

DURHAM COUNTY
MEETING MINUTES
Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

Tuesday, January 28, 2025
7:00 PM
[Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams]

Present:

Committee Members:, Lt. Georgette Ray, Dr. Ashley Baines, Dr. Emily Wahl.

Non-voting Members: Nida Allam, Captain Mark Manning, Shafonda Allen, Shenell Little, Leah Santelli, Makeda Black, Wendy Pinner.

Community Members: Dr. Rod Jenkins, Robin Rogers.

Committee Counsel: Nathan McKinney

Sheriff's Counsel:

Item I – Introductory Remarks

It was noted that a quorum was not present, the Chair was not present, and the Vice Chair and Secretary positions are vacant due to the completion of recent terms. Therefore the meeting would not include approval of minutes and other business, however – due to short notice – Director Allen asked Counsel if anything else could be done. Counsel suggested having everyone introduce themselves. The meeting was continued for purposes of introductions and other discussion.

Item II - Approval of Minutes

Not addressed due to lack of a quorum.

Item III – Animal Services Report

Captain Mark Manning of Durham County Sheriff – Animal Services introduced himself and explained what his office does. Usually *monthly* stats and other updates are presented during this time. In addition, Captain Manning has compiled the *annual* stats and they are ready for presentation, but due to the importance and volume of the annual stats, Captain Manning will save them for a meeting that is more fully attended.

Captain Manning introduced a new voting member – Dr. Emily Wahl. Dr. Wahl will fill the position made vacant by Jan Paul's completion of her terms as of 1/31/2025. Captain Manning noted the very valuable service made by Jan Paul to the committee and the community over the years.

Dr. Wahl is a licensed veterinarian and has been appointed by Sheriff Birkhead. Captain Manning noted that Dr. Wahl does a phenomenal job in her field and will be a valuable asset to the Committee.

Dr. Wahl thanked everyone and expressed that she was happy to be part of the Committee.

Captain Manning reported the DCSO – Animal Services still has some vacancies, but the department is pleased to have filled one of the vacancies with a new employee. She came from Granville County and the department is confident she will do an outstanding job.

Otherwise Animal Services is conducting their day-to-day activities.

Item IV – Shelter Report (and attendee introductions)

Director Allen noted that some additional attendees had joined the meeting, so she gave them the information regarding lack of a quorum but that the meeting would include introductions and other helpful information.

Director Allen then made the rounds asking for introductions. She asked that Attorney McKinney introduce himself and explain his role. McKinney explained the two divisions in the Durham County Attorney's Office - DSS Legal Services and General Legal Services – that attorneys in the General division are assigned to the various county boards and committees, that one of his assignments is AWAC, and that his role is to keep the bylaws updated and assist the group in remaining compliant with NC Open Meetings laws, the bylaws, and other applicable requirements of the committee while it conducts its business.

Director Allen noted that Commissioner Nida Allam is the new Board of Commissioners liaison and asked Commissioner Allam to introduce herself. Commissioner Allam stated she had big shoes to fill coming in after Commissioner Carter but is very excited to get to work with the Committee, to be supportive of Animal Services. Commissioner Allam stated that her family adopted their cat from the Shelter, and that the issues around animal welfare are near and dear to her heart.

Director Allen noted the presence of Dr. Ashley Banes and asked her to introduce herself. Dr. Banes stated that she is the veterinarian appointed by the Sheriff's Office, is coming up on one year on the committee, and is happy to hear the introductions and be part of the committee.

Dr. Wahl introduced herself and confirmed her appointment as described by Captain Manning.

Director Allen asked that Georgette Ray introduce herself. Lieutenant Ray stated she is retired from the Sheriff's office and is an appointee of the sheriff's office.

Dr. Jenkins. Dr. Rod Jenkins expressed that his department (County Public Health) is well-represented on the committee by Public Health's highly-trained and very professional nurse Shenell Little as well as by Makeda Black. Public Health partners with the great Captain Manning and others to ensure that they have the necessary supplies and everything needed to carry out their duties, that Public Health is happy to do so, and the he is delighted to be at the meeting.

Leah Santelli. She stated she is with the Animal Protection Society of Durham, Director of Life-Saving Programs. Attends with Director Allen as a non-voting member and representing APS.

Shenell Little stated she is a Nurse Manager for the Durham County Public Health Department.

Makeda Black stated she is an Immunization Nurse Specialist for the Durham County Public Health Department.

Lieutenant Wendy Piner. Works with Durham County Animal Services, currently tuning in from a post she is serving in the Durham jail. Captain Manning noted that this double duty was voluntary on Lieutenant's part.

Director Allen noted the presence of Robin Rogers and that Director Allen has know Ms. Rogers for a long time. Robin recounted her time serving on the board of APS as well service on this very committee in the early 90's. She had reached out to Jan Paul about a concern who recommended she attend the meeting. Director Allen said she would return to possible Public Comment once introductions were completed.

Sergeant Scott Tanner. Serves in the Animal Services Division of the Sheriff's Office and is happy to be here.

[see Public Comment Section below, as this came next, followed by the report in the next paragraph]

Budget season winding down, new employee to fill one of the vacancies (coming from Granville County Animal Services). Otherwise just day-to-day business. Over 65% of animals received into the shelter are stray (not necessarily ownerless, but just lost). While somewhat a broken record, more education regarding tags, microchips, keeping animals at home, etc. Have seen fat and healthy animals that obviously belong at home but are just "out." Several animals per week are hit by a car.

Item V – Old Business

None (no quorum).

Item VI – New Business

None (no quorum).

Item VII – Public Comments

Robin Rogers. 2 Dogs in neighborhood – one large and one small. One of them (a large dog) is outside all the time. The ordinance does not currently speak to extreme weather (too cold or too hot). Is proposing that a change to the ordinance could be something this body could address. There has been extreme cold for the last couple of weeks and she worries about animals not being kept indoors and/or not given sufficient protection against the elements.

Director Allen asked if the dog was given its legally required care: food, water, etc. Rogers reported that the dog is fed by an automatic feeder and that there is a dog house (too small for the big dog) and a shed. She is not aware if the shed provides sufficient warmth or other protection from extreme weather.

Director Allen noted that the Shelter does not address law enforcement and passed the mic to Captain Manning.

Captain Manning expressed his department's willingness to connect with Ms. Rogers and do a welfare check on the animals to ensure that the owners are in compliance with the law and local ordinances – including issues regarding shelter, spacing, etc. Captain Manning confirmed that there are current no state laws or local ordinances that address temperatures and other weather-related matters, but that Animal Services could connect with her to investigate further to see if there may be other avenues to explore. Captain Manning gave Ms. Rogers the various ways they could communicate further via phone and other contact methods.

Rogers reported she had called Animal Services to the situation in the past (heat of summer, lack of shelter). Had also called recently and was told there are no temperature-related enforcement mechanisms (which she understands).

While Rogers agrees with the importance of welfare visits, educational communication with owners, and other similar efforts, she believes this may be the type of issue that can only be addressed by including specific ordinance requirements.

Director Allen asked if this could be a topic of discussion at a future meeting. Attorney McKinney confirmed that it could via an Agenda Item.

[see Animal Shelter Report in last paragraph of Animal Shelter Report section above, this came after Public Comment]

Conclusion: Next meeting is in March. No other comments. Motion to adjourn made and seconded. Adjourn.