If it's in a grove our officers will take the call, but it may take some time for us to get there. We are having issues responding to live animal calls. This is considered a lower priority call. At the very least, she knows her officers go and scan deceased bodies even if they can't put a deceased animal in their vehicle at the same time as a live animal, but they will at least scan them for microchips.

Tricia said the same is true of trash pickup. The Farm Bureau provides a road trash hotline for rural animal landowners to call in trash and then the Sheriff has a farm road trash removal crew that goes out and they're not allowed to enter private property, so they often suggest to a landlord that before they call them, they make sure the trash is on the right of way so the county can access.

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

Cassie said they just ended the fiscal year on June 30th. She ran some statistics for the fiscal year of 2021 to 2022, so during this last fiscal year our animal control officers ran 6,500 calls. That was with 1-3 officers for the majority of the fiscal year. We ran 488 calls for service just in July, so needless to say, we're tired. We are extremely incredibly short staffed like a lot of places are right now. Our intake for the last fiscal year was 5,036, which is 1,400 animals higher than the year prior. Our calls for service were up 1,300 calls over the fiscal year prior.

The status of shelters and rescues throughout the county, but definitely throughout the state is pretty dire right now. There are way too many animals entering shelters then can possibly get out. But we've managed a live release rate in 2021-22 of about 87%. 90% is considered no kill so we're still doing ok but we are definitely looking for more help whenever we can get them. We have increased our adoptions program with the addition of Candace who has been an amazing asset. She's our new Animal Services Coordinator. She's increased adoptions almost threefold over what we were doing last year and participated in adoption programs that we haven't had the ability to do. She's restarted our volunteer program slowly but surely, and this kitten season has been an absolute crazy mess. From March until now we've taken in almost 900 cats and kittens. Most of those went into our foster care program through Candace. So, she's had a lot to deal with. During the wintertime she'll be focused more on our volunteer program. We've been triaging lots and lots of kittens. We usually have about 100-150 kittens in foster care at this point.

The clinic has been going strong since October. We did almost 2,600 surgeries since October. Not too shabby for the first year of operation. That's 1,700 cats and about 900 dogs that we fixed, and we provided about 2,500 vaccines. We did one large vaccine clinic that was our inaugural, our first vaccination clinic that we did for the public here at the shelter along with San Francisco SPCA and we saw 136 animals that day in about 6 hours. Doctors are in a very, very short supply so the clinic will probably have a little bit of a lull here for the fall.

And our intake for the last couple of months: June was 580 animals, July was 640. So that's one month, 640 animals intake in one month. That's up almost a third over last year. Over 180 animals from what it was in July of last year. So far in August and this is just the first 11 days of August, 250 animals. Flooding with puppies and flooding with kittens. Lots of dogs in orchards and lots of stray animals coming in. So, if you are hearing out in the community that Animal Control Officers are not responding, we're responding as fast as we possibly can, but we are getting far, far more calls for service than we can possibly respond to in a single day. The officers are getting to everyone as soon as they can, and we are taking in massive amounts of animal and our staff are very tired.

TULARE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

Tricia applauds Cassie's ability to keep her wits about her. This has been an incredibly bad year and she thinks all of us knew it was coming as the pandemic has changed the world so much. Everyone thought they were going to have companion animals by their side during COVID and now they're shedding them like trash in an orchard. At the rate of 640 a month right now, just one shelter. I can tell you that every shelter out there has this problem and every rescue has this problem right now. On a more positive note, she just wants to applaud Cassie for trying to be the most professional overboard manager that they could possibly ask for at this facility. There's so many times every week that she wants to call our Board of Supervisors and just beg them to give Animal Services more support, more staff and more equipment. Part of it is just finding the people to work. We have a remarkable resource and asset in Cassie and now in Candace in her role. She wants to be on record as saying we need to do everything possible to prioritize supporting Cassie and her team. Even if it means going out there and cleaning kennels. It needs to happen. She needs more help. And every time she goes out there and picks up a dog or transports an injured critter she is shocked at how they are managing to triage 250 animals in 11 days.

It's beyond her, whatever our county can do. This cannot be just the redheaded stepchild agency that is constantly shoved under the rug and told to do more with less. We can't do that. It is a crisis situation that our county needs to figure out how to better address. Patrick agreed that Cassie is doing an amazing job. Amy told Tricia she was preaching to the choir. She agrees with that Cassie has done. She appreciates it and knows the rest of the Board appreciates it. Anytime you need her to carry the torch she will do that. Cassie really appreciates her support.

