

MINUTES OF THE DOMESTIC ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING

Naples, Florida, August 21, 2024

LET IT BE REMEMBERED, the Domestic Animal Services Advisory Board in and for the County of Collier, having conducted business herein, met on this date at 6 P.M. in a WORKSHOP SESSION at Administrative Building “ F”, 3rd Floor, Collier County Government Complex Naples, Florida with the following members present:

ACTING CHAIR:	Laurie Harris
	Al Schantzen
	Kelly Hyland
	Cpl. Sherry Rego
	Suzy Mehas

ALSO PRESENT:

Amy Patterson, County Manager  
James French, GMD Department Head  
Michael Stark, GMD Division Director  
Tom Iandimarino, Director, Code Enforcement  
Tim Crotts, Assitant Division Director, Code Enforcment  
Alexandra Casanova, Manager, DAS  
Cindy Delgado, Administrative Assistant, DAS

**1. Call to Order**

Michael Stark called the meeting to order at 6:00pm

**2. Roll Call**

Roll call was taken and a quorum was established with 5 Members present in the Boardroom.

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**4. Approval of Agenda**

Motion to approve agenda by Al Schantzen  
Motion carried unanimously

**5. Approval of Minutes for the July 16, 2024 meeting**

Al Schantzen asked for correction to his name spelling  
Suzy Mehas asked to be included in the meeting minutes  
Al Schantzen moved to approve the minutes with those corrections  
Laurie Harris seconded the motion  
Motion passed unanimously

## **6. Staff Report**

- We're going to start with our personnel. Currently, we have 28 full time employees with three vacancies. These vacancies are the shelter manager position, customer service representative, and one vet tech.
- As of Thursday of this week, there will be a fourth vacancy, which is our veterinarian, Doctor Sikora, and she had put it in her notice, and so she will be leaving effective tomorrow. So that'll be a total of four vacancies. We have four pending positions for the new fiscal year. Ten one, those were reviewed and approved by the board of county commissioners. Two Vet tech, two's, one program coordinator, and one revenue supervisor.
- We also have twelve key staff members, and this is split up between animal care specialists, vet techs, and our maintenance team. And so that takes the total number of employees. We have 28 ftes, three vacancies, four being tomorrow, four pending the ten one, and then twelve key staff members. And that includes for 24/7 shelter care as well as the operations.

Laurie Harris:

Do you have applications on any of these open positions?

Michael Stark:

We do. The managers we just received a few days ago, and we've started the review process.

We'll be scheduling those shortly. For the first round. We do have the new Division Director, Meredith, who will be starting, and she will be part of the second round selection for the Manager's position for the Customer Service Rep. We do have applications, so we're also reviewing and interviewing for those. The vet tech, we did the first round of interviews and we decided to put that position back out. So that's external.

Suzy Mehas:

You do have one vet, still correct?

Michael Stark:

Yes, but she doesn't do surgery. So she does not do surgery because we've had Doctor Sikora in place, and so she does anywhere between 50 to 60 surgeries at any given time for the spayed neuter or any of the fixing of the animals on site.

But this is something where we focused with one of our vets being Doctor Sosa does general medicine, as well as seeing for multiple daily rounds and medications that are dispensed. So this is also on site safety. This is something where if there is an incident where behavior is a concern, that she will also take a look at those animals, not only in their kennels, but also is walking the site as well, meeting with team members and the volunteers.

Suzy Mehas:

Another question, talking about the vets, they have no authority about what happens to any individual animal, is that correct? Meaning the previous vet, who's I'm glad is gone, made these decisions about putting the cats back outside. I never understood how she thought or got that type of authority. Why does it make sense that that would come out of the medical side?

Amy Patterson:

This has been something that we've been talking about here for the last several months. The veterinarians obviously are on the medical side of the house, not the operations side.

So when we're dealing with medical euthanasia, they absolutely have that authority. If you have a critically injured or very sick animal, that is their call. A veterinary call on the ops side of the house, While they may give input, we were very clear ultimately that those are operational decisions. So decisions about the cat, and this came up a lot about friendly cats, friendly cats being put back out, friendly cats being put places where people said, we don't know where the cat came from and we don't want the cat back, and somehow the cat shows back up. So, no, that is not a veterinary decision. Those are operation decisions. And we're really trying to create those lines of separation. Where there's some crossover which we are not currently dealing with, but anytime there may be decisions about behavioral euthanasia, we really are working towards moving towards a committee so that it's not one person's decision making decisions about a behavioral euthanasia. Now, the veterinarian would have a place in that committee, but they are not the ultimate authority or the final say.

Suzy Mehas:

Thank you for drawing that line in the sand.

Kelly Hyland:

Before an animal is adopted, and they need to be spayed or neutered, who's doing the surgery?

Amy Patterson:

Up until now, Doctor Sikora has been doing that surgery. Obviously, we are aggressively looking for a replacement vet. And we know that's a difficult thing right now because everyone is looking for vets, both public and private. And it takes a special type of person to want to be a shelter vet. So we're also back to working with our contracts.

We have contract veterinarians that come from the other coast and locally. We also have worked in the past with Purr and Bissell to be able to stand up larger spay neuter events. And we're looking to partner with some of our local groups like SNIP and Humane Society, to make sure that we can continue with spaying and neutering animals, and because that's our ability to get them adopted. Now, whether or not we need to look at the ability for people to take an animal they want to adopt to a local veterinarian, we're going to look at that, too. Every option to keep animals moving out of the shelter while we figure out what our next steps are to hire a veterinarian.

