

St. Clair County Animal Services

Minutes for Meeting

Conference Room: 6:00 P.M.

August 26th, 2024

Members Present:

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

Others Present:

Dr Debra Moore, County Administrator
Ann Barnum, Human Resources
Ashley Jett, Animal Services Director
Robert Allen, County Board member
Phil Henning, County Board member
Ken Sharkey, County Board member
Eddie Johnson, Animal Services
Randy Pierce, Mascoutah Harold

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mr. Trentman.

Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum

Stand for the Pledge of Allegiance

Roll call and a quorum declared present.

Public Comment:

Mr. Trentman: Is there any public comment? Please keep your questions or comments to about 2 minutes and direct them towards this chair. If you could please state your name and where you are from.

Maria Sharma: Hi, my name is Maria Sharma and I live in the Signal Hill neighborhood along with my brother and his wonderful family. So, I wanted to speak to an incident that happened to my sister-in-law. One, in support of her but two, because of my concerns. So over the course of July, we have had several neighborhood posts about two dogs that were running loose in our neighborhood. Some neighbors upset, scared to walk their dogs. Others that were "Oh they are friendly. They are nice" coordinating to get them back. On July 26th, the dogs showed up again in the neighborhood to my brother's house and my sister in law put them in the backyard, contacted animal control and was told that because they had owners and because of still recovering from the flood that they wouldn't be able to pick them up. They suggested calling the police to bring them back to the owner, because they should go back to the owner. At first the owner was not wanting them back, but ended up taking them back so they went back. But on July 6th, they showed back up again, August 6th. So once again, she let them back into the backyard. This time the owner said she would not come and get them, she did not want them, she didn't want anything to do with the dogs. My sister-in-law had no idea what to do. She contacted four different shelters, posted on the neighborhood Facebook page asking if anyone could take them. Some of our wonderful neighbors; one offered food; another was helping coordinating to get them vaccinated. But after a couple of days, no one wanted the dogs, she couldn't figure out what to do with them, she was getting overwhelmed. I mean what was she going to do, open the gate and let the dogs roam the neighborhood again? She had no idea what to do, there was no one who would take them. The next morning, she went out and had decided that the dogs – I don't know, I haven't asked her all the details – pardon how I say this, because she can't respeak this, but the dog got out in her backyard and the dogs attacked her dog. She ran after to try to save her baby. I won't paint the picture, but my niece watched. So, my niece called 9-1-1 and no one answered. So thankfully, some men heard her screaming, came and opened the back gate and the dog went running. They stuck around while she took her dog to the emergency vet, did no good. She went, animal control let her know that she needed to go get a medical report, send pictures, so she did. I was very surprised to find that the reason anything was done was because my sister-in-law had been bitten. Had it just been the dog, that would not have triggered anybody to come out. Those dogs would still be running loose, and I don't have to do a what if, because that's a terrible scenario. She can't even go out into her backyard still, but what if those dogs were running loose and my niece was walking the dogs and found herself trying to protect herself from these dogs – or anybody in the neighborhood. We are in an area that has high drop off rates for stray dogs, and we are at risk. What I'm asking for is proper support. If you go to the Animal Services site, let me find it word for word but it does state that the responsibility of animal services is to enforce the Illinois State Statutes and County Ordinances for Animal Services. In the Animal Services, St Clair Animal Services chapter of the ordinances, chapter 3, article 4, section 3, states that any dog running at large contrary to the provision of the code of 510ILCS-5/1, shall be apprehended and impounded, for this purpose, the administrator shall utilize any existing or available public power. And I know, I can only imagine, I think it was stated that they get like 26 bite cases a day, I can't imagine how many calls come in just for stray dogs and how hard it is to keep up with that, but in the same animal services, chapter 3, article 2, section 2, it states that the Board shall provide necessary personnel, equipment, supplies and facilities and shall provide pound or

contracts for the operations as necessary to keep this program running. So, what I'm saying is my sister-in-law had a traumatic scenario, she was trying to do that job, and I am asking for Animal Services to require the board to properly fund the program so that they can protect us, our pets and our kids.

Mr. Trentman: Thank you. Anybody else?

