

# CLARK COUNTY ANIMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## MINUTES

**Parks & Recreation Administration Building  
2601 East Sunset Road, Administration Conference Room  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89120  
April 25, 2006  
6:30 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: GLASSMAN, MYRA LEE (MG)  
HUTT, FREDERICK (FH)  
OLSEN, DENNIS (DO)  
SONDEJ, KEN (KJ)  
POOLER, TOM (TP)  
YOUNG, BILLIE (BY)

**1. Call to order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

**2. Approval of agenda**

A motion to approve the agenda was made and seconded.

**3. Approval of January 31, 2006 Minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded.

**4. Approval of applications for Spay/Neuter Funds**

Two applications: Heaven Can Wait and Las Vegas Valley Humane Society. DO – do we have enough to fulfill both of these? DAVE MARCH (DM) We currently have over \$9,500. We have to assume initially when we give out the vouchers that it will be for the maximum value. The person to whom the voucher is given has 30 days and the veterinarian has 90 days. BY - Does the Humane Organization have to use it within a specific amount of time? DM – we don't want these vouchers hanging out there for years. If it becomes necessary we can look at extending the time period. With our spay/neuter program, we find the veterinarians fill up quickly and we end up extending the time. We will be tracking the monies and giving an accounting. As we understand it, the voucher would be issued at the time the animal was going to be sterilized so there is no lost time. TP – it is incumbent upon those who are issued the vouchers to use them as soon as possible. The faster the accounting goes, the more money will be left over to reissue. DM – this is more of an outreach. They can work with low-income people to get them these vouchers. Neither of the organizations is looking at adoptions. The applications are complete. All information has been submitted but was not included for public dissemination. MG – motion to approve the 2 applications. They devote most of their energy to spay or neuter and deserve any help we can give them. Motion approved and seconded.

**5. Proposed Dangerous and Vicious Animals Ordinance**

FH would like an addition in the first paragraph. Animals caught in illegal dogfights should be added. DM – it is covered due to words “used in commission of a crime.” MG – the way it is worded if you have your animal in your fenced yard and another animal attacks it, your animal can be declared dangerous. DM – that

is not what we would be looking at in that instance. Under (B)(1)(c), another animal running at large or in violation of this title, an animal may not be declared dangerous if the other animal is RAL. KS – this has come up in other cities and the dog that was in his yard was declared vicious and euthanized. A cat came over the neighbor's fence. The dog was declared vicious because it killed another animal in its yard. JOE BOTEILHO (JB) – we have a really good track record with this. The City of Las Vegas has had this on their books for some time. That's why we banded together. To give you some background, the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition (SNRPC) thought it was important for us to look at these types of measures. We have used NRS 202.500 with great success. This has been patterned after it and expanded upon. It is not breed specific. It is reactive. Your animal has to act out and if responsible owners have the nastiest dog in the world, they can do so. We have very dangerous animals living in our community and they don't attack anybody – lions, tigers, etc. You can keep them restrained and keep them properly. The City of Henderson has passed it. Hopefully this will be one of many steps in standardizing the laws in the many jurisdictions here, especially the big 3 that all are contiguous. Henderson stepping in is even better because in many areas we touch them. It is easier for the public to understand. Especially in a dangerous animal situation, depending on which side of the line you are on, you may evade by moving somewhere else. We have had that in the past. People with dangerous animals in Clark County have moved and we had to track them. Motion to approve was made and seconded.

**6. Proposed Ordinance to Amend Title 10 to Allow Release of Dogs and Cats and other Small Animals to the Designated Animal Shelter Contract**

TP – we may want an explanation from county staff. JB – the amendment gives the sheltering contractor maximum flexibility to maintain the animals and to place them up for adoption after they have been there the required 72 hours. As it is now, we have a specific set fee for adoption. This will allow them to give animals away or hold them for extended periods of time. Clark County is trying to give them maximum flexibility to get these animals adopted. They have a big investment in these animals. TP – in essence it gives all otherwise condemned animals longer. MG – if the contractor owns the animals after 3 days, are they free to charge whatever they want to adopt that animal? JB – that is correct. As it is now they have to charge a fee. If they want to give them away with so many animals that spend 3 or more months there, they can't. MG – in the original contract, they could only charge \$13 for a county animal. With this change, they can charge nothing or whatever they want. I am not comfortable with this. I have already heard complaints. If the public wants to adopt a small dog, they knew they could go to the county shelter and adopt a small dog for \$13. Now those small dogs are being taken to an off-site adoption center where some rather exorbitant amounts are being charged. It was my understanding the county had an interest in maintaining the \$13 adoption fee so it would be affordable to the population. This runs in the face of that. JB – Clark County has a tremendous deal. We are paying for the animals to be there 7 days. Essentially, we are paying our contractor about \$800,000 a year to shelter and care for about 20,000 animals which is fair if they keep them 7 days. The track record shows they are keeping them much longer than 7 days. They keep the animals 70 days, 170 days, 370 days or until they can get them adopted. I am very proud of that \$13 fee but if they can give them away they can keep the animals longer. It may be a situation where some will be marketed higher. If you look at the record, and we have looked at it, the majority of them are given away. They are not making anything. The option was to get them out alive. BY - does this in any way give rescues or foster homes more leeway. JB – the contractor says yes. As it was in the past, if you were a rescue you had to pay that \$13 to get the animal. It was written in stone in the code. Some of the rescues would be able to come in and by working together, get the other dogs out quickly. KS – we understand the small dogs are the prime mover in the shelter. Prime small breed dog may cost more but looking at the numbers, they are fewer. The only reason a rescue gets them is health or unadoptable and they would make other arrangements to get them another home. DO – it opens up the door of increased cooperation between rescue organizations and shelters hopefully to work to get more animals a home. For them to recover some of their cost, if possible, I can see some benefit. JB – we have been assured they will work with seniors and those who can't afford it, to make this thing work. It is an enabling factor. MG – the small dogs are not the dogs languishing at the

shelter. I have had contact with citizens recently that were told to go to the Centennial store and they wanted \$100. They couldn't afford it. JB – contractor has assured us they will work with the seniors or those below the poverty line. MARK FIERRO – spokesperson for AFI. Our concern regarding seniors and small animals would revert back to \$13 or \$0 in some cases. The reason is that is the best home we can find the dog under any circumstances. They enter into a symbiotic relationship. No county dogs are going to the offsite adoptions. They aren't adopted at the same rate as a result of that. On any given day, say we have a litter of kittens and they are all county animals and we have someone we worked with in the past say I will take them out of here. We have to run down the hall and hit somebody up for the money to pay for these animals to be taken out so they have a chance. We know the little guys go at top dollar. If a senior comes in, they will get it for \$13 or \$0. Say that dog starts at \$150, and he is there 2 weeks, he is \$100, a week later \$50. That dog will keep going down and down. You will see signs that say give me a second chance. I am free. MG – will you start taking county dogs to offsite adoptions centers? At this point I need to tell my seniors they should go directly to the offsite. MARK FIERRO – no. Counter productive to take them all there. It is less expensive to keep them at the shelter. Our facilities for training are at the main shelter. The more training an animal has the more it bonds with the person. Anything we can do to train the animal, those animals don't come back. What this does is give us the opportunity to put as many animals as possible out there. We don't have to put animals down for space. The only way to insure that moving forward is to give them that flexibility. The highest and best use of the shelter. The most dogs and cats get the best homes that are possibly out there for as much of the population as possible. MIKE CONNELL – I have yet to go down to the shelter on a Sunday and not see a small dog. I am down there regularly and have never not found small dogs. Maybe they were looking for a specific breed. KS – when Dewey had the contract and had visibility of all dogs as soon as they came in, 8 to 15 people were lined up waiting for the adoption. They could be looking for a specific breed and they may be hard to come by. MG – I go over periodically and there is not a small dog to be found. They are highly adoptable and for the most part, they will command top dollar. BY – can we have an assessment over a 6-month period to see how it is actually working? To see if there are any problems we have missed. DM – we do track the adoption rates out of the shelter and that is where we would see the changes. From there, it would be more intensive to determine on our side whether it was animals going for free or not but would immediately show up in adoption rates. We can run Chameleon reports to look at adoption rates. FH – if this gets passed, can a report be brought back to us to let us know how this is working. DM – it will take some time for it to work through the system and get to the point where it becomes commonplace and people are taking advantage. Bear in mind, over 40% of the population in the shelter is pit bulls. Six months would be a place to start. DO – when will BCC look at this. JB – hopefully it will be on the May 16<sup>th</sup> agenda. Public hearing on June 6, and then 30 days after that it goes into effect. Figure January or sometime after the first of the year, we should be able to pull a pretty good report. TP – bring back a report 6 months after it goes into effect. Motion to adopt was made and seconded.