Patrick did have one question. Cassie indicated that the end of the fiscal year took place on June 30th and so the county is entering into a new fiscal year. Are there any updates on Animal Services Budgetary issues? Cassie said budgetary issues are staffing wise. They have a lot of recruitment open. The applications they have received and the interviews that they've done has not been fantastic. Hopefully they will get one more extra help. Waiting on approval for the higher step. Part of the issue that they are having as a county is that they are not keeping up with the pay that private industry is able to pay, especially their clinical staff. So, when they run a recruitment, this is the second time running a veterinary technician recruitment and even after that recruitment was supposed to close, they have one qualified applicant. Part of it is that they need people to be able to be approved at a higher step and there's some things that have to happen for that process. She's not really sure what it is. They have two people that have been waiting, one for two months, to have them start and there's something happening in that process. So hopefully soon there's some light at the end of the tunnel. Hopefully that will happen within the next few weeks. That would be one animal control officer position, one kennel position and two extra help positions that they are waiting on.

We have a recruitment open for an extra help veterinary position. That pay scale probably will not attract a doctor at this point. But they are looking into other avenues for that as well. And they have their veterinary technician if anyone knows someone would like to apply. The veterinary position recruitment was extended for another two weeks, so it closes next week. And they could definitely use some additional clinical staff. The clinic won't be able to reopen and operate the way that they had been operating. Because she's been operating as a veterinary technician without that additional position. So, there are lots of things in the works but there's some potential roadblocks coming up in the process. Patrick mentioned that the agency's Animal Services budget included a request to add two additional Animal Care Technicians that would be dedicated to the clinic. Patrick has also given up one of his support staff and reassigned them to Animal Services on an interim basis to try and get some level of support out to them and based on all of the significant changes they have put in a request to reclassify Cassie from just the Animal Services Manager to the Animal Services Operations Manager and to make an adjustment to the salary structure based on the added responsibilities. So those things are in our proposed budget that they've submitted to administration and that hopefully will be going before the

TULARE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

Board. Which would be in September and depending on any type of feedback we get; we may reach out to the committee and ask if a letter supporting these positions and the approval of the Animal Services budget.

Michael wanted to share something where he lives. He lives two houses down from a Karen, a very difficult neighbor. Since he feeds some feral cats, she let him know that this little kitten approached her with her eyeball severely injured and they went down to the county who repaired it and she adopted the kitty for \$70. Going to the emergency vet would have been in the hundreds, probably thousands of dollars to repair so she took the kitten in to Cassie and her team. They fixed the kitten, and this lady adopted the cat. \$70 to get a cat that is missing an eye, but it was treated and got its shots. That's a great deal. This Karen thinks very highly of your team, and she rarely offers grace, so he thinks that's an accomplishment.

Tricia mentioned that Labrador rescue is paying between \$300-500 for a spay or neuter at some of the regular veterinary clinics in the area. Cassie is their most affordable choice and is by far, giving them every bit as good a service. And the suture wounds look amazing and they're healing quick and she's giving your meds and she's helping us manage foxtails and things like that, which would cost them \$600-800 to run through a retail vet. They are incredibly blessed to have this clinic. Having a vet allows you to do more critical care and then you get bogged down and the costs associated with that critical care. Tricia knows that helps her live release rate and it helps that you can partner with rescues and you're not just handing them broken, mangled creatures without some forethought of how they're going to deal with going to a retail vet and spending that kind of money as well. Every vet clinic in this valley is short staffed and raising fees and even giving shelter and rescue discounts of 10-20% are not anywhere near what Cassie's services are offering. So now they are prioritizing how many they can afford to do at retail vets vs. how many can possibly wait until Tulare County opens back up or how they can shift dogs to other places.

On the volunteer side, Tricia asked Cassie if they can use high school students for some of the relief work, like cleaning kennels, if the kennels are empty without animals in them. If she found some high school students that need community service, can that help you or are there a lot of liability issues with that. Cassie said that Candace has been working on some orientation materials. They have at least one volunteer who is under 18 right now and she is able to do some things. The hard part with the dogs is that we take in dogs of unknown personalities that are stray dogs. As far as cat care and cleaning kennels we could potentially have people who are under 18 with parental permission do some of those things, especially if they go through a school program that needs community service. Patrick said that was one of the key things based on past experience when he was at Animal Services. They used to have groups rotate through from the high schools and they would come out to meet their community service hours since it was through a school sanctioned program. If they are not through a school program then they run into significant liability issues. Tricia will check with some FFA chapters, and the Tulare County Farm Bureau has a high school leadership program which draws from the FFA chapters in the county and they're covered under her general liability.

AGENDA / **DISCUSSION: Education**

Discussion: Michelle thinks she was the one who knows about this. She is working at getting ahold of schools and they were waiting for Candace and after kitten season to slow down and for schools to start up again. Cassie said that is one of the things on Candace's strategic plan for this coming school year is to work on that and their volunteer program but they need some of these hundred kittens to leave our system and for the fosters to stop blowing up her phone and taking up all of her time so she can get started on some of those things. Patrick said we will leave this on the agenda for future conversion which will put us into October and hopefully free by then of the kitten season.