Simon Herley: Simon Herley, from the Signal Hill area. August 9th a whole lot of things failed. 911 failed my daughter when she called to try to save my mother, her mother. Animal Control or Animal Services failed because they were called multiple times for them to come out and get these two dogs whether they came out to get the dogs and bring them back to the owner or whatever had to be done, they failed. They failed their job, and it led to the death of our dog, and it led to my wife, and I'll paint a little bit of a picture. She was holding our dog as it was being attacked by two pit bulls. They ripped the dog open; they drug my wife off of our porch onto our deck, and out into the yard. And the only reason she was saved was because two people were walking by and heard her screaming, and they came out and saved her. My 17-year-old daughter is 105 pounds, there is no way she is going to do anything. She was at the mercy of two dogs that should have never been at my house still, they should not have been there. That's not her job, but because we have her kids, our daughter, multiple kids that they are all friends within the neighborhood, we did not want those pit bulls roaming free. Our neighbors Morgan and Katie, they have 3 little, small dogs, I mean all of those people could have been victims. Actually when they ran out of our yard, he was walking his dogs just right down the street and they went that direction, and they were already agitated. This should never have happened, very preventable. I went down and I spoke with you, and I apologize for being rude but, as you can imagine, I was very stressed out.

Ashley: I completely understand.

Mr. Herley: The solution that you said, don't put the pit bulls in the backyard, not acceptable.

Ashley: I understand that.

Mr. Herley: Maybe I shouldn't have, because I shouldn't have had to. We are not the only ones who called about it. We are not the only ones who posted about it. We are not the only people who needed help. This same lady had two dogs, that a couple years ago, escaped and killed another guy's dog. To my knowledge, she still has another dog that roams loose in her yard. Thank god that one did not escape. What I want, what I would like is for, maybe you don't come out that day, but when we call and have them in our backyard, or anybody calls for help it would be nice to have it that day, but it's not our job. It's what we pay taxes for, is to have for you guys to come out and get the dogs and maintain a safe neighborhood or at least help. The 9-1-1 failure, there is nothing you can do about that. The phone rang, rang, rang. We ended up having to call the Sheriffs, non-emergency number. I don't know what's going on, but multiple failures led to this incident, and I just don't want it to happen again. I don't want it to happen to anybody else. I don't want it to happen to little kids in our neighborhood. I want, all I want is a solution. I want you guys to offer us, this community, a solution of what you need, what's going to change, and how we can prevent this from happening again. That's it.

Mr. Trentman: Thank you. Anybody else?

Katie Feder: Hi I'm Katie Feder. Like he mentioned, we are their neighbors. So, I know there was an incident where my husband was walking our three dogs, and they are like 10 pounds and

both of those dogs came at our dogs. One of ours is a little aggressive, but we can manage him because he is like this big, but I know that Jess and another neighbor pulled the dogs away, so obviously those dogs were already a little aggressive ahead of time. So, had someone done something when they were first called about them being in her yard, this could have been prevented. I mean we were all in danger, like Maria said, from the beginning unfortunately. So, the support would be nice. It is a very populated street. We have a school right next to us. It's two houses away. There are small children who walk around our yard, in the area behind our house, and walk to and from school. Buses don't even come to that school, it's a walk only school so if they are willing to attack Jess, I mean if they are aggressive in that way, there are lots of children too unfortunately. It's very populated with dogs also. My husband walking our 3 dogs is not the only one walking, so just like they said kind of dangerous and it's unfortunate that we don't have the support so it would be nice to see something change. It is a lovely street, that is why there are so many of us here. It feels like family. It would be nice to know that we have the same behind us. Thank you for listening.

Mr. Trentman: Ok, anybody else?

Katie Hoffman: I'm Katie Hoffman, I'm also a neighbor on the Signal Hill Blvd. I'm going to paint the opposite picture, and this is that it's just not children. We also have a multitude of older, especially women, who are single and like to let their little dogs out in a very appropriate manner, that have invisible fences and I cannot even imagine what would happen if somebody's grandmother or mother, of a totally fit age, but yet older and single and by themselves, because we all have animals that we love, and what we would do for those babies. So, we are good tax paying citizens, and we just want to see our taxes going to the appropriate places.

Mr. Trentman: Who else? Anybody else? Now is your chance.

Mr. Herley: If anyone is interested, I do have pictures from the attack. They are not great.

Mr. Trentman: Ok. Thank y'all for saying what you have to say. Ok. If I don't hear anything from anyone else, we are going to move on.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION: by Mr. Greenwald to approve the minutes of July 29th, 2024, meeting. Second by Mr. Wilhelm.

Vote: Yes: 6 No: 0 Motion Carried.

Ashley Report

Mr. Trentman: Reports from Ashley Jett, our AC Director.