7. **Report on comparison of Clark County Animal Control Officers vs. Population in various jurisdictions**

Handout – Clark County population is currently sitting at 753,824. This is a 2004 figure so it has increased. The proportion is about 1 officer per almost 63,000 residents with 7,600 square miles, which is equal to the size of the State of New Jersey or the Country of Israel. If we added 2 officers, we would be sitting at 1 officer per 53,845; if we added 3, we would be sitting at 1 per 50,000. Initially we have our sister agencies locally which gives a comparison. We do similar work under similar conditions with the only difference between the cities and the county being the size. You can see we are quite a bit behind on our staffing levels. Hillsborough County, FL has really good staffing including 8 dedicated humane investigators on staff which is something we would certainly like to see at some point. Their square miles are nowhere near Clark County's. Only one area, Mesa, AZ is below our staffing levels. They don't deal with livestock, wildlife, humane orgs, cats, very different work. BY – how is FL able to afford their staff? DM – hurricanes have pushed the needs of animals to the forefront in the last several years. They have been able to

increase provisions for animal control, as the need was clear. It was seen in Hillsborough County sooner than in Louisiana. MG – I had originally asked for this because the budget hearings are coming up at May 15<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. in the Commission Chambers. We need to muster support for lobbying and testifying for our need for the Commission to budget for more animal control officers. Some things are very striking. Not only do we compare poorly when we look at population figures but our animal control officers are covering 7,600 square miles. None of the other jurisdictions comes close so population numbers and mileage are spreading them thin. They spend a lot more time driving around covering rural and livestock areas. In many jurisdictions a lot of the investigative work is being done by humane organizations. NYC is a perfect example where the US Humane Society and ASPCA are certified to actually issue citations. Our animal control people are doing a lot more than in many other jurisdictions. They are responsible for a lot more. These numbers underestimate the discrepancy. Urge all of you to get friends and neighbors and anyone who cares anything about animals and their interface with animals to get down to the hearings and speak up. DM – I have been here 17 years and over the course we have actually moved into more in depth investigations and filing requests for prosecutions as opposed to a citations. Years ago officers had to observe the violation and issue a citation. We are to the point where we are doing criminal investigations. We gather information, statements and evidence from witnesses, then submit them to the district attorney's office for consideration of prosecution, which is how Metro deals with crimes they don't see. We have well over 100 on-going investigations and have submitted 60 for prosecutions. This is helping to resolve chronic issues where we can't get resolutions such as barking dogs, complaints about beating their dog. It is more time consuming. It takes about 20 minutes to issue a citation and hours to prepare a request for prosecution. MG - what kind of cooperation do you get? DM - we are getting great cooperation from the District Attorney's office. There is a Q calendar where only Animal Control and Public Response cases are heard. We get a lot of restitution. We have been working to raise the level of enforcement and understanding with the judiciary.

