

ANIMAL CONTROL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

CALLED MEETING

AUGUST 25, 2015

The Animal Control Advisory Committee met on Tuesday August 25, 2015 at 6:00 PM at the Burke County Library. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bill Tinley. Mr. Tinley read a written agenda and introduced the Committee members in attendance: Jones "Scrap" Gresham, retiree and tax payer advocate; Kelly Jenkins, Assistant District Attorney, Middle Judicial Circuit; Carol Jones, community volunteer; Larry Lewis, Chief Deputy, Burke County Sheriff's Office; Stephen Murray, Burke County Health Department; Monika Mobley, teacher and animal rescue volunteer; and Jesse Stone, attorney and State Senator. Committee member Sarah Ford, veterinarian, was unable to attend.

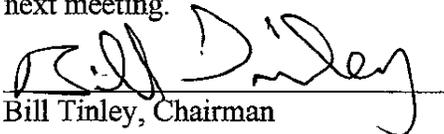
Mr. Tinley explained that County Commission Chairman Wayne Crockett had established the Animal Control Advisory Committee, for the purpose of researching local animal control needs and advising Burke County as to possible solutions.

Mr. Tinley asked for a volunteer to act as Recording Secretary; Committee Member Carol Jones volunteered. Mr. Tinley proposed that meetings be scheduled on the third Tuesday of each month at 6:00 PM, at the Burke County Library. Meetings are to continue at least for a few months but as long as necessary to get the work done. No Committee members voiced any objection, therefore this schedule was agreed to.

Mr. Tinley then read aloud a document titled "Guidelines For The Animal Control Advisory Committee", which is attached to these minutes. He requested that all Committee members study the guidelines and operating procedures in preparation for the next meeting, September 15, 2015 at 6:00 PM.

Scrap Gresham briefly addressed the Committee, stating that he believed that Burke County taxpayers should not have to pay for the mistakes of those owners who do not take proper care of these animals. He referenced a letter to the editor, expressing similar views, which appeared The True Citizen on August 12, 2015.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 PM, with Mr. Tinley requesting that Committee members use the remaining time to engage with the audience, in order to have Committee members and concerned citizens get to know each other better, and to solicit input from citizens prior to the next meeting.


Bill Tinley, Chairman


Carol Jones, Secretary

AGENDA
Animal Control Advisory Committee
August 25th, 2015

- 1 Call to order 6:00 P.M. : Chairman
2. Welcome : Chairman
3. Introduction of Committee Members
4. Selection of recording Secretary
5. Discuss meeting Day, Time and Location
6. Guidelines for the Committee
7. Operating Procedures
8. Adjourn

Guidelines For The Animal Control Advisory Committee.

Animal overpopulation is a problem not unique to Burke County but it is a problem in Burke County. The Committee has the responsibility of helping our leaders to make the best decision they can to address this problem.

The subject of animal control evokes feelings of passion and compassion. The Committee must approach its task with reality and practicality.

Burke County cannot operate a “no-kill” facility due to fiscal constraints as well as other budgetary priorities.

Rescue/ Adoption/ Foster and other volunteer organizations must be willing to work together and with the County in order to minimize duplication of effort as well as to maximize the effectiveness of the Animal Control Program.

In doing this, hopefully the Program will be a success for all concerned and the Citizens as well as the animals will be well served.

The purpose of the Committee is to help the decision-makers by:

1. Gathering information and data pertinent to the problem.
2. Developing options to solve the problem.
3. Making recommendation to the decision-makers.
4. Supporting the final decision.

The Committee must approach its task with a willingness to objectively look into all aspects of animal control. We must not allow the perceptions of sensational social media postings to overshadow the reality of factual data revealed during the information gathering process.

Some suggested areas to be researched:

1. Successful solutions that have been developed in counties similar demographically and economically.
2. The possibility of all the Cities in the County cooperating in an animal control program.
2. Legislative constraints such as O.C.G.A 36-70-20 (Service Delivery Strategy).
5. Alternate sources of funding such as grants from foundations and other such organizations as well as private donations.
6. Facility requirements:
 - Federal, State and Local regulations
 - Size and staffing of a facility
 - Design and cost of constructing a facility
 - Maintaining the facility
 - 24/7 operation of a facility
7. Other information as needed.

Operating Procedures of the Committee:

Roberts Rules (modified) will be used

Meetings will be open to the public

Public hearings will be held as needed

The Committee will accept written suggestions and recommendations only.

Sub-committees will be used to gather information to share with the Committee.

Some suggested sub-committees assignments:

To acquire information and arrange visits to facilities in operation.

For contact and liaison with Volunteer groups.

Research of regulations and requirements for animal control facilities.

Other assignments as needed

The County will be asked to provide admin support for:

Supplies, copies, travel, Meeting notices etc.

Volunteers say more needs to be done to tackle overpopulation

Chronicle
Aug. 15, 2015

By Tracey McManus
Staff Writer

When Noodle the English bulldog was abandoned by his owner at Augusta Animal Services at the end of July, the chances of him making it out were slim.

July was the deadliest month at the shelter so far in 2015, with 809 new animals brought in and 576 euthanized. Noodle was also covered in fleas and sores, had a painful eye condition and was heartworm positive.