Al Schantzen:

For the record, does that include fostering to adopt type programs and stuff based on.

Amy Patterson:

So a lot of people will say that foster to adopt isn't best practice, and we understand that, but it's also not best practice to have your shelter full to capacity with animals that can't be adopted, because we have our internal or our County requirements that say that animals have to be spayed or neutered in order to be adopted. So foster to adopt was one way we were bridging that gap.

We'll certainly look to use that program again, because an animal in a home is way better off than being in our shelter. Not that I don't love them, want to care for them at our shelter, but we want them to find homes. So foster to adopt will be something that we look at, as well as imploring the local veterinary community to at least give us appointments here and there when they can.

Michael Stark:

Next, with the number of animals in the shelter, currently, there are 257 cats, 73 dogs and one horse, bringing the number to 331 animals under our care.

Also, we have had great success looking at a comparison from last year at the other time versus this year for the number of adoptions. And I'm sure that with the board of county commissioners help and at the one board meeting, we have taken a look at a zero fee adoption. So this includes, you know, anything that we can do with our social media and with the help of our volunteers, reaching as many people in the community that we can. And so, as we look at last year's number for the same time, this was June 26 of last year. Until August 21, we had 197 dogs.

I'm sorry, 197 cats, 127 dogs, and 16 others. This could be horses, tortoises, birds. So a lot of things fall into that category, with a total of 340 animals between that timeframe from last year. When we look at this year, we're up 36.5%. So 464 animals have been adopted in this small amount of time from the shelter.

And so that's really a great success there with 288 cats, 171 dogs, and five others, which includes one large tortoise.

Al Schantzen:

Is there any comparative data on return rate on those numbers versus last year?

Michael Stark:

That's one of the areas of focus that the team and I are looking at as well, is that how do we maintain those animals staying with the families? Not only scripting and developing this program, it's really that level of outreach that may have been missing in the past. This is something that we really want to address, and make sure that we can continue those connections.

Whether it's financial hardships or, you know, places to live, is this maybe looking at food options, the pantry that we had talked about in the past, is this something where we have other opportunities that we can provide to them? This is maybe just a gap in communication which is a big part of this, and we're trying to address that every day so that we can maintain those animals with the dogs.

Also you as a volunteer, Al, and the rest of the team that's here tonight, you know, that's why we've worked toward better signage within the kennel and then making clear connections with the right type of family and matching that energy of the animal to make sure that's going to be the right fit, whether it's the size apartment building that they have or the condo or the big yard where some of our more energetic

animals can really just run free. And so that's something where I know that we've made strides together on that as well, to try and really be animal ambassadors moving forward.

Suzy Mehas:

I haven't had the opportunity to read your adoption contracts, but I've certainly seen others in my time. Does it state in the adoption contract that you will always take an animal back that is adopted from DAS?

Michael Stark:

30 days is the time limit, but there are also other opportunities.

Owner surrender in the past, we want to take a look at meeting with these individuals to see how we can help. How can we support? Is it food?

Is it resources? Is it something where there's other families maybe fostering it? So that networking is really going to be a big part to this moving forward and continuing to grow that networking network of fosters and different families here, not only in Collier County, but maybe outside of Collier County as well.

Suzy Mehas:

That's helpful because, you know, something doesn't always happen in 30 days. Somebody has a dog or a cat and all of a sudden the kid comes up with supposed allergies and four years later, that person should be able to get some help.

Michael Stark:

I think with our strategic partners that we have out there, maybe it's Humane Society in Naples where they have the behaviorists that we can lean on or, take a look at training and professional development for some of our employees. I know that the partnership with Dogs Play for Life and we've introduced playgroups to domestic animal services and where this has been a huge success. As part of that number, we talked about the number of adoptions, and I'll definitely speak about cats as well.

This is something where the animals on site, we're now looking at how we socialize dogs, how they work together, taking a look at whether they're barrier reactive, food reactive. This is something where this increased level of awareness and training that's been happening on site and working with the animals makes them more adoptable. And so that means moving more animals through and out and finding the right home for them.

Susy Mehas:

30 days, in my humble opinion, is not long enough.

Amy Patterson:

It's really important to look at these on a case by case basis, but it's also incredibly important for us to be a good rescue partner. And so we've got a couple of cases right now that we're working on with dogs that went out to rescue in the hopes of being adopted. It didn't necessarily work out and there were some extenuating circumstances, but we've committed to taking this particular dog back. So we're going to work through that.

I understand it's common in horse rescue, specifically that the rescue that originates, the horse would be contacted first before the horse was rehomed to anybody else. That's a little more complicated with the

volume of rehoming that we do. But we most certainly want to be able to provide those resources to try to figure out what we can do to keep the pet in the home. Is it a behavioral challenge, as Mike said, is it an environmental challenge? Could it be a financial challenge?

But then as a case of last resort, we have to be able to stand by what we're doing. So that's definitely something that's on our radar. In this particular case, it's a more difficult case for this dog. He's been adopted out and then returned through another rescue.

We have to be a good rescue partner and stand by our animals when we send them out.

Kelly Hyland:

I don't think there should be really any time limit. If the DAS is willing to help at any point, then why have the 30 days even listed?

Amy Patterson:

Sure. It's certainly something we can look at. I think the 30 days is meant probably more specifically for somebody that either encounters a difficulty with a pet, or the pet gets sick. It's kind of like a 30 day insurance policy on the animal not intended for thinking about what happens if there's a recession, what happens if there's a lot of what ifs years from now? That 30 days is kind of their return period. Just like if I hate to say that, but if I buy something and then I have Regret, they can come back, no questions asked and bring the pet back. So I think we're kind of talking about two different things.

One is that initial 30 day period from adoption. The other is providing those resources to try to help people stay with the pet or at least standing behind our pets and finding them another place. If we're in a desperate situation, like finding out later that you have a child allergic to cats.

And we've had that sad story where somebody, and they've tried everything, so there's nothing you can do. But there are things we can do if you're having behavioral issues with your animals. So I think we got kind of two lanes going here.

Suzy Mehas:

Can we also consider, though, eliminating, I mean, if somebody's filling out an adoption contract and they see that 30 days and they're going to remember that, to me, that should just not exist.

Amy Patterson:

I think we can spend some time talking about this, but I think what we need to do is maybe add the language that says that we'll be contacted first at past the 30 days that the first contact is us, so that we can help with the animal placement, return, etcetera.

And so there's 30 days where if you've had a change of heart or it doesn't work out, that's one thing. But in the future, we always want to be contacted back before the animal is rehomed or before they have to make difficult decisions.

Al Schantzen:

That 30 day period, when you write that down, that gives these people a thought process and gives the dog 30 days to wrap them around their finger and really make them love them instead of just leaving it blank, open, bring it back in two weeks, one week, whatever. If they say, well, we got the dog for 30 days, we'll go for four weeks and see how the dog's doing. That gives the animal, dog, cat, chicken an opportunity to come to win them over, and it becomes more of a family and the family. So there's a

chance that a percentage of those might keep it the full 30 days and decide or rehome it themselves. Can you find another solution instead of giving them the easy way out of just going right back to DSD? So I'd give that 30 day rule a thought.

Amy Patterson:

I think we can massage this. What's going to work for everybody. So we're protecting the animals, but also, it is bringing an animal into your home. Sometimes it's super easy and sometimes it's a little more difficult and you have to try to stick with it. But to Mike's point, that's where this outreach is really important, we're checking in with our adopters and making sure that everything's going well in the home and asking if they're having problems. Providing those reassurances and what to expect, the decompression, which I think is something that is often maybe not stressed enough or overlooked, that how they're acting now might not be how they're acting in another week or another two weeks.

In some animals, every animal is different, and how long it takes for them to get to whatever that normal is in the house, it's different for each animal. That education is something that we feel really strongly about in providing people all the tools to understand what's going to happen with that animal when it comes into their home. Some of these people may have never had a dog or not for a long time.

Our experienced people know what they're doing, but a first time pet owner, they don't necessarily know all of those things. When we're reaching out, saying, how's it going? Do you have any questions? Can we provide you any support and specifically for our harder to adopt animals? Mike and I just were speaking about this.

We had a dog. We're very excited that he went out, but he was a special case, and we're going to be checking back on him to make sure everything's going well if they have questions, if they're having any difficulties, because we want him to have that chance to be in that home, and we don't want something, a behavioral issue to be what turns him back and brings him back to the kennel.

Michael Stark:

And that's where dog play, you know, dog plays for life, has really helped with some of that education. And as Al may or may not talk about a little bit tonight, some of this mentoring program, you know, remember, the volunteers have been here and a lot of the organizations longer than we've been at DAS. And so we're really turning to not only our partners, but as well, the volunteers and some of the other organizations to help us learn more about what you've seen in the industry as well.

And so how can we make that placement? And so we do have to speak to about the rescues as well. Melissa, who's on site, is really starting to build that network of rescues that are out there for these individual types of cases. And really, it's as quickly and efficiently that we can try and re home or find different areas for the Huskies. I don't know.

This is a pipeline for huskies for whatever reason. And the volunteers will tell you it's something where now we have really a strong relationship with a lot of different areas that are out there. Our cats. We have an organization that's willing to take a certain number of cats every single month for us moving forward. And so now we're, we're developing those pipelines and that open communication where now we can, you know, kind of take some of the burden off of, you know, not only our own shelter, but really other areas within the state or within, you know, the southwest that can really utilize these animals and get them out and find the right families for them.

Susy Mehas:

What are they doing with these cats that they're taking? You mean it's another shelter?

Amy Patterson:

We have a shelter that's an organization out of state that for, you know, when you get up into the northern parts of the country, they have different challenges than us with animals.

There are places that don't have enough cats and that's why being a good partner is incredibly important because when we send them animals, we want them to feel good about what they're taking from us and have a positive experience so that they continue to help us find homes for our animals outside of this area. And being a good rescue partner is a big part of that.

Laurie Harris:

Michael, the Dogs Play for Life has been incredibly successful. What's come of it is, behind the kennel card, we now have a reference to how the dog behaves in a playgroup, their personality. So for the volunteers, we have a better insight now into the dogs and when a family comes in, if they have another dog and so on. It gives us great insight. That program has been very successful.

Suzy Mehas:

What about the cats? I have cats at home that just don't want to be around the rest of the cats. I have other cats that just love to play together. I mean, they're just like us.

Do you have something that lets people know, this is a cat that would get along if you have another cat in the house, or this is a cat that would really like to sit in your grandmother's lap for the rest of her life? Are we doing this for the cats as well?

Michael Stark:

This is something where, you know, we take this very seriously with, you know, the cat population that we have, with over 257 cats that we have on site, we have some fantastic volunteers led by Audrey with our program.

I think she's via Zoom right now as well, so we'll say hello to her. And, you know, she's been instrumental in really just trying to make those connections with individuals that come in. You know, not only just how many other cats do you have? Do you have dogs? And really, I think that that's where we continue to grow and develop together.

As one team, really, with the work language, with taking a look at, you know, the time that we can not only spend with. With our cat population as well, and then really finding the right individual. If they've taken the time and they can find parking, we want to welcome them there and really find the right animal for them. So I know last time you were here as well, the website's been updated a lot, a lot of new pictures. We've had multiple events.

Kenny, who's on our team as well, has been going almost every other weekend to different events, taking these animals with them and really adopting almost everything out that he takes with him. So it's been really successful. So, yes, cats are definitely getting a lot of attention right now. I know you're going to have some questions about the intake, and we'll definitely get to that as well.

Amy Patterson:

Also, the challenge we've had over the last couple of months with the panleukopenia in the shelter has changed the way the cats are allowed to socialize because of the cleaning protocols and all of that.



So we used to have the rooms where throughout the day, the volunteers would allow cats to be out of their cages. The ones that like to hang out with other cats were able to play and do those things really, really fun. But because of dealing with the pan Luke, that's had to be really restricted. We're really anxious to get back to that. There was nothing more fun than going into the cat rooms and having, you know, three or four or five cats hanging out, and you could kind of see their individual personalities, but it also let you know, well, this one likes cats.

This one only likes the cat because he wants to steal his food. This one prefers to be up high and see the cats, but not hang out with them. So getting to know their personalities, and that helps to place them into homes. I actually have a foster that was allowed to be out of his cage before the pan Luke hit, and he's a real character. So, anyway, we'd like to get back to that as soon as it's safe for the cats.

Michael Stark:

This would probably be a good time to talk about the suspension of the intake process at domestic animal services. So I think that's a nice segue that we really need to talk about this. This is something that. It's a very difficult decision for us. We have been at or near max capacity for the amount of cats that we have been taking in.

There are several variables as to how we've gotten to this place. We've kind of been in and out having Panlukepenia. We've had the two vets with their plans in place. It just seems that with the number of cats that we continue to intake, safety is our number one concern in the health and well being of the cats and any shelter animals that we have. We've made the difficult decision that we are moving forward with closing intake for suspending intake for a short period of time in order to make sure that cleaning protocols are followed, that we've isolated different areas of the shelter and completed a complete sanitizing protocols, making sure that we're wearing the appropriate protective equipment and really taking the lead with this. And we have not done this in an isolated way. This is something where we've reached out to our various strategic partners in this process. We've obtained other advice as a part of this process. And this is not an easy decision because we understand that one of our number one goals is to end animal overpopulation in Collier county.

And if we stop the intake process where we've been fixing these animals, then that really grinds this to a halt. And so this is something where it's not an easy decision. It is not isolated or done, you know, just independently. This is something that we are facing, and this is not something new to the animal shelter. This is something where we want to be transparent with you that these types of, when large populations of animals, the best we're doing with, as far as, you know, PPE and the sanitation protocols, it is an opportunity where it'll invite in different types of illnesses into the shelter.

And so we are doing our very best but asking the community for a short period of time to suspend intake. We will get back on track. We just need to make sure that the health and safety of these animals is our number one priority. And so with. Also with our shelter vent leaving effective tomorrow as well. These protocols are so critical to make sure that the cleaning standards continue that we're following this. We are doing regular daily testing. We do multiple rounds and walk the site. As far as seeing the cat colony, Tabby Alley, the front conference room, we're trying to keep the cats separated and treat them as best as we can.

And so we. We look for guidance as well as just making sure that we are moving forward in the right direction, that this is temporary. We're hoping, and that we will be in full communication. We have reached out to all of our partners in this process to make sure that, you know, we are not doing this just

independently. This is something where we've communicated with each one of them to make sure that we're on the right path for the health and safety and welfare of the animals.

Suzy Mehas:

Well, I understand that. And I sent you and Amy an email recently, and a rescue person had suggested to me, which I thought was a good idea, what about putting a FEMA trailer on the property or one of those school board trailers and move your pan, Luke kitties or kittens or whoever into that, because, and you also hear me harp, Mister French doesn't want to hear anymore, probably, about how important ventilation is when we're doing this renovation. If you can really, really look at that. I've said it before, that's one of the main things the humane society did right when they redid the building, was the ventilation. It's important for dogs, but it's crucial for cats because they're so sensitive to airborne things. What about the idea of getting one of these trailers of some sort? Can you do that? What about a construction company? They might have one to loan you. Just an idea.

But if you consent, and most of them come with electricity and a/c, I think if not, you can put a window unit in. It's just an idea to consider. But yes, airborne is tough with cats and ventilation. I'm saying it again is crucial going forward, we're putting out that money.