DO- during the last set of floods in Mesquite, how many of your officers were involved trying to help take care of the problem. DM – I was actually the first person deployed at the human shelter before it was open and the last animal control person to leave after the shelter was torn down. We deployed 5 plus a volunteer. DO – so you had half your force out there and the rest of your group out here. DM – some of the officers had days off. We were running a skeleton crew as we were trying to address the needs of those affected by the floods. DM – I can see if something else happens, it will again leave a big portion of the county undermanned. I recommend you get more people. A city this size needs to have a full time investigator. DM – we have had an increase in cock fighting and those are very in-depth. We do have a senior animal control officer and he handles investigations in some of the difficult cases. DO – it would behoove Animal Control officers to have a full time investigator where his time is committed to that. DM – I can appreciate that but staffing at one would be problematic, as it would only cover a narrow window of time. That person would work only 40 hours a week. Would you hold the rest of the cases? That is why all of our officers do the investigating; all of the officers prepare requests for prosecutions, all of our officers are trained to do just about everything, because we do not have the staffing levels to actually have dedicated investigators. DO – so what I am hearing is that it would be best to initially get more officers, get your staffing up and then get your investigators. DM – once staffing was at a level where we could do that we would want to look at creating a different classification. TP - Will it hold any weight if as a group we make a recommendation to take a good hard look at this staffing? JB – This Committee has made this recommendation in the past. We have made those recommendations. One of the things in the past when we passed important animal ordinances, we had hundreds of people there. That is going to be the bottom line one-way or the other. Significant need will have to be relayed at the budget hearing through numbers and it is up to the public. That is where that information is going to be taken into consideration by the Board. KS – the only thing the BCC understands is people. If you have people in the meeting, it will mean more. They will listen. The piece of paper will mean nothing.

KAREN LAYNE (KL) – I think the Committee needs to look at is that Animal Control has been given its marching orders by the County Manager. We were told there are all these demands and Animal Control is

competing against other county agencies. The big issue is for the Courts and District Attorney's office. You have to be thinking about how you do this. I am not convinced that presenting these numbers will help. What is it you do that you can't do now? We get complaints all the time about animal cruelty issues. We are very limited and people don't understand there is not much we can do. Humane societies in other states have some law enforcement powers. If there are 76 suspicious child deaths, we can assume there are probably a larger number of animal cruelty issues we are not getting to because there is no time to investigate. I don't think an investigator is realistic. From what we see, they must be getting 5 times the number of cruelty complaints we get. One person cannot deal with all that. If you do it the way other law enforcement agencies put up their numbers, it would make a bigger impact. Look at population in terms of other law enforcement agencies. They do number of officers per 1,000 population. That is the way most of the stats are set up in terms of law enforcement. You would probably have less than .3 officers. JB – NRS 574, any society for prevention for cruelty to animals with 25 members can be sworn in just like police officers. They can make arrests; investigate cruelties, present cases to the DA. KL - So if the humane society gets frustrated because cruelties are not getting investigated and we send out a retired police officer to investigate complaints, you wouldn't have any problems with that? JB – not at all. This is what happened in Maricopa County. This has been done in the past and those that remember the case and the fourth amendment issues; I think that is why it went by the wayside. The law enforcement ramifications must be understood.

JUDITH RUIZ – as I understand it, in order to qualify for peace officer status, they have to go for training which is several years and several thousand dollars. No organization wants to spend that as animal control officers are already peace officers. MG – I think one of the concerns has been liability. The law does not preclude you from being sworn in. DM – animal control officers are not peace officers. We are a special unit of law enforcement empowered by the county to issue citations for violations we observe and the DA allows us to submit cases. MG – if you have any interest, contact some of the organizations in cities where they are doing it and find out the issues that you would have to deal with.

BY - Response time to calls, do you have an average time? Do you prioritize calls? Is there any overtime in department? DM – The Chameleon we recently instituted allows us to estimate time response to calls. Unfortunately we don't have historic data. We haven't been on it long enough to show that 10 years ago it took us 5 minutes to get to a call and today it takes us 30. Prior to this data wasn't collected in that manner. With regard to overtime, we run \$47,000 a year in overtime. We also have call back where we can call people in on their day off to work. Officers in the field prioritize calls. The computer assists with that; dispatch sets a priority and it is listed on their screen by priority. BY – your overtime alone is one person. DM – not when you add in vehicle as well as wages and benefits. It would be significantly more. MG – in terms of what you could be doing, we have several ordinances developed that could not be enacted because there was no staffing. DM – there are no full time equivalents to put them into effect. I think we are looking at just maintaining, not to add more. We would like to add those codes but we need people just to maintain. MG – The exotic is still waiting because there is no full time person and the anti-tethering is also waiting. The only one that passed was the spay/neuter and that is being handled reactively. DM – it depends on how the call comes in. Sometimes we authorize people to go out and take a look if we feel it is necessary or the officer will do it while out in the field. It depends. BH – while it is important that we show a force of numbers, I think the Committee should take a stand on recognizing needs for the entity we are volunteering to advise. We should do a letter for support to increase staff. TP – if we don't do it, we can't say we did it. If we continue to do it and say it, we can say we have continually done it and we can stress to the BCC that it is important to look at this. When it comes to comparing animal control officers to children, there are a lot of things that must be addressed and what it boils down to is money. I know the county has the money they just don't want to cut loose with it. They need to take a hard look at what the citizens need, especially with the influx of new people and traffic problems. All of that boils down to more people or the job falls down the wayside. DO – we can do this on a voluntarily basis. If someone wants to draft the letter off of committee time and disseminate it to the committee before the meeting on May 15. TP – if county staff