When volunteers with the Dog Networking Agents rescue group toured the shelter Aug. 4 and spotted him, they put their contact list of nationwide rescue organizations to use.

Within 24 hours of the group discovering Noodle, he was transferred to the Winder, Ga.-based Georgia English Bulldog Rescue, where he received treatment and a safe foster home.

The daily efforts by the all-volunteer rescue group is one of several strategies Augusta Animal Services has used to adopt out more pets and reduce the county's staggering euthanasia rate, but officials say more resources are needed to control Richmond County's pet overpopulation problem.

The kill rate in the first seven months of 2015 fell to 61 percent from 64 percent in 2014 and 70 percent in 2013, according to shelter data.

Still, an average of 13 mostly healthy and adoptable animals have been killed every day this year, a figure that could be dramatically lower with the right methods in place, said Dog Networking Agents volunteer Ashley Whitaker.

"If the shelter really wants to make a big dent in the euthanasia rate, we need more community outreach, going out and talking to people, doing

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more community meetings," Whitaker said. "The shelter needs a PR face lift. I realize they are overburdened in a lot of ways and I feel for that, but there are easy things to do, like Facebook, improving the Web site, going to events and taking dogs with them. Some shelters go into schools, and (Augusta) could emulate that."

Those intensive outreach programs have been successful in lowering the euthanasia rate in metro Atlanta's municipal shelters.

LifeLine Animal Project took over Fulton and DeKalb counties' animal controls through a contract in 2013 and opened two low-cost spay and neuter clinics, offered trap-neuter-release programs for feral cats and began a "Dog for a Day" program that allows residents to take adoptable animals off-site for walks and socialization. They also hold three to five off-site adoptions each week, offer monthly discounts, arrange transports to shelters in Northern states and require owners who give up their pets to first speak with a shelter counselor who gives advice about low-cost resources and guidance to help change their minds.

The euthanasia rates before Lifeline took control in 2013 were 60 percent in Fulton and almost 50 percent in DeKalb. Through these efforts, it dropped to 17 percent for the nearly 15,500 shelter animals in 2014, according to public relations director Karen Hirsch.

Dog Networking Agents, which has several dozen volunteers, many with full-time jobs and families, bathes dogs on Mondays and Wednesdays to prepare them for spay and neuter surgery and for weekly adoption events at PetSmart. While the group chooses, prepares and promotes the animals, Augusta Animal Services transports the dogs to PetSmart each Saturday and receives the adoption fees because it has legal possession of the animals.

The rest of the rescue group's week is filled with working with local veterinarians on medical cases, communicating with other rescue groups and posting adoptable animals and pleas for support on its Facebook page, which has 3,575 followers.

Since Aug. 1, DNA has written 53 posts with photos about pets that need homes, updates on adopted dogs and information about abuse cases. The Augusta Animal Services page, which has 3,076 followers, has made four posts in that time.

DNA also provides kennels, bandannas and manpower for the PetSmart events. Co-founder Ali Williams said that since the group began working intensely with the shelter in the fall of 2014, they have developed themes for the adoption events to excite the public.

In February, which included a Super Bowl-themed PetSmart adoption, 150 animals were adopted from Augusta Animal Services or transferred to a rescue group, up from 124 in January and 113 in December.

"Visibility was a big issue before we came to the shelter and still is a big issue," Williams said. "That's something DNA has been successful with, promoting animals on social media. I think that's been one of the most impactful things."

Priscilla Crisler, Augusta Animal Services' kennel manager, said she and the staff also work to promote animals and increase adoptions. She said workers post adoptable animals daily to the database PetHarbor.com, but with 22 employees, about 10 fewer than the ideal, time is limited.

Crisler said all employees are required to be certified to administer euthanasia, and the constant death can make it difficult to keep workers long-term.

"Doing it all the time, it can weigh on you heavily," she said of the process, which involves an overdose of anesthesia in a vein in the front leg. "You have to compartmentalize things. Nobody wants to euthanize. But we try to make it as easy and peaceful as we can."

Dog Networking Agents co-founder Hayley Zielinski said having a paid, full-time employee to focus on adoptions and networking could help to lower the euthanasia rate to a no-kill status, in which only vicious and ill animals are euthanized.

She said a change in certain shelter policies could also help. For example, she said DNA has offered to foster puppies and kittens from Augusta Animal Services, pay their medical expenses and bring them to the PetSmart adoptions when they are old enough so the shelter would still get the adoption fees. However, AAS has only once allowed

them to do such an arrangement, Zielinski said. The volunteers have offered this to Columbia County Animal Services instead, which has been receptive.

Zielinski said responsibility also lies in the community, to get more pets spayed and neutered to control overpopulation, but more resources are needed. There is no low-cost spay and neuter clinic in Richmond County, and the closest two are in North Augusta and Martinez.

DNA volunteer Brenda Huffman said it could help to have every Richmond County commissioner walk through the kennels and observe euthanasias to underscore the urgency. But she has a better idea for owners who abandon their pets to a near-certain fate.

"Every owner who surrenders their dog should be made to walk it back to the kennels themselves so they can really see where it is going," she said.