TULARE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

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

Tricia said the Ag Advisory Committee met in July and there was quite a bit of talk about a variety of issues related to the problem of deceased animals dumping and trash dumping. Seeking a permit for the ability to maybe compost. These conversations are continuing. Supervisor Micari is aware of some of the bottlenecks related to the disposal of deceased horses and large animals that you can't fit in the animal control service trucks. That conversation continues to be elevated at the County Ag Advisory Committee. Cassie said they did open some agreements with two vendors that pick up deceased animals. So, if there is an emergency, they do have the ability to call, but they don't have that in their budget. The additional budget would be needed if it becomes an epidemic like we are probably anticipating. So, things are prepared on our end. It's just waiting to see if an amount would be able to be added to our budget in order to accommodate for that. At this point, we have only had one situation where we were thinking we might have to call out that service and we didn't have to, but we do have that ability if the need arises and that's for large animals such as horses, cattle, livestock animals. Tricia said there was quite a bit of social media activity after the horse was struck and killed on Caldwell just east of Lovers Lane. She offered to tarp up the dead animal. Cassie believes the owner took care of that situation before they were able to get out there. By the time they got out there, they had to assist the owners in retrieving their other horse who would not go into a trailer and broke free a second time. So, they had to escort that horse back home with their trailer, but by that time somebody had already picked up the deceased body. Patrick said that the Agency is covering any of the additional expenses through their own funding sources. That is something Animal Services can not take on, would be something that additional funding would need to have come down for.

AGENDA / DISCUSSION: Update from Ad-Hoc Committees

Membership: Patrick said the Membership Committee hasn't met but they need to get a meeting on the calendar. They've got Laurie's position and a couple of other ones that they need to look at filling.
Volunteer: None
New Committees: None

AGENDA / DISCUSSION: Suggestions of Committee Alternates

Discussion: None

AGENDA / DISCUSSION: Additional Comments

Discussion: Damaris wanted to thank Tulare County Animal Services. A couple of months ago they lost one of their dogs. She understands what Michael was saying. It's such a hard time. When their dog of nine years passed away unexpectedly they were able to take him to Animal Services to just dispose of the body. It was very economical and helpful to them and then they were able to adopt and now they have a new dog in their life. She just wants to thank Animal Services for what they do. She personally benefited and they love their animals and it's something very dear to their hearts and Animal Services was there for them. She wanted to thank Mary, Paula, Candace, and Stephanie who personally helped her and Cassie. They have a new addition to their family, Max, who they love. She just wanted to say thank you.

Tricia mentioned that Cassie was also right now working with her on a residential rural property owner who had run out of water due to a well issue. This is going to continue happening. There is no real clear path for how we support rural residential property owners with livestock needs. They're doing their best right now to cobble together a plan for a dairy to probably provide water which might temporarily offer some relief to this homeowner. But you're probably going to hear and see more about this as the drought continues. She was really appreciative that Cassie reached out to her because she was able to help and reach out to United Way. Talked about how they could get a tank. There's lots of resources for drinking water access but there's not always a lot of choices for how to get water to horses on a private



TULARE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

property where the well has gone dry. She is hoping they'll be able to collaboratively work through a solution for this gal, at least in the short term but there is no clear path. County resources are already stretched really thin on a lot of these kinds of issues, but she appreciates that there are a lot of us working together and trying to make temporary solution when things like this happen. Cassie gets her angel wings for trying to handle this.

Michelle had a question on the membership end. She knows somebody who put their application in and hadn't heard back yet. The membership committee hadn't met yet.

Laurie wanted to say that it's been a pleasure working with everybody in Animal Services the last 17 years. She's witnessed the changes. She's been there for all of the improvements. It is heartbreaking to see everything that's happening now and it's not just here, it is nationwide. She's so glad that this committee was formed. It has brought a lot of goodness into this valley. They just need to overcome the hurdle of the new way of life and unfortunately there's no way to anticipate what tomorrow is going to bring until we live that day. Tulare County Animal Services for the last 17 years has done everything to make this a better place for the animals and she's just happy to be a part of it.

Patrick thanked Laurie for all of the support she has provided, especially from the time when he stepped in and took over Animal Services and then through the transition into Cassie. Laurie has always been there being a part of this committee, all of the work and dedication that you've done and ensuring that we had the resources and information necessary to make a lot of the significant changes we did and always supporting us at adoption events. He truly appreciates everything she's done for this committee and all of the work that she's done for Animal Services and the county through the efforts with her nonprofit as well. Laurie said thank you. Damaris also thanked Laurie for her service and wished her good luck in her new venture and her new move.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGENDA / <input type="checkbox"/> DISCUSSION: Adjourn meeting @ 1:53 pm			
Motion:	Adjourn Meeting @ 1:53 pm by Patrick Hamblin		
1st:	Laurie Eberle	2nd:	Oma Mansfield
Vote	Yes:	No vote	No: