



# Coachella Valley Animal Campus

Thursday, March 10, 2016  
9:30 a.m.  
Commission Meeting  
Coachella Valley Animal Campus  
72050 Pet Land Place  
Thousand Palms, CA 92276

## Animal Campus Commission

### City of Cathedral City

Councilmember Mark Carnevale  
Mayor Stan Henry  
(Alternate)

### City of Coachella

Councilmember Betty Sanchez  
Vacant (Alternate)

### City of Desert Hot Springs

Councilmember Joe McKee

### City of Indian Wells

Mayor Ty Peabody

**Chairman**

Mayor Pro Tem Dana Reed  
(Alternate)

### City of Indio

Councilmember Michael Wilson  
Jason Chan  
(Alternate)

### City of La Quinta

Councilmember John Pena

**Vice-Chair**

Mayor Pro Tem Kristy Franklin  
(Alternate)

### City of Palm Desert

Frankie Riddle

### Palm Springs

#### Animal Shelter

Dr. Shayda Ahkami,  
Shelter Director

### Friends of Palm Springs

#### Animal Shelter

Tamara Hedges-Vice President  
Ex- Officio

### City of Rancho Mirage

Mayor G. Dana Hobart

Mayor Pro Tem Ted Weill  
(Alternate)

### County of Riverside

John J. Benoit, 4<sup>th</sup> District  
Patricia Cooper,  
Board Assistant  
Marion Ashley, 5<sup>th</sup> District

### Animal Samaritans

Len D. Betz, President  
Ex-Officio

### County Staff

Laurie Dozier  
Interim Executive Assistant I

#### 1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

#### 2. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The Animal Campus Commission Meeting was called to order on Thursday, March 10, at 9:36 a.m. at the Coachella Valley Animal Campus, 72050 Pet Land Place, Thousand Palms, CA 92276, by Chairman Ty Peabody, Mayor with the City of Indian Wells.

A roll call was conducted by the **Chairman** and it was determined that there was a quorum. The following were present:

#### Members in Attendance:

John Pena, Councilmember, La Quinta  
Ty Peabody, Mayor, Indian Wells  
Frankie Riddle, City of Palm Desert  
Betty Sanchez, Councilmember, City of Coachella  
Joe McKee, Councilmember, City of Desert Hot Springs

#### Others in attendance:

Jason Chan, Sr. Management Analyst, Indio  
Tamara Hedges, Vice-President, Friends of Palm Springs Animal Shelter  
Earl Moss, Police Captain, Cathedral City  
Tom Snyder, Chief Executive Officer, Animal Samaritans  
Robert Miller, Director, County Animal Services  
Greg Priamos, Riverside County Counsel  
Frank Corvino, Deputy Director, County Animal Services  
Dr. Allan Drusys, Chief Veterinarian, County Animal Services  
Veronica Ramos, Customer Service Manager, County Animal Services  
Laurie Dozier, Interim Executive Assistant, County Animal Services

#### 3. FINALIZATION OF AGENDA: The agenda was approved as submitted.

#### 4. APPROVAL OF November MINUTES:

Minutes approved as submitted Peabody/Hedges m/s.

#### 5. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

**Dr. Paula Terifaj (Desert Hot Springs Resident/Activist):** Dr. Paula Terifaj read an article from February 8, 2016 from CBS Local 2, regarding Animal Services and Blaze Thrall. The article was regarding a house fire belonging to Blaze Thrall who had dozens of animals at the property. Seven puppies and four cats died during the fire. Eleven dogs were removed from his house during the fire. Dr. Terifaj stated animal control had six months to take care of this situation and they failed to do their job. Animal Control went out with a warrant in August of 2015, but did not seize the animals. Mr. Thrall was told he would have to reduce his animal count by three dogs per month, which was six months ago. The six month plan did not work. She stated she has copies of the article

and her timeline of events if anyone would like a copy.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS CONTINUED:**

**Kim Hardee:** Kim stated she came here today to thank Frank, Rob and Craig. The joint clinic they participated in was very successful. There were 83 feral cats and 229 dogs spayed and neutered over a two weekend span. Flyers were distributed for the next low cost pet clinic being held on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The clinic will include Zeuterin, spay, neuter, vaccines, microchipping and pet licensing, all for a total of \$50.

6. **CORRESPONDENCE:** Received a letter appointing Captain Earl Moss, Cathedral City to serve as the alternate for Councilmember Mark Carnevale, Cathedral City.
7. **ANIMAL COMMISSION BYLAWS:** Chairman Mayor Peabody stated that the Bylaws were very well written. Rob stated our direct County Counsel Kristine Bell-Valdez participated in writing the Bylaws. Rob introduced our county counsel representative, Greg Priamos, who has made himself available to answer questions today. The Bylaws were approved as submitted. McKee/Sanchez Approved m/s.

Mr. Priamos explained City law, State law, court orders and violations. Animal owners can be held in contempt. He stated we can seek a civil order to recover costs for a quick, simple, effective resolution. Any city with an ordinance that limits the amount of dogs a person can own can seek a civil order. Jail time is not a deterrent; it hurts more when they receive a monetary punishment. Rob said it would behoove cities to have better municipal/ordinance packages to leverage situations further.

8. **ANIMAL CAMPUS COMMISSION MEMBERS AND DIRECTOR COMMENTS:**

Joe McKee spoke about the animal rescue that occurred in Desert Hot Springs and issues with squatters. Matters are complicated because law enforcement cannot go into an area without a search warrant unless a felony is being committed. Frank Corvino cannot discuss the final outcome at this time, but we worked with the city attorney and local police department to get the search warrant. He stated the owner also paid all the fees to get his dogs back. Our officers visited the property almost daily. Animals were healthy and not in conditions requiring to be seized immediately. Each time DAS visited, we took action as far as the law permitted and issued citations. Rob explained kennel violations and that when the case goes to court, there is no action. The owner is given fines - it never elevates to a misdemeanor or felony where we can stop them from owning animals during a probationary period.

Joe McKee would like to put some type of mechanism together to help out in this area. He understands the limitations the Department has been working with and indicated they can pass ordinances and should be able to help us.

Frank Corvino spoke of the difference between California and Arizona and the conditions of animals. In Arizona, it is up to the city prosecutor to decide when a cruelty case is filed. In California, animal conditions make it sometimes difficult to determine if a cruelty case is warranted, unless it is truly black and white.

Per Rob, one thing we have been trying to lobby at the California state legislative level is establish a level of environmental conditions for cats and dogs (example: the level of feces in a home). Some environmental factors under current state law are not conditions for seizure. That becomes problematic and we might be able to tackle that with a local city municipal code or even a county ordinance that the cities can model.

Greg Priamos, Riverside County Counsel stated he was the City Attorney for the City of Riverside for 13 years prior to coming to the County of Riverside, County Counsel. One of the tools Greg has found both with the City or the County to be effective when violations of a city ordinance, regardless of what that is, are civil court orders. Sometimes with citations, criminal prosecution is infractions to misdemeanors or even violations of state law, which can prove to be ineffective. They do not provide the requisite incentive for individuals to abide by the law. This would be a situation where the city attorney in Desert Hot Springs should consider Civil

Nuisance Abatement Action. The reason you do this is to retain a temporary restraining order and ultimately a preliminary and permanent injunction, so if the city ordinance limits the possession of three dogs and the person has four or more, then you can obtain a court order. If they violate that court order they are subject to civil contempt and the judge can hold them in contempt. What that would mean is fines and also jail time, which is the most significant penalty. If you have an ordinