

St. Clair County Animal Services

Minutes for Meeting

Conference Room: 5:30 P.M.

February 27, 2023

Members Present:

Robert Trentman, Chairman
Scott Greenwald, Asst. Chairman
Lonnie Mosley
Robert Wilhelm
Mike O'Donnell
G.W. Scott
C.J. Barecivic

Others Present:

Ashley Jett, Animal Services
Robert Allen, County Board Member
Randy Pierce
Lexi, Belleville News Democrat

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mr. Trentman.

Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum

Stand for the Pledge of Allegiance

Roll call and a quorum declared present.

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Public Comment:

Sheila: First of all, thank you for the donation of straw, hay? So, it's been awhile. What's the status of TNR? Was there money budgeted for TNR this year?

Ashley: That is a question that I cannot get answered.

Mr. Trentman: You can't get an answer? Ok. Alright. We will check into that. Anything else?

Sheila: The backyard of the adoption center, that play area back there. It's been a topic of conversation for years. What would it take, if we got volunteers and whatever to level it out and make it a more viable yard. Its icky when the weather gets bad. Can we have that backyard re-done. What would it take?

Mr. Trentman: Ok. We will look into that.

Sheila: Ok. One more question. Oh, I saw the news that there is supposed to be a new animal control. So, over at the fairgrounds?

Mr. Trentman: We are working on that. We are trying to work it out. We just got the fairgrounds. You know what I'm saying. We don't know.

Sheila: Ok.

Mr. Trentman: Its just an idea. I heard that might be a good place for it.

Sheila: So, it's not finalized?

Mr. Trentman: No, not that I know of.

Sheila: Ok, well those were my questions.

Sara: I didn't know if Ashley had the transfer numbers from Gateway and Belleville Area Humane Society, from pulling animals from Animal Control. Gateway pulled the most adult dogs and Belleville pulled the most cats. But yes, we are excited for even more partnerships in the future. We also brought in 347 stray on our own that didn't touch animal control and 539 owner surrenders to our facility. We were trying to help not bring animals there and then help get animals out of there if they get there. I'd be curious about TNR too, because we did TNR over 200 animals from the ESHD.

Sheila: And then Sterilization Nation is a huge factor in the county as well.

Mr. Trentman: And let the record reflect that Robert Allen, County Board Member is here also. And Herb Simmons stuck his nose in the door.

Sara: Is Animal Control now fully staffed or do you still have positions open?

Ashley: Not yet. I still have a med tech that I'm waiting on and also a secondary adoption center employee. We are doing some more interviews this week. As of right now though we have our two wardens. Animal Control is for the most part fully staffed except for our vet tech. And then the assistant position for Brittany.

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Mr. Trentman: Ok, does anyone else have anything to add?

Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Mr. Mosley to approve the minutes of December 19th, 2022. Second by Mr. Hollingsworth.

Vote: Yes: 7 No: 0 Motion Carried.

Ashley Report

Ashley: You all have a copy of our 2022 stats from last year. So I just kind of broke it down into layman's terms, that's easier to understand than the way our reports print them out. We did do 822 rescue transfers. 107, actually 114 adoptions with 7 returns. We transferred 129 animals into the adoption center, and 210 animals reclaimed. We brought in over 1300 animals last year, 1379 animals. We had a 94% save rate for the total 2022 year. As far as December goes we were at 92% for our save rate. And the only reason is, that we were unable to take in as many and we had a lot of injured animals come in that had to be euthanized, so it kind of offset our numbers a little bit. We are still doing good with the save rate. We have been above 90% for a very, very, very long time. I'm trying to think of what else I have here. We are full. Its crazy how many animals we have coming through, how many people want to surrender their animals. We have a wait list for people who are just holding strays for us right now. We don't have anywhere to put them. Its absurd, kind of.

Mr. Trentman: For people wanting to surrender their animals. What is the main reason that the give for that?

Ashley: That they are home enough, that they cant afford them any longer. If they try to tell us that they cant keep them for food purposes, we give them BAHS and GPG's number since they provide services for that. Housing is a lot of the issue. They've moved and they cant have them where they live. That's probably the biggest one.

Sara: By the time they get to us or Animal Control, its like we are the last resort.

Ashley: We haven't been able to take in owner surrenders for a long time just because we have so many strays that are coming in the door. Or strays that are really owner surrenders that people are telling us that they are strays. The problem is that not a lot of them are being reclaimed. A lot of them are sitting there waiting for rescues, and they are helping by taking them off the streets when we cant take them so we have the same animals sitting at animal control for ever waiting for rescues to have space and be able to help take them. But I think that we are hopefully getting some clearance again. We have a couple of our long timers pulled and we are trying to get into the rotation again. We are trying to figure something out because its

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not far to the dogs to be in the shelter for that long. We have dogs that have been there since August and they are good dogs. We actually just took Caldwell and Jax, who are the longest two residents that we have had there. They have been there since August of last year. So we moved them to the adoption center and we are going to give them a chance.

