**DURHAM COUNTY**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Animal Welfare Advisory Committee**

**Tuesday, March 26, 2024**

**7:00 PM**

**[Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams]**

**Present:**

*Committee Members:*Dr. Jenny Campbell, Shenell Little, Elizabeth Overcash, Marianne Bond, Lt. Georgette Ray, Dr. Ashley Banes

*Non-voting Members:*Captain Mark Manning, Lt. Wendy Pinner, Leah Santelli, Shafonda Allen, Commissioner Heidi Carter

*Community Members:* Sarah Reichman, Brian Mulligan, Keisha Graham, Susan Teer, Sarah McDonald, Jacqueline, Anissa

*Committee Counsel:*

*Sheriff’s Counsel:* Keisha Lovelace

**Item I – Introductory Remarks**

Dr. Jenny Campbell called the meeting to order after 7:00 p.m. A roll call was conducted, and there was a quorum.

**Item II - Approval of Minutes**

The meeting minutes for the November 2023 meeting and the January 2024 meeting were emailed out to all committee members. A motion was made by Marianne Bond and seconded by Elizabeth Overcash to approve the November 2023 meeting minutes as written.

Dr. Campbell asked that the January 2024 meeting minutes be reformatted to mimic our standard minute formatting. Elizabeth Overcash agreed to reformat the minutes. We will vote on approving the January 2024 minutes at the next meeting.

**Item III – Animal Services Report**

Captain Manning reported that the Sheriff’s Office Animal Services handled 1,031 calls for service last month. Response time was down to 15 minutes (down from 19 minutes in the month prior).

Last month Animal Services attended nine different community events and administered 104 rabies vaccines. Animal Services also completed 158 different incident reports, issued 62 warnings and three civil penalties, and impounded 105 animals. Of the 105 animals impounded, 34 were returned home due to microchipping. Another 36 animals were surrendered to Animal Services. Animal Services completed 26 home bite confinement checks last month and conducted two rabies investigations (both of which were negative).

Animal Services has also hired two of the four civilian animal control positions. Those two new hires are currently in training.

**Item IV – Shelter Report**

Director Shafonda Allen stated that during the past month, the shelter took in 270 animals. In general, the shelter has around 300 animals coming in each month, around 58% of which are strays.

The shelter is preparing for kitten season. Staff are doing kitten foster training classes and have a “kitten shower” coming up on April 21 from 1 to 3 p.m. The kitten shower will feature games and refreshments and allow members of the public to bring in supplies for kitten fostering.

Director Allen stated that the shelter is having trouble placing dogs, both large and small. The shelter will be present at several locations in the community this month, including a dog day at the library, the bull city running club, Earth Day, and the annual Walk for the Animals on June 1, 2024.

May is mental health awareness month, so the shelter will be redoing a walking trail and naming the trail in memory of a staff member who committed suicide last year. They will be doing a day of service on May 4.

The shelter has a low-cost spay and neuter program that had a goal of 900 spays/neuters this year. For this fiscal year, which ends in June, the shelter is going to top out over 1,000 spays/neuters.

The pet food pantry program is still going on with partnerships outside of the shelter, such as with the Salvation Army.

**Item V – Old Business**

There was no old business.

**Item VI – New Business**

Electronic leashes

A member of the community (Brian Mulligan) wanted to discuss the Durham leash law in respect to electronic leashes. Brian stated that he understands that the Sheriff’s Office is allowing use of electronic leashes for walking dogs in public. He wanted to know if this was accurate and to discourage such use.

Captain Manning stated that Durham ordinances currently allow for the use of electronic leashes.

Brian stated that these leashes are causing problems and can be harmful to dogs. He stated that using the leashes requires a lot of training, which most people do not have. He stated that if the batteries weaken, the leashes will lose range and effectiveness. He also stated that other dogs react poorly because the dogs on electronic leashes appear to be off leash.

Captain Manning stated that the Sheriff’s Office does not have a stance on these leashes but that they have to enforce the ordinances, and the ordinance is written to allow them. Captain Manning did some research before the meeting and stated that there are arguments for safety on each side. This ordinance has been in place since 2012. Since that time, there has not been one documented case where a dog got loose from an electronic leash and bit someone; however, there have been multiple cases of dogs getting off of traditional leashes and biting someone.

Dr. Jenny Campbell suggested we should do research on this to see what other jurisdictions are doing and if we need a change here.

**Item VII – Public Comments**

Commissioner Heidi Carter provided updates on progress toward a new animal shelter. She stated that Durham County has a 10-year capital improvement plan, which is updated every two years. In the current plan, there is a combination of 37 million dollars to plan, design, and build the new shelter. Construction is scheduled to start in 2025/2026; however, it will likely not start then, but the money is still there. The capital improvement plan will go before the board of commissioners for approval, and the building will hopefully happen within the next five years.

Dr. Jenny Campbell asked what people should do to let the commissioners know this is an important issue.

Commissioner Carter stated that community members should reach out to the commissioners via email, phone calls, or by going to meetings and speaking at public comment. Community members should let the commissioners know that this is an important issue to the public.

Sarah McDonald had questions about the TNVR ordinance and if it had been rewritten. Sarah Reichman checked, and it has not been updated in our ordinance (in the municipal code), even though the language was voted on. Commissioner Heidi Carter and Dr. Jenny Campbell said they would let attorney Nathan McKinney know.

A motion was made to adjourn and seconded.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 28, 2024.