Ashley: Well, as everybody is aware, we had a flood last month. We are still re-cooping from that and the damages that were incurred by that. We are up and running and have been since a week after the flood. We are trying to do our best to intake the animals that we have and be out on the road as much as we possibly can. We are hoping to move back into the animal control side of the building. Right now, we are all functioning out of one side and hopefully that can

happen next week. Construction has been a little hectic, but all of the walls are now back together, and we are waiting for paint. As far as everything else goes, of course our live release rate from Animal Control was greater than it should obviously be because we emergency evacuated everyone out of the facility. But we are full again, within 2 weeks of the flood we were back to full again with 52 dogs and at least 20 cats. We are intaking and doing the best we can. We do have another clinic coming up where we are doing low-cost vaccinations, microchipping for the community. That actual clinic itself is fully booked – it is on September 4th, but we are planning our next clinic for October so hopefully we will have a date for that soon. I don't really have much more than that.

Mr. Trentman: Alright. Any board members have anything or any questions?

Mr. Trentman: How many calls do you get in a day, Ashley, would you say about dogs at large, dogs running around?

Ashley: Anywhere between 10 and 20 a day, not to mention we get about 20 something bite cases a month, so at least getting 1-2 bite cases every single day. Our abandonments, evictions, police assists, bite cases pretty much are outweighing our entire day. We have dogs that are being abandoned, evictions that are being served where we are unaware and we just have to figure it out on a daily basis. We try to do the best we can when it comes to straying reports, but obviously by the time or five minutes after we receive a straying report the dog is gone unless it's confined in some way, shape or form. But even the next day, if we still have the straying report, we are trying to go out on them as fast we can. It's just a lot. We have one animal control officer that's handling our entire county right now. That includes bite cases, police assists, all of the above. It's a lot. We have a position available to hire another animal control officer. It's been open since March and we haven't had anybody apply.

Mr. Trentman: Alright, I need a motion to accept Ashley's report.

MOTION: by Mr. Mosley to approve Ashley's report. Second by Mr. Greenwald.

Vote: Yes: 6 No: 0 Motion Carried.

Mr. Trentman: We have no ordinances or resolutions. Any other busy to come before this board from any of you guys? Does anyone else have anything else to add?

Mr. Mosley: I'd like to see these people get some support from us. Their stories are just so... I'm supportive of what they want down there.

Mr. Trentman: I do know this. Ashley works hard down there at AC. She is overwhelmed with animals. She may get, in a week, half a dozen to 10 calls just right here, aggressive dogs running around, and she is trying to figure it out. It's tough, it's hard and she works hard, and we are lucky to have her.

Mr. Herley: Bob, can I ask a question. What is the salary for that position?

Mr. Trentman: For?

Ashley: For the Animal Control position: It starts out at I believe at 38 and goes to 43. It just depends what kind of background they have and then they have an increase once they receive their certification. There are classes that are involved to become an animal control officer.

Mr. Herley: I want to post that in our neighborhood. What are the requirements? Younger?

Ashley: We ask that they have some sort of law enforcement backing or something to do with animal control. We don't find a lot with the law enforcement portion of it, but not even to be an animal control officer prior but to have experience with the handling of animals. Because that is the biggest part. You have to be able to go out into the field where these animals might be acting aggressively and not be scared, and also be able to control them or be in communities that they might not be comfortable in.

Mr. Herley: Just asking the questions mainly because from 38-43 is a big ask for someone to have a background in law enforcement. I think the majority of the officers make more than that.

Ashley: Absolutely.

Mr. Herley: And yes, by the way. I do understand that you, I could tell just by coming in that you are swamped. You are the warden?

Mr. Johnson: Yes.

Mr. Herley: You were awesome. Thank you.

Mr. Johnson: You're welcome.

Mrs. Herley: I want to thank you personally. You were so good to me.

Mr. Johnson: I am sorry about what happened. Like I explained, it's not that we weren't trying to help you, we were so busy that actual day. We had multiple assists and things going on. It's not that we were ignoring you.

Mrs. Herley: I just felt like you were the only one who cared that day. And I know that you did too, I just want to know why I called, I think a total of 3 times and I want to know why I was told, I think it was you maybe twice, you knew exactly who the dogs were and the owner. So why do we have to constantly call when you know the animals and the owner is horrible. Like why do we have to constantly call when her dogs are constantly out.

Ashley: And it's not that, I mean I printed out the calls too that we have regarding the incidents and reports we have for these dogs, and they are pretty hit and miss when people have been actually reporting them to us. We have gone out on all the calls, and either they are GOA, which means gone on arrival, but with that being said, we do try to make an attempt to contact the owner, we will leave a door hanger if she is not home. She is usually very rarely home. Citations can be issued to her for running at large, which generally the animals are impounded, but if we can't pick them up if they are running loose, running at large, and we don't pick them up, then we obviously cannot do the impound fees and make her pay to get them back. We have only had them one time and that was in 2022.