Sheila: And they are gorgeous dogs. I can't wait to see how fast they get adopted.

Sara: We would have helped with them but they are not for Gateway's service area. We currently have 15 from our service area there.

Mr. Trentman: We are going to have to start charging them rent.

Ashley: The other couple of things that I have is, obviously Brittany is the new adoption center manager. So she took my position and we are going to get another person over there. We are going to hire someone for her, to help her. We got our cabinets. Thank you. Finally got those so we are in the midst of organizing, getting everything put away, trying to get the shelter back to normal and just decluttering has been our goal for the last few weeks. The only other thing is just that I am working on the implementation of the fees for the individual cities. I've been working with the states attorney because we think it might be better to create an ordinance or put it in our ordinances instead of just, here's a letter and hope that everybody just abides by the fees. I've been working with Chris Allen and he is going to help create that ordinance for us. And then me and Brittany have been pondering for our five year plan and what we are going to accomplish. We have lots of different things that I have been wanting, that I am going to rely a lot on for her to do. Boost our volunteer program, because we just don't have that many at all and it's going to help us tremendously to have volunteers there again. And then maybe, eventually a foster program. Just trying to come up with some new ideas. There are lots of things that we could be doing that we have potential to do.

Mr. Trentman: Maybe we could have schools bring kids to the adoption center maybe.

Ashley: There we go.

Mr. Trentman: Get some kids through there. If they like the dogs, they take a picture of the dog home, give it to their parents.

Sheila: Read to them.

Ashley: The reading program is always something that I wanted to do over there, but we just have to find a way around the age barrier.

Mr. Trentman: Whatever happened to the money that we raised for that overnight stay.

Ashley: I still have it.

Mr. Trentman: You still have it?

Ashley: Yes.

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Mr. Trentman: Then we need to spend it on something.

Ashley: I wasn't able to really spend it before, so I have just bought some Kongs and things like that for enrichment. So I'm working on that. My goal was to have that money to do enrichment for the animals so that I can buy whatever they need to stay sane in the kennels. Also to provide

medical to animals that need it, that is more extensive than what we pay for normally, and then to also maybe fix that backyard. That was my whole goal, that's what I wanted to do with that backyard a long time ago, but we just have to figure out what we can do with the backyard.

Mr. Trentman: Well we raised the money to spend it on the animals, so we need to spend it.

Ashley: We are spending it.

Mr. Trentman: Harry, you got something?

Mr. Hollingsworth: You took one of the questions out of my mouth, but if the police was willing to pay for the expense of the dogs they bring up there. Secondly, do most of them have paperwork on the animals that want to bring them to you? Do they own most of the animals or do they get them out of the street, or are they just stray dogs that they bring to you.

Ashley: Well, we take in the strays, but as far as the owner surrenders go, but the owner surrenders, they are pretty honest when they bring them in. They say that they are theirs and they can't house them or whatever the case may be. They usually have some sort of paperwork, I don't know if it's necessarily up to date vaccinations or anything like that, but for the most part we do know that they are the owners of those animals.

Mr. Wilhelm: Do they have chips?

Ashley: Some of them do, yeah.

Sara: We don't mind getting owner surrenders diverted to us because we can sometimes provide them with supplies or get them spayed or neutered or help them. The owner surrenders we don't mind talking to. That way we can help them keep their pets.

Ashley: And the strays are usually only on a wait list for maximum 3 days, because honestly I wouldn't want to house another dog that wasn't mine for longer than a 2-3 day timespan but those are something that we should be able to take in immediately but we just can't. So, it's just asking them, unless they tell me they are going to go dump them in the parking lot or in the middle of the highway which a lot of them do, I will just take them at that point. But then that puts someone else who was being nice enough and willing to hold an animal for an extra couple of days down the list even further. I've never seen it like this before. It's a new situation.

Mr. Hollingsworth: When an animal is in bad shape and you all have to euthanize them, they really just can't be saved right?

Ashley: Right. We don't euthanize for space, aggression – extreme aggression, and extreme extreme medical that cannot be treated are what we euthanize for. If it's medical, like hit by car

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or something like that if it's from Sara's area, then we contact Gateway, or I call Sara and then they will come within a day and pick them up. Then they do their stray hold and provide the medical that they need to stay comfortable and then if an owner reclaims then obviously we send them to wherever to talk to the rescue and they come up with a plan.

Mr Hollingsworth: Ok, thanks

Ashley: We don't euthanize for much unless its requested by an owner. And we only do that for aggression or old, no quality of life type thing.

Mr Trentman: What was your name again?

Brittany: Brittany

Mr Trentman: What do you have going on at the adoption center?

