

**Galveston County Animal Services
Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
October 5, 2007**

Meeting Minutes

In attendance

Members:

Richard Price, Police Chief, City of La Marque
Pam Wood, Administrative Assistant, City of Santa Fe
George Fuller, Animal Services Liaison, City of Texas City
Anthony Matranga, Council Member, City of Hitchcock
Eddie Janek Jr., Alderman, City of Bayou Vista
Madeline Baker, Secretary to the Board, Animal Alliance
Jerry Finch, President, Habitat for Horses
Lark Tedesco-Finneman, Equine Cruelty Investigator, Habitat for Horses

Staff:

Jay Holland, Chief Operating Officer, Galveston County Health District
Kim Schoolcraft, Manager, Galveston County Animal Services
Ronnie Schultz, Director, Environmental Programs, Galveston County Health District
Renee Boles, Administrative Assistant, Galveston County Health District

Guests:

Lorraine Murtaugh
Tom English
Susan Moore

Ron welcomed all and announced a Quorum was certified.

Update Items:

Animal Services Policy

The New Animal Services Policy was presented to the United Board of Health and passed at the September Board meeting and it is currently in effect. The policy is posted on the Health District web site for review.

Animal Disaster Planning

Ron spoke regarding the Animal Issues Committee chaired by Brian Rutherford, Galveston County Health Districts Public Health Planner. They are working on finding staging areas for the inventorying and housing of large animals in the event of a disaster.

Jerry Finch and Lark Tedesco spoke about utilizing Runge Park and how a state laws limit where horses can be kept or moved to due to the possible spread of infectious diseases.

Public Comments:

Lark Tedesco recognized officers and employees that helped with the recent cat seizure.

Lorraine Murtaugh spoke about the superb attitude of shelter personnel, even though they are always shorthanded, she noted the need for subs or volunteers to help with such things as micro chip scanning or helping with the computer software which is currently not effectively being used. The volunteer procedure needs to be simplified and teens that are willing to help should be able to do so without it being a liability issue.

Lorraine Murtaugh also spoke about funding issues which result in a lack of care the animals receive, such as vaccines and antibiotics. It was stated some of the shelter buddies are currently paying out of their own pocket. Lorraine spoke of the need for heartworm testing. She commented on the strong efforts being made with animal cruelty. She feels there is sufficient space at the current location for expansion and felt it might be beneficial to look into a company from Houston named "Hound Quarters", they have metal buildings that are covered with brick and are cost effective. She also commented on how criminals are kept comfortable at the County jail but shelter employees do not have a comfortable work environment. She spoke about numerous building maintenance issues.

Lark Tedesco-Finneman expanded on the subject of maintenance needs and infrastructure problems. She presented pictures of some of the issues: Leaks in the adoption room, kennel area, former kitchen area, also in the bathroom an umbrella is required if it's raining. She stated the roof needs to be repaired.

Need for Shelter Expansion or Construction of New Shelter – Education Efforts for Decision Makers – Discussion and Possible Action:

Lark Tedesco-Finneman suggested a sub-committee be formed to put together a list of shelter needs to present to the commissioners.

George Fuller stated that with what Texas City is paying they need to see some improvements.

Jay Holland suggested the sub-committee put together a well organized, concise presentation highlighting the shelter needs. This presentation could then be presented to local mayors associations, city councils and commissioners' court.

Ron Schultz suggested someone make a motion to form the sub-committee. Jerry Finch made the motion, no one opposed. Lark Tedesco was appointed to head the committee.

Bacliff Area – Dogs Running at Large:

Ron Schultz presented Steve Hoyland's concerns over dogs running at large in the Bacliff/San Leon area and the need to pay overtime to an officer that can patrol this area on two (2) Saturdays per month. Steve proposed to Commissioner Pat Doyle that the county pay 50% and the citizens of Bacliff/San Leon pay 50% to cover these additional expenses. Ron raised the concern for additional shelter staff to care for these additional animals that will be transported to the shelter. Ron will keep the committee updated with Commissioner Doyle's and the Galveston County Commissioner's Court decision.

Committee Member Re-Appointments:

The following members and alternates accepted 2 year terms ending August 31, 2009:

Galveston County Official – The Honorable Stephen Holmes
Galveston County Representative – Ms. Madeline Baker
City of Bayou Vista – Member, The Honorable Eddie Janek Jr. and
Alternate, The Honorable Ross Leago
City of Clear Lake Shores – Ron is currently working with the City of
Clear Lake Shores to fill two (2) vacated positions
City of Hitchcock – Member, The Honorable Anthony Matranga and
Alternate, The Honorable Henry Coger
City of Santa Fe – Member, Mr. Joe Dickson and Alternate Ms. Pam
Wood

The following non-profit nominations were proposed and will be sent to the Board for approval at the next Board of Health meeting October 31, 2007:

Non-Profit Animal Welfare Group, Position 1 – Member, Ms. Lark
Tedesco-Finneman and Alternate, Mr. Tom English

Non-Profit Animal Welfare Group, Position 2 – Member, Mr. Jerry Finch
and Alternate Susan Moore

Civil Seizures Increased Activity:

Kim Schoolcraft provided a handout that detailed the increase in reported seizures. She has become increasingly concerned because in most cases animal control officers cannot file criminal charges. This must be done by a licensed peace officer and screened through the District Attorney's Office for prosecution. Kim would like a volunteer reserve County officer assigned to the shelter 1 day a week to work on cruelty cases.

Richard Price asked about funding. He stated he might be able to put an officer at the shelter if funding is available.

Anthony Matranga motioned that we meet with the County Sheriff and ask him place a deputy at the shelter 1 day a week. No one opposed, motion passed. Ron will keep the committee updated with the Sheriff's decision.

Micro Chipping Issues:

Kim provided a handout and spoke about the problems they are having linking the chip to the owner. This is happening because the owners do not follow thru with contacting the chip company and entering their information. One solution would be for shelter staff to micro chip the animals at the time of adoption. She would like to research a chip that would be easy for shelter to register and cost effective.

Final FY 2008 Animal Services Budget:

Ron announced the budget was approved by the board.

Committee Member Comments:

Richard Price asked about the Alternate for the County Position. Ron stated that one was not needed.

Lorraine asked about animal carcasses being disposed of at the landfill. Ron explained how they had researched the cost of an incinerator, even if we contracted out would be too costly. He informed everyone that landfills are lined with a poly-liner and are within the law for disposal of carcasses and are cost effective.

Meeting adjourned