Mrs. Herley: I seen that I looked it up. She actually told me the first time that I had them she told me that she didn't want them back because she couldn't afford the constant fees. What she told me was almost \$500, well that was a lie. Afterwards, I found that out.

Ashley: Right.

Mrs. Herley: I looked it up and yes, I seen only one fee. Is it guys that did that or was it the Sheriff? I don't know how that works.

Ashley: When they actually come to us and our in our building for her to reclaim, they come through us. Now, as far as citations are and what they are ordered, that is determined by a judge to see how much they would pay in fees and fines for that and then that money is paid to the county clerks office. So, it all would go through them.

Mr. Herley: I just want to state also that some of the calls – so you are one person and you are by yourself and it's probably a lot, with some volunteers but some of the calls that we made there, you are obviously very busy. I mean you would have had more calls. I called several times, and I know that some other people have called.

Ashley: And I always tell people, and I mean right now we are having... we have our office staff at a remote location, so they are here answering phones while the rest of us are at the shelter. So, when I called your wife, it was because the Sheriff's office came and asked why we hadn't responded – that the call had been in que. The initial report that we had was that there were just two dogs running at large and attacked another dog. So that's why, and it didn't come from you, it came from the neighbor.

Mr. Herley: That right there is our point. That should be enough.

Ashley: We were at a bite case, which is where he was at, and we were heading that direction afterwards, but we were assisting in a bite report in O'Fallon so that's where he had to come from. When I talked to your wife, she asked if she could just shower, and I told her that she had about 35 minutes before our warden could get there. Then the dogs escaped, and we ended up getting a call, someone had posted 15-20 minutes later that the dogs had been confined somewhere else, so then we ended up getting them from there. I always tell people even if we are closed, call the Sheriff. They can report and do the same thing that we can. If they can't respond or haven't responded, call us the next business day. We would rather have the report in our system so that we have an actual log of it. Even if it occurred the day prior. If it happens over a weekend, still call us the next business day and talk to somebody. We are down to one phone line right now, so it does make it hard for incoming calls to come through because we have one phone until we get the staff back to the shelter. I apologize, it's just – the flood has not been real easy on us.

Mr. Herley: And I think that is my point, the main thing or issue that I see here. It's one person, one phone line, one warden to respond to everything in the whole county. That is my issue. And like you were saying, there were multiple calls, you are one person. There is no way that you are going to be able to field all that. There is no way. It's an unreasonable ask.

Mr. Trentman: We do have other staff down there besides Ashley.

Ashley: We have two staff that answer the phone.

Mr. Trentman: We have staff that answer the phones, it's just everybody is busy and everybody's working.

Mr. Johnson: Here's the problem. Here's what I think the problem is. This morning you all had issues going on (inaudible).

Mr. Herley: That's what I'm saying.

Mr. Johnson: Every part of the county. Even if there was 3 wardens, we only have so much space to take in from stray calls. So, when someone owns a dog, we expect them to go back to the owner. If they can't have it, sometimes we are just full. We are a no kill shelter.

Mr. Herley: So that to me, I understand that, and I know how everybody feels, but is that a reasonable thing to do?

Mr. Johnson: That's above my pay grade.

Mr. Herley: How do we change this?

Mr. Johnson: That's above my pay grade.

Mr. Herley: I mean I hate to do it because I love animals, but you are asking something that is unreasonable of a shelter, or Animal Services. To keep taking animals in, over and over and over again, with no end in sight, is unreal. It's not possible. Unless you build a massive shelter for that. That's an unreal ask. Animal Services shouldn't be doing that, you are not a shelter, you are animal services. If a shelter will take them, then yes, but that's not animal services. That's not in the mission for the animal services.

Ashley: We passed a no-kill resolution in 2017, so it is no-kill to have a 90% save rate and that was what was approved at that point. It was achievable back then. We were taking in 1200-1300 animals every year and sending 1200 of them to rescue. Now, with the aftereffects of covid and employment and things of that nature, we have dogs that are, we have probably on a weekly basis, we probably have 50 calls per week and I'm not exaggerating about people who need to surrender their pets. And we are not even helping with owner surrenders currently, we are just intaking strays.

Mr. Herley: How do we change that resolution?

Ashley: That would be the County Board office.