Michael Stark:

It can vary daily because some will come out. We have litters of kittens. Those are the first concern. With the large number of young cats we have because it is kitten season, I don't want to put a direct number because it changes daily. But we're averaging somewhere in the 25% range for the number of cats, and it can be in different areas. This is something where there are a lot of variables and we're doing our very best to make sure that cleaning protocols are in place, we are limiting the public from any of these areas, even for staff. We're trying to assign for cleaning those particular areas. Changing gloves regularly.

Amy Patterson:

HSN has panleukopenia in theirs. To Ms. Mehas's point is that we are dealing with a 25 year old shelter that has very limited isolation space. Construction trailers, FEMA trailers, etc. not only do not have good ventilation, but we also just have limited space. It's something that goes on every kitten season. To our understanding, it probably fluctuates with what's going on that year. I think our level of transparency is greater this year, perhaps, than it had been in the past.

We're really trying to turn a corner on informing the public on what's going on versus sort of cloaking it in secrecy. We're looking to get positive tests within seven days and with 200 and some odd cats that clock keeps resetting.

It's helpful that we've got them isolated the best that we can. But it's tricky because they come in and the kitties seem fine, and then they're sick. Mr. French is here to comment on the FEMA trailers.

Mr. French:

You're subject to Florida building code, Florida fire prevention code.

So typically that's not intended for animal storage, whether or not you've got panleukopenia or you've got any other ailment that may be affecting a shelter. The Florida Building Code and Florida Fire Prevention Code does not waiver.

Suzy Mehas:

When people call or they show up there, what you say to them is going to be crucial. Crucial about can you just hang on to your cat for another two weeks?

If you can hang on to the cat for two weeks, something, anything, because otherwise they're going to get dumped or the rescue groups are going to get overwhelmed.

Amy Patterson:

We're certainly imploring the community to help us and there are obviously things we can do if somebody needs help, even as far as providing food, things like that, just to keep the animals where they're at, if the people are feeding them in their yards until such time that we can get clear. Because honestly, besides the health of the ones that we're already in charge of, the last thing we want to do is take care of a cat who's for right now, otherwise, okay

And then the cat comes in and gets sick. It's a very delicate balance. I agree with you that that piece of outreach is important to the community. We're not doing this because we don't want to take in animals. We're doing it because we've gotten to this critical point with the health of these animals.

Michael Stark:

Suzy, if I can build on that. Jim Rich is here as well and I think he's going to speak tonight about that. We had reached out to Gwen and Megan as well prior to this decision. There may be a gap in communication from before but we're really trying to cinch up and make sure that our partners are not only aware of what's happening, but welcoming them back on site.

I know Jim just had an event at our facility as well. And so we are looking for building back, building bridges and making sure that not only just your rescue organizations, but those who are bringing in the animals day after day, trapping and so forth, that, you know, there's that Regular communication. We're not in the offices, the rest of the team can speak to that we are out. We're working with the volunteers, the different programs that are out there to develop this future plan. And Meredith is a big part of that as we move forward.

Suzy Mehas:

I appreciate that because I can tell you from my personal experience what the rescue groups do every day and every night. A couple that I know probably feed 100 different locations times x number of cats in each location that have all been fixed. If they aren't fixed, they're trapping them.

I have a friend who goes out in the estates, 37 different locations, multiple cats in each location and they're all fixed. We have to be a partner for the rescue groups. and I love that I'm hearing that because that was right here on my list. I want that pantry for them. You have to help them. And whatever they need, if they show up in the lobby and there's a cat in a trap, and the person says I really need this cat to have a blood test. Can you just do this for me? They should not be told no and had to go somewhere else. I don't ever want that to happen again because these rescue groups, what they do every single day, and then you have a group like Jim and Jan and what they're doing and the money they spend.

Tom Kepp with his SNIP, Collier. I mean, it's wonderful that we're building these partnerships because we have to, and we can't say no to these people, we just can't.

Comment \_\_\_\_\_ In the budget going forward, there are steps that are being taken to address the spay and neuter problems in the field with programs. Language is going to get changed in the ordinance

so it's going to strengthen how that money is spent in the field. Addressing the overpopulation in the field will slow the crazy numbers that you all are dealing with.

Suzy Mehas:

This is out of their pocket and the Humane Society doesn't have time to do this. DAS doesn't have time to do this. These are just plain old people like me.

I feed a colony every day, but I've got one colony. I'm talking about people that have 37 different locations in the Estates. And then waits and cleans up the paper plates so the neighbors won't complain. I don't know if you really have any idea what is involved in TNR and rescue and feeding. And you know that we don't take a cat back and put it in the middle of a Publix's parking lot. That should never, ever be done if a TNR is done, which to me means a non adoptable cat. I don't even like the word feral. You have to make sure there is a dedicated feeder, food, water, shelter from the weather, shelter from predators. I had a conversation about ACO's with Paul the dispatch person. I was asking if the ACO trucks or vans have cat carriers.? Do you have humane traps on there?

He said when we see these instances with cats, we rely on the rescue groups to do the trapping, quote unquote. Now, if we're going to do that, we're going to step up tenfold to help these rescue groups.

Michael Stark:

It all starts with communication. And that's getting the right people at the table to make sure that we develop a plan if it's within something that we want to pursue with your help. But this is something where, like we said, we're healing relationships, building the bridges back, come to the table with us and the rest of the groups that we've been in communication with between Gwen and Jim and Megan and some of the other groups that are out there doing this and yourself. So it's going to be about open communication and making sure that we can develop a plan moving forward if it's something that not only this board, board of county commissioners and the county manager.

