

# Galveston County Animal Services Summit Documentation of Recommendations

## **The Summit**

On March 30, 2004, the Galveston County Health District hosted a public forum in an effort to improve public relations among our public health partners and relevant stakeholders as outlined in the District's **Strategic Health Plan**. The purpose of the forum was to outline the Health District's plans to improve existing services within available resources and to hear community ideas and perspectives regarding the need for short-term or long-term improvements in animal services.

The Honorable Judge James Yarbrough opened the summit with a county perspective on animal services followed by Health District staff presentations on Strategic Health Planning and the Health District's vision of animal services in the future. The District also spoke on the need to form a Task Force responsible for appointing potential members to the new Animal Services Advisory Committee and charged with the task of reviewing and making recommendations on an Animal Services Inter-local Agreement.

The forum was then turned over to the fifty-seven (57) attendees anxiously waiting to voice their ideas and perspectives regarding animal services improvements. The ideas were captured, synthesized into categories and documented for review below. These ideas, along with a comprehensive needs assessment conducted by the Health District will be forwarded to the new Animal Services Advisory Committee once selected.

## **The Recommendations**

### **Staffing**

- The Galveston County Animal Shelter needs to coordinate a volunteer corp. trained and ready to assist shelter staff.
- Animal Shelter should look at hiring temps to cover the necessary work in the shelter.
- Investigate summer programs for teens to assist with the work in the shelter. Program should include proper training of the teens and adult supervision.
- Inmates are a likely work force to work with animals.
- Pet adoptions and pet rescues should be listed as a general requirement on the job description of the Animal Services Manager.
- We should all support the new manager once hired.

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## Training

- Texas Animal Control Association provides wonderful training opportunities.
- Animal Services staff needs training on the proper identification of breed type, gender type, etc. In addition, the staff needs sensitivity training
- Employees of the Animal Services Division need assistance and training to prevent burnout that lends itself to negative attitudes.
- Animal Services staff should receive training on the new culture shift concerning customer service and the humane treatment of all animals.
- Communication skill training, sensitivity training and knowledge of basic veterinary medicine
- Train employees on maintaining a daily log of animals currently in the shelter

## Facility

- Galveston County Animal Shelter should look into purchasing a crematorium.
- Phone system needs to be upgraded
- Animals need an area outside.
- Shelter capacity needs to be increased. Base expansion on current and projected demographics for Galveston County.
- Shelter needs to be appealing.
- Shelter needs to include a socialization area.

## Collaborations

- Create a “Friends of the Shelter” group.
- Animal Services, Rescue Groups, Adoption Groups need to be on same page and working together.
- Animal Services needs to support and assist in the communication of the collaborative efforts of the Spay/Neuter advocates. Research the idea of sponsoring a spay and neuter month.
- Animal Services needs to collaborate with Wildlife Rehabilitators
- Look at working with Foster homes
- Increase work with adoption groups
- Work with volunteers to print and distribute brochures about animal services
- Work with large animal rescue groups.
- Set up an “Angel fund” for animals needing medical care when none is available.
- Collaborate and communicate with other animal shelters about hours of operation, current dog populations, space availability, and adoptable animal network.

## Financial

- Increase fees for licensing and redemption for animals that are not spayed or neutered
- Estimate cost of sheltering animal and euthanasia. (Data – shelter and euthanasia \$185, spay neuter \$85).
- Consider increasing the fees for adoption.
- The money generated by fees at the shelter should remain in the shelter budget.
- Raise the necessary dollars to purchase a new computer database software.
- What can citizens do to assist in raising appropriations for the animal services program?
- County Commissioner Janek stated that he would try to increase the amount of money going to animal services.

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## Advisory Committee

- Animal Services Committee should be composed of subcommittees similar to the Goals 2000 Committee in the City of Texas City
- Advisory Committee composition needs to look at demographics
- Current advisory committee is ineffective, animal services are always limited by money, encouraged to continue membership on committee following enthusiasm of summit
- Advisory committee needs to better communicate with municipalities

## Rules and Regulations

- Second time an animal is picked up ordinance should require the owner to sterilize the animal
- Enforce current statutes
- Could spay and neuter requirements be expanded within the limits of established statutes
- Enforce laws regarding the chaining of animals and animal cruelty laws
- Review euthanasia requirements

## Operations

- The Animal Services Program should have a coordinated effort to pick up dead animals
- Always scan dog for microchip
- Who takes care of prisoner's animals
- Care of injured animals
- Information from county tags needs to be entered into a database
- Quarantine all animals as they are brought in and observe them for one day minimum
- Place signage at the shelter to identify the entrance to the shelter facility
- What role does the Animal Services program play in the sheltering of farm animals
- Become more flexible when working with rescue groups
- Stop the practice of placing sick animals with healthy animals, different breeds in the same run and sheltering too many animals per cage
- Review hours of operation
- What can be done to reduce the feral cat population

## Communication

- We need to increase the communication within the shelter itself
- The Animal Services program needs to increase public awareness
- Improve communications with rescue groups
- Communicate more with cities

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### **The Next Steps**

- At the Animal Services Summit, attendees were asked to nominate potential candidates to serve as a member on a Task Force charged with reviewing the current Inter-local Agreement for Shelter Operations and drafting a new agreement which, at a minimum, recommends to the Board of Health, the composition of a new advisory committee, the operational review of both animal services field and shelter operations, and funding mechanisms.
- Following the review of these nominations, the Health District assembles a well diverse group to serve.
- Task Force begins its review of the current Inter-local Agreement, drafting of a new agreement, and formulating nominations for the Animal Services Advisory Committee.
- The Task Force recommendations are forwarded to the Galveston County United Board of Health for their review and approval. The United Board of Health (Board) is a thirteen member appointed body responsible to the public for the operation of the Galveston County Health District. The function of the Board is to approve policies that govern the Galveston County Health District including the Animal Services Division.
- Changes to the Inter-local Agreement are communicated by the Board to the contracted cities/county along with recommendations for adoption.
- Animal Services Advisory Committee is formed under the guidance of new Inter-local Agreement and begins the task of reviewing the operations of both the Animal Field Services and the Animal Shelter. The Committee is provided the material used by the Task Force during their review, the comprehensive needs assessment conducted by the Health District and all of the recommendations documented during the Animal Services Summit.
- Animal Services Advisory Committee recommendations for services, funding, facilities, personnel, etc. are forwarded to the Board of Health for action.