Brittany: I have a million ideas, but we have to get there slowly. I think eventually that I will have a volunteer proposed to you at some point. We just have to get a few things going. So, I worked at Gateway for a really long time and when I first started Gateway we were very very small and with the right policies we were able to increase our intake and our adoption numbers, so I hope to really increase the adoption numbers on the animals and have them have more outcomes instead of having to wait for rescues. So that's my ultimate goal.

Mr Trentman: Awesome, ok.

Sheila: Look at how this has changed over the years. Really think about it. When we first came here angry and pounding our fists, and look at it now. I mean granted there are different problems now because times have changed in society, but what a better place our animal control has become. You know it was slow getting there, but we are there.

Sara: There is a nation wide crisis everywhere so its not just here, its everywhere. I think when covid hit everyone was home, and was like, oh I'll take a pet because I'm home or working from home, but then now they have to go back to work and people are now feeling the after affects and are losing their jobs, or losing their housing, and now its going back down to where we were years ago, but

Sheila: But Spot can stay home by himself. It's ok!

Sara: Yeah.

Brittany: Well I think a lot of it is that people don't adopt a dog every year. So the amount of people who adopted in 2020 are not necessarily going to adopt in 2021 or 22. So we have to get a few years in so people are adopting again. Supply and demand is the issue.

Mr Trentman: Those owner surrenders, I think if we can somehow figure out how we can help them keep there dog, like we need to ask them, like what will it take to keep your dog.

Ashley: Yeah, we do. We try to do as much of that as we possibly can. We send them across the street and if they are from GPG's area then we will send GPG's way. At least we are having a

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conversation with them to see what we can to do try to help. They have endless amounts of services available that they can provide for people.

Sheila: Is the humane society still doing a pet food pantry?

Ashley: Not that I am aware of.

Sheila (to Sara): And is yours only for your area?

Sara: No. So we have a free food pantry, but you have to have your pet spayed or neutered and from our zip codes 62201 to 62207. But we do have a retail store that's low cost and anyone can purchase food from there. It's .35/lb. Its just bulk food that we get donated. Its scoop your own, bag it, but you can get a big bag for \$5.00. And it sells out really fast.

Ashley: Maybe I should start coming there.

Sara: I know. Haha. Our retail store has leashed, collars, tie outs, doghouses, straw.

Sheila: Do you have a flyer? Because we could start putting that out weekly. I could start putting that out in all the various places.

Sara: We also have the low cost vet clinic, where rabies are \$15.00. If you live in those zip coeds you can get free space/neuter with microchip and all that. That's huge.

Sheila: I think the humane society has like a \$50.00 voucher program or something. But I don't see that advertised.

Mr Trentman: I think they have a Glow Bingo this weekend. Ashley do you know?

Ashley: I think it is.

Mr. Trentman: So if you guys want to go to Glow Bingo. Its at Tribouts'. Ok. I need a motion to approve Ashley and Brittany's reports.

MOTION: by Mr. Wilhelm to approve Ashley's report

2nd by Mr. O'Donnell

Vote: Yes: 7 No: 0 Motion Carried.

Mr. Trentman: No orders or resolutions. Is there any other business to come before this board or anything else from any other board member on this committee.

Mr. Hollingsworth: I have a question real quick. In the backyard where you have the issues. What's the problem, do they have high hills, grass, all the above.

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Ashley: So the backyard goes down, into the creek, so the runoff of the water kind of settles on the top and then stays on the bottom. So the side yard is flat, but the actually backyard is on a hill. And it is muddy all the time. We cant get grass to grow, its bad.

Mr. Hollingsworth: It probably smells too.

Ashley: I mean we clean all the time, picking up stuff everyday, but there is the creek that literally runs right behind the building. I had an offer a few years ago for someone to excavate the whole thing and add a retaining wall in the back, but it never got approved. That would have been free, and they had the backfill too. But right now I am looking for, or if anyone knows someone who might have any astroturf or any kind of large turf pieces and they would want to donate them, that would be fantastic. I have called all of the soccer fields and left messages with them because I know that they replace their fields every couple of years, just to get a piece donated or for super cheap.

Mr. Trentman: Call up Maher Landscaping. Tell them I told you to call them. The last time I was out there buying hay for my wife's horses, I seen that they had a bunch of astroturf all over the place.

Ashley: ok! I know them. Luke and Lance, isn't it?

Mr. Trentman: Yes. Lance really isn't with the landscaping company. He is in the operator's union. Tell them that you need some astroturf down.

Sheila: Does it still need to be leveled though.

Ashley: At this point, I would rather just get anything down so even if we have astroturf down over what we have now, its going to be way better. At least it won't hold the water and create mud.

Sheila: And dirty dogs.

Ashley: Exactly.

MOTION to adjourn by Mr. Greenwald.

2nd by Mr. Scott.

Vote: Yes: 7 No: 0 Motion carried.