Kelly Hyland:

Is there a way to allocate any type of funding for the nonprofits in the area to help them so they don't have to worry so much about trying to raise the money and the funds and they can do more of what they do specifically for them to help, specifically for spay and neuter. Now that you're closing down intake, everyday there are more cats out there in the community, more kittens, and everyday matters.

I think things get off track with trying to get things situated inside the shelter. That's needed as well but the bigger picture is what's happening out in the community.

So you're going to get a handle on the situation inside the shelter, but every day you're still going to get more cats. So until programs and money is allocated the wheels are spinning on this, it's going to continue to happen. So what is the plan for that?

Amy Patterson:

Let me give you the three fold answer. So one is that in the 2025 budget we have started with a little bit of seed money to do partnerships for spade and neuter. We haven't gotten our arms around exactly what that looks like, but we have put money in to say well okay, your rescue, you want to and you were going to. Mister Rich is a great example. He had 70 plus cats. Is there a way that we could financially partner? Because those are cats that aren't coming into our shelter. Two would be Commissioner Saunders has

championed the change in the fee resolutions that specify that the animals have to be in our care, in custody to use donation funds, try to broaden that out because again, cats or dogs, this is really more about cats. Cats that are now being handled by a rescue to do these spay and neuter days are cats that aren't going to come into our custody and go through that whole process. If we can get them spayed and neutered and they're taken care of, then that's something else that's off of our plate. So using some of the donation funds in that way to partner with the rescues is another one. And then lastly, we've been having initial conversations both with Mister Kepp and The Humane Society who each have their mobile buses, as well as Ray from the Benny fund about how we get out and start having community events. So we have areas of expertise.

We start to look at how we schedule these community spay/neuter events where we're all working together. I don't know what Mr. Kepp and the Humane Society are doing on their own, but they had acknowledged that they would be willing to work with us, as did Ray. It's kind of in his wheelhouse and the charitable work that he does. So we've got a lot of people that are, are coming to the table. I think it's important, as Mike said, that we continue the conversation and really make this something that happens, not just something that we talk about and we all have something to offer. I think traditionally what's happened is that the DAS has tried to be too many things to too many people and ended up not being that good at a lot of things.

Burt Saunders, Collier County Commissioner, District 3:

My goal is to place into the Budget language and also into that resolution language that gives the manager total flexibility to spend the dollars appropriated by the County Commission. And I want you to be in a position where you come up with an idea, and then you go to the County Commission to get approval. We're putting together the language in the budget that will provide flexibility so that when this group, this advisory board has a recommendation, or the manager in terms of spending those dollars for a spay and neuter program, she doesn't have to come back to the County Commission for approval. There's already flexibility built into the budget, and so that's what we're working towards.

Al Schantzen:

I know in the past the Bissell Corporation has come down and bailed us out many times. With the loss of our vet, is there a possibility of using Bissell in the future for spay/neuter. But is there a possibility for Bissell to service the private people?

Amy Patterson:

Both Bissell and Purr do come to the facility and they are high volume spay/neuter veterinarians. Could we allocate spots for community cats? I know it takes a lot of coordination. And so that's a piece of it. Cause you can't always predict who you're gonna trap or can you get them on the third Wednesday of the month.

That's the coordination piece that needs to be worked on. We are trying to work with them to get some Regularity. The other option that we do have is some contract veterinary services from the other coast. Before we hired our vet, we were actually looking at that as a backstop to be able to get spays and neuters really going. They have a veterinarian over there that is a high volume spay/neuter where we could not only have space for our own animals, but also allocate community spaces.

Michael Stark introduced Jaime French to speak on capital improvements.

Mr. Jaime French:

We've completed the demolition of the interior of building five. We've had a number of different contractors come in, including the contractor that actually built the structure, Mario Valley who worked with PBS Construction. And I've consulted with them and Bartzino, who was employed there at the time, to go through alternative methods that I may have missed.

We're going through concrete restoration right now. This old untreated concrete, very porous and it doesn't protect the construction elements. Then we'll look at sealing the building and do restoration of the metal.

If we can get another 10-12 years out of these structures, then it gives us enough time to earmark additional capital dollars also without impacting or minimizing the impact to the surtax dollars that were already collected.

We are probably another three to four months before we see occupancy.

Best number would be mid December, end of December before we could stand building five back up.

As we look at this one, we learned best practices. Five was clearly the worst, when we go to three and four, those will be almost identical.

We are working on the play yard for Ray and the Benny funds. They do a fabulous job and are great partners. He has been coordinating with us on what we can do without permits because the drainage is exceptionally important.

Suzy Mehas:

What is happening for the cats? Is the foot footprint being expanded? Can they have great big playrooms?

Jaime French:

The cats have benefited probably more than the dogs in a sense that many of the rooms have all new flooring. I'm hoping to be out of the Admin. building by the end of this month. Painting is completed and we've looked at everything to delineate noise and air filtration. The outside area will be a lanai with windows and climate controlled.

There are some really cute and different things for cats that we intend to get in the future and also cages that have good visibility and that are easy to clean.

We are also planning to put things up the walls for climbing.

We will have a commercial dishwasher for sanitizing and provisions for pest control.

Suzy Mehas:

May I ask what the status of the ACO officers is? We only have 2 officers everyday.