Mr. Trentman: We are lucky to have Ashley. She works her butt off and so does Ed, and everybody else down there. It's a job that she takes home with her every day. When she goes on vacation, she's making calls trying to rescue animals and find homes for animals. So, we are lucky to have her. She was from rescue when we got her, and we are lucky to have her. So, I back Ashley and I hope we do a better job for you guys. We will try.

Mr. Herley: Thanks so much.

MOTION: by Mr. O'Donnell to approve Ashley's report. Second by Mr. Mosley.

Vote: Yes: 6 No: 0 Motion Carried.

MOTION to adjourn by Mr. Wilhelm. Second by Mr. Greenwald.

Vote: Yes: 6 No: 0 Motion carried.



Kennel Statistics, Including Animals Left

Intakes from 8/1/2024 to 8/31/2024

	DOG	PUPPY	CAT	KITTEN	TOTAL
GRAND TOTAL	47	22	16	32	117
EUTH REQ	2	0	1	0	3
BELLEVILLE	0	0	1	0	1
CASEYVILLE	1	0	0	0	1
EAST ST LOUIS	1	0	0	0	1
OWNER SUR	2	8	5	8	23
(no jurisdiction)	2	0	4	0	6
BELLEVILLE	0	0	1	3	4
CASEYVILLE	0	8	0	0	8
O FALLON	0	0	0	1	1
SWANSEA	0	0	0	4	4
RETURN	0	2	2	0	4
FAIRVIEW HEIGHT	0	2	0	0	2
SCOTT AFB	0	0	2	0	2
STRAY	43	12	8	24	87
(no jurisdiction)	0	0	2	4	6
BELLEVILLE	18	7	3	10	38
CAHOKIA	9	0	0	0	9
CASEYVILLE	1	3	0	3	7
COLLINSVILLE	0	2	0	0	2
DUPO	1	0	0	0	1
EAST ST LOUIS	8	0	0	0	8
FREEBURG	2	0	0	1	3
LEBANON	0	0	2	0	2
MASCOUTAH	0	0	0	1	1
NEW ATHENS	1	0	0	0	1
O FALLON	0	0	0	3	3
SHILOH	1	0	0	1	2
SWANSEA	0	0	1	1	2

	DOG	PUPPY	CAT	KITTEN	TOTAL
WASHINGTON PARK	2	0	0	0	2



Kennel Statistics, Including Animals Left

Outcomes from 8/1/2024 to 8/31/2024

	DOG	PUPPY	CAT	KITTEN	Total
GRAND TOTAL	26	17	9	36	88
ADOPTION	7	1	1	10	19
(no jurisdiction)	0	0	1	0	1
BELLEVILLE	2	0	0	1	3
COLLINSVILLE	0	1	0	0	1
EAST ST LOUIS	1	0	0	0	1
FAIRVIEW HEIGHT	2	0	0	0	2
FAYETTEVILLE	0	0	0	2	2
FREEBURG	0	0	0	1	1
MARISSA	1	0	0	0	1
MILLSTADT	0	0	0	5	5
O FALLON	0	0	0	1	1
SHILOH	1	0	0	0	1
DIED	0	0	1	0	1
SWANSEA	0	0	1	0	1
EUTH	2	0	1	1	4
(no jurisdiction)	0	0	0	1	1
BELLEVILLE	0	0	1	0	1
CASEYVILLE	1	0	0	0	1
EAST ST LOUIS	1	0	0	0	1
RELOCATE	4	8	2	5	19
(no jurisdiction)	1	0	1	1	3
BELLEVILLE	2	1	0	2	5
CASEYVILLE	0	4	0	0	4
COLLINSVILLE	0	2	0	0	2
FAIRVIEW HEIGHT	0	1	0	0	1
FREEBURG	0	0	0	1	1
LEBANON	0	0	1	0	1
O FALLON	0	0	0	1	1

	DOG	PUPPY	CAT	KITTEN	Total
SHILOH	1	0	0	0	1
RTO	2	0	0	2	4
BELLEVILLE	2	0	0	2	4
TRAN IN ST	11	8	4	18	41
(no jurisdiction)	1	0	1	2	4
BELLEVILLE	4	5	3	10	22
CAHOKIA	4	0	0	0	4
CASEYVILLE	0	3	0	3	6
EAST ST LOUIS	1	0	0	0	1
FAIRVIEW HEIGHT	1	0	0	0	1
MASCOUTAH	0	0	0	1	1
O FALLON	0	0	0	1	1
SHILOH	0	0	0	1	1

Animals Left In Shelter
on 08/31/24

DOG	PUPPY	CAT	KITTEN	Total
34	7	7	14	62