

DURHAM COUNTY
Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 25, 2023
7:00 PM

Present:

Committee Members: Dr. Jenny Campbell, Elizabeth Overcash

Non-voting Members: Captain Mark Manning, Lieutenant Wendy Pinner, Leah Santelli,
Shafonda Allen

Community Members: Joshua Sotomayor, Brian Mulligan, Sarah Reichman, Keischa Lovelace,
Scott Tanner, Anissa Litwin, Dale Wolf, Jones, Joy Nolan, Sara Abrons,
Geraldyn

Item I – Introductory Remarks

Dr. Jenny Campbell provided welcome remarks and called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. A roll call was taken and there was not a quorum.

Item II - Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the May 2023 meeting had previously been sent out to committee members. However, because there was no quorum, we were unable to vote to approve these minutes. We will need to table the approval of the May 2023 minutes until the next meeting in September.

Item III – Animal Services Report

Captain Manning provided highlights for the Animal Services report. He reported that Animal Services officers responded to more than 1200 calls for service in June. In comparison, there were over 1300 calls for service in April and over 1400 in May, as compared to around 600 calls in January and February. The response time was on average 16 minutes. Animal Services completed 42 animal abuse investigations, all of which have been cleared. They also completed six rabies investigations, all of which had negative rabies results. Animal Services completed 215 incident reports in June (the majority of which were bite reports) and issued 107 warnings.

Animal Services officers impounded 158 animals in June, 60 of which were owner surrenders, which is up from previous months. Captain Manning stated that July 4 week was particularly heavy for owner surrenders. Animal Services officers returned 27 dogs to their owners in the field due to microchipping. Animal Services impounded 54 animals due to nuisance calls.

Captain Manning highlighted that Animal Services participated in five community events in June. However, only 29 animals received rabies vaccinations at their rabies clinic, which was due to a vaccine shortage and inability to obtain vaccines.

Item IV – Shelter Report

Director Allen reported the state of the shelter, which is currently in a difficult situation. The shelter took in 562 animals in May and 522 animals in June. Over a four-day span, the shelter received over 130 cats (the capacity for cats in the shelter is 119 cats). The shelter currently has over 300 animals in the shelter and over 400 animals in foster care. However, just over 200 of those animals are currently available for adoption, as the others are awaiting medical care.

Because the shelter is pushing beyond its capacity for care, they have made the difficult decision to no longer keep in their program any animals who cannot feed themselves or maintain their own body heat. The shelter is struggling to even keep track of all of the incoming animals and is having to close on Wednesday, July 26, to work on sorting out this situation. Last week they were forced to euthanize more animals than they had in a long time.

There are currently around 200 cats in the shelter at any time. With the increased number of cats and in turn increased stress levels, the shelter is also dealing with disease transmission.

After an update from the Department of Agriculture, which has authority over shelters, the shelter may no longer provide microchips to animals being reclaimed. This is a concern, as microchips are key in getting animals back home when they are found as strays.

The shelter is doing everything within its power to keep euthanasia levels down. They are attending all possible adoption events. Director Allen stated that euthanasia is still down from last year for May and June; however, July will likely be a different situation.

Item V – Old Business

Final approval of the TNVR ordinance: Changes to the Durham ordinances allowing for TNVR have been approved and active since July 1, 2023. Community member Jones asked how this legislation would help with the number of cats coming into the shelter. Director Allen responded that unfortunately, as this time, this change to the legislation does not appear to be having any positive impact on the shelter as far as decreasing intake of community cats. TNVR allowed by the ordinance must still be performed by a non-profit (other than the animal shelter), and there are currently limited options for this in Durham. Sarah Reichman commented that we need to expand affordable spay/neuter resources for cats in Durham.

Item VI – New Business

Direction of AWAC: Elizabeth Overcash spoke to this topic. For so long our focus has been on changing the Durham ordinances to allow for TNVR. Now that the ordinance has been changed, we might consider how to make the best use of our time to support the shelter and Animal Services.

Possibilities for the direction of AWAC included the following:

- Increasing spay/neuter resources in Durham (brought up by Director Allen).
 - In particular, we may need to focus on low-cost spay/neuter for community cats.

- Community education (brought up by Captain Manning and Brian Mulligan).
 - There has been some mention of forming a subcommittee on public education.
- Working to improve affordable housing options and decreasing breed restrictions in housing (brought up by Sara Abrons).
- Finding ways for Animal Services and the shelter to work together more efficiently, including by looking to how surrounding counties are navigating these relationships (brought up by Elizabeth Overcash).

Item VII – Public Comments

Dale Wolf provided public comment about an experience with Animal Services. Six years ago, Dale's neighbors brought chickens to their home. The neighbors then moved away, leaving two of the chickens behind. These chickens took up residence in the woods around the property and eventually made their way to Dale's residence. Dale did not mind the chickens being there. The chickens reproduced, and the population grew somewhat, although several were killed by predators, keeping the population low. One of Dale's neighbors complained about the remaining chickens, and Animal Services came to investigate. Dale explained the situation, and Animal Services attempted to catch and remove the chickens. They were unable to do so, so Dale offered to try to rehome them. After this, Dale received a written warning from Animal Services for having the chickens. Dale did not feel that this right, given that the original neighbors (not Dale) were responsible for the chickens. Dale stated that this is not a critique, just an experience that Dale wanted to share.

A motion was made by Elizabeth Overcash to adjourn the meeting, and this motion was seconded by Dr. Campbell, thus adjourning the meeting.

The next meeting is September 26, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.