Michael Stark introduced Tom Iandimarino, Tim Crotts and Joe Mucha.

Tom Iandimarino, Director Code Enforcement:

We've got three vacancies that will be filled in the next 30 days or so. I think the start date for one is September 7, the next one is going to be September 20 I think. What we have is insufficient and we definitely need a handful more.

Tim Crotts:

That's what part of our hurdle is, is to get these folks hired, to find somebody certified. They're very hard to find. It's a four day class. And so much like with code enforcement, we're going to get these folks certified, multiple certifications and give it that force multiplier.

Sherry Rego:

Where do the calls like this go? Like with what Suzy was saying, with the tethered dogs and the puppies and all that. What if there isn't an ACO available? Then why wouldn't the sheriff's office or the animal cruelty task force respond?

Amy Patterson:

A deputy could go respond to that and the Animal Cruelty Task Force are detectives.

Kelly Hyland:

If a call that comes in like that for a chained animal or something.

Amy Patterson:

They would send a deputy and then if we needed, we could contact Code Enforcement.

Unfortunately, whether you like it or not, animals are property. So if they are tethered, I can't go and take that dog because whether you like it or not, and I'm not trying to be the bad guy, but whether we like it or not, that is how a lot of people are with their animals. So unfortunately, if you grew up on a farm, you had farm dogs.

They didn't come into the house. Just because they have that dog tethered, that doesn't mean that they don't go out in the morning and water the dog, feed the dog.

If Code Enforcement gets a call that a dog's tethered. They'll issue them a citation. Here's a warning.

Your dog can't be like this. They may go out 15 times before this person does it, but if it doesn't have signs of duress where it's, it's starving, it's, there's no water we can't take the dog.

Tim Crotts:

So you can understand how I know if a dog suffered some level of life safety or a dog is in distress or a cat is in distress, what is the definitive. I'll invite the County Attorney's Office here and we'll see if they'll give you an actual lawful or has legal sufficiency because this is how we prosecute cases. But the short answer is that, here was very little, if any, case management that was done on these.

I invite you to go to the city View website. In the week and a half that it's been open, we've already had nearly 200 generated complaints from the community all in real time, where you can see the activities in. And it's what I told you I was going to do.

And we've done it. And so when you go to the code enforcement website, you can see the city View portal, where you could file a complaint as follows right under Florida statute 162. You can track all of the follow up, how many times we've been out there to visit, whether it's a code officer, whether it's an ACO, whether it's me, whether it's Tim, whether it's Tom. That entry would be made.

Michael Stark:

Old Business

## New Business

We'd like to propose a subcommittee for the ordinance amendments.

So that is, we're asking for some guidance there as far as maybe a vote to form a subcommittee.

Amy Patterson:

I've drafted hundreds of ordinance amendments, so that's not a problem. We can get started. And then if we decide we need to bring on some consulting help, of course that's something we could consider in the future. But I think we can at least make some headway pretty quickly here if we want to set up the subcommittee.

And I'll commit to you with it myself.

So we need some members. So we have Susie and if we can get another. Okay, Kelly. That doesn't mean that other members can't attend. The public can attend but these will be your two representatives for the subcommittee.

We will get you all a draft, a copy of the ordinance, the chapter out of the code of laws so you can take a look at it and then we will get calendar times that you're available to set up an introductory meeting and then we'll develop a work plan.

So we have two members. Is there any interest in adding a third?

Laurie Harris or Mr. Stark, I will reach out to the three of you. We'll get you a copy of the ordinance, and we'll get our organizational meeting set up. And that way we can, we can set up a work plan and make sure that we're keeping code with us also, so that we're all swimming in the same direction.

Michael Stark:

Next item is to elect a chairman and a vice chairman of the sub committee.

Al Schantzen nominated Laurie Harris as Chairman

The Motion was seconded

The Motion passed unanimously

Michael Stark:

Do we have a nomination for Vice Chairman

Al Schantzen was nominated

The Motion was seconded

The Motion passed unanimously

The Committee decided on the third Wednesday of every month to meet at 6:00 p.m. at Horseshoe Drive.

## 7. PUBLIC COMMENT

### **Jim Rich, The Love of Cats**

Carolyn Guzman from Wink News sent me an email asking questions about DAS suspending cat intake for precautionary measures in the face of SPV cases.

This is an edited version of the reply.



We have been fostering all the kittens rescued by us for DAS and Scrambling to find more foster care so they did not have to be exposed to the virus. We do not bring the kittens into DAS after the initial intake process and are using our own funds for veterinary care, food and supplies to keep their exposure to the absolute minimum. For the kittens we are fostering, we /Have advanced the HCP vaccination schedules ahead. DAS has closed their community cat program, which means that we can no longer bring in community or feral cats for spay and neuter.

We certainly don't blame DAS but alternatives would be welcome. When Darcy was here there were 2 air conditioned trailers brought in for cats that contracted ringworm to be kept in. Mr. French said a year ago when I was there that Code Enforcement was getting involved with DAS to increase presence. Certifying officers of other departments within the County. I don't know what happened to that but we now you're saying we only have two officers. That's a concern of mine, that we're down to two people and we are not utilizing what I thought we were going to be doing.