knows what wording to use, they can draft up something generic for the BCC, all we have to do is agree now what we want it to be and we can get it in there. All we want them to do is take a look at it and know that we all agree that they need more staff. JB – it is a public hearing so if you are going to have a Committee member there to address your point that would be the best way to put it on the record. DO – we could have a letter that they could read. MG – or a member could be designated as a member of this Committee to testify to this. The testimony becomes part of the open record of the meeting. A letter or petition gets attached but doesn't hold as much weight. There are at least 3 people here who will be there. FH – we are for an increase in personnel. DO – requests that all those who can be there to represent the AAC state that we collectively as a group support getting more officers. JB – the supplemental budget has been submitted and we asked for 2 officers. Two is a huge number in the supplemental budget. DO – we can say we support the supplemental request by Animal Control. Also asks that the public do the same thing. The number of animal control officers per population is pitiful. Committee members agree unanimously.

#### 8. **Information-sharing by Committee Members**

MG – has had 6 reports of animals (female) that were adopted from shelters that were certified as being altered. This is probably the tip of the iceberg. A month or two down the line they went into heat. They were taken to a private vet who checked them. There was an incision, estrogen levels were checked and found to be very high. Animals were opened up and found not to be spayed. All 6 have come through the NSPCA. One lady spent over \$500 between testing and getting the animal spayed. When she called the SPCA, they wouldn't even talk to her until she threatened to sue them for her expenses. This is not an isolated instance. I don't know what is going on there. They are letting animals out that are unaltered, claiming they are. DO – the problem is they are making an incision into the animal without doing the actual surgery. That is called fraud. If they are doing it intentionally, it should be prosecuted. However, after seeing situations with doctors who work for speed and time, doctors get distracted. I have seen where they have taken part of the uterus and not the other half. I can see how it can happen with someone pushing for speed rather than accuracy. How it can be investigated, I don't know. It would be difficult to prove. The most common thing you will see is an ovary being left in. MG – the one case, nothing was missing inside the dog.

DR. DAVID HENDERSON – possibly they are getting dogs and they are shaving the belly and seeing they had a previous skin incision and thought it was an OHE scar. I don't believe there is a county law or ordinance that demands an organization to spay/neuter before adoption. DM - NRS 574 is a state law – any humane organization has to spay or neuter prior to adoption.

BRUCE HALSTEAD – I recently rescued 3 different dogs where they swore dogs were spayed and it turned out it was tumors, etc. There is an estrogen test they can use to verify whether or not the dog was spayed.

KAREN LAYNE – it is possible that these proposed ordinances be put on line as a PDF file before the meeting so we could read them before the meeting? DM – it can be done. Unfortunately, I am the one who maintains this and maintaining it has become a lower priority. I am trying to get someone trained to take it over. They could call and Roseanne could fax it. We tend to not send them out via e-mail. In PDF format, they are not changeable. KAREN LAYNE – we just get a copy of the agenda which usually comes out a week ahead of time. DM – we will work on getting it posted on the web.

#### 9. **Comments by the General Public**

MIKE CONNELL – Nevada Dog Fanciers Association, if anyone is interested in advertising, please contact Don Ploke. It is not limited just to dogs so if you horse people want to put an ad in too, we will take it.

#### 10. **Set date, time and agenda of next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for July 25, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. at the Paradise Community Center.

**11. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.