But I don't think that's good, because when people find out, then they really think we're hiding something. I mean, this is a natural cause of having too many animals. From what I understand, we've had this virus every year for as many years as I've been involved with DAS. I've never known that we've had it. So, like we're saying, is it a cover up or what? And we used to have a great foster program. We don't have that now, unfortunately. As long as you're piling one animal on top of the other, this is going to be a continuous problem until we build up our foster program again.

### **Patty Teulet**

There's been a longstanding problem with safety on the kennel doors. The bungee cords worked and now they have been replaced by clips. You can't get the clips off or on.

The other thing is, first holds, mistakes are being made, creating a lot of angry and frustrated potential adopters confusion.

They don't know. You know, the staff doesn't know. The volunteers don't know. They have to go to the front desk, wait to ask the question. They're afraid to even talk to an adopter because they're not sure if the card is correct, if it's got a first hold or what is the problem.

It's just not fair to adopters. There's a lot of volunteers that agree with me. Some staff agree with me. People can fill out an app and call in and put a dog on first hold and never see the dog. So there it sits. Then whoever is in charge of calling, they don't have a timer, anything that tells them, okay, this dog is off first hold. We got to call the potential adopter. That doesn't happen. So I'm working on a german shepherd right now. I've asked three times if they've called.

Once they didn't. The second time they made the call they left a voicemail. And now a third time I'm waiting to hear, are they coming in? Are they not coming in? I went over my time anyways, so I just think that it should be abolished.

Forget about it. Let the people come in and adopt a dog. Get rid of the first adopter. It's not fair to people that come in and they're there. They can take the dog. I agree with you, Patty, because there's also a 24, from what I understand, once the first adopter is called, they have 24 hours.

The other thing I would change and I am hoping to get some statistics. A five day stray hold seems long. If people haven't come by the third day, they're not coming. So if we can get some statistics on how many return to owners happen in the fourth or fifth day, maybe we tighten up five days to three days and get those, you know, who's going to be there.

### **Meagan Zobara**

I just think maybe better communication between the partnering groups and domestic animal services along with.

So has there been any advancement or movement towards getting these sort of microchip stations set up? I think originally it was libraries that we were looking at that introduced some training issues. Just kind of looking at it, you know, is a librarian trained and is that a possibility moving forward or is this something where we need to look at other opportunities? And that may be EMS stations, the fire stations, you know, maybe taking a look at where I think Mister French had talked a little bit through, some of the training opportunities with our ACOs. And so that force multiplier that we talk about, you know, this is a real opportunity, maybe not through the library system, but maybe through our EMS and Fire as well. These were kiosks that were set up. So a member of the public could just walk up to it and grab it and scan. Maybe there could be an instructional video or something, but it just eliminates having a person having to help you.

It would actually make things a lot easier and we would have way more flexibility and where we could put that. And then you don't have to worry about the training of staff to train the public, but it's a great opportunity. So we're definitely interested in going to look into that. Thank you.

Tom Kepp:

The building right next to the jail and the whole three acres, give or take, back there has been released. We are doing spay/neuter cats out there now. When we get vets we have it set up to do that. The architect is working on the building and he should have that out with all the mechanics parts to be put into code to permit by the first to second week of September. So it will go to the County.

We are building a medical rescue facility. Once we get that done and with our mobile unit we can do vet care. We want a place where when we find an animal we don't have to worry about where we're going to take it. It comes there, we get it healthy, we spay and neuter.

The next phase which we've already had the beginning designed will be a 3000 square foot full medical facility with x-ray machines and everything in it. This is about a two to two and a half million dollar project. And then phase three will be an education center.

It's going to be approximately 1800 square feet or something. And we'll have isolation rooms for puppies and kittens that are sick. We'll have, you know, with the airflows properly, we'll have certain kennels that we will house a mom and puppies. And we're going to have to put a number on it. Moms and kittens, we'll have their separate rooms.

## **7. Advisory Board Member Comments**

Laurie Harris:

On the website, it's very lacking in being updated. When you click on the agenda, it goes to an error code. It still shows old board members and there's a vet or a vet tech.

Al Schantzen:

From Al Schantzen, you mentioned somewhere along in the, in the dialogue about need. Need. The need for reassessment assessment. The SWAT. I mean, that's something we should pursue.

They come in and do a full up down, look at where you're at, what your mission is, ordinance say. You mentioned how many years ago one was done for this organization. I might put that on as one of the issues you want to address is the SWAT evaluation.

I go to places like Aldi's, Tractor Supply, some gas stations and they have vaccination clinics. A lot of the people from the outskirts come in and bring their dogs in for inexpensive vaccinations. And I didn't know if that was a possible situation where we could tag up for spay/neuter or tag up for reading of dog's microchips rather than a kiosk.

Also, it indicates that you will publish the agenda 72 hours in advance of the meeting. And if we could kind of get closer to that. It addresses the minutes separately and it indicates that they will be done promptly, not with the agenda.

Laurie Harris:

If we could possibly get just some updates on major things. We don't need to know, like daily little things, but big things that really affect us in the community. I think if we could get a little bit of a heads up so we don't, you know, look like we're not informed because we're hearing it from other people who know before us, I think.

Michael Stark

Adjourned the meeting at \_\_\_\_\_ (3 hr. 37 min.)

## **DOMESTIC ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

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**Chairman, Laurie Harris or other**

**These minutes were approved by the Committee or Chairman (choose one) of DOMESTIC ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**on \_\_\_\_\_ as presented \_\_\_\_\_, or as \_\_\_\_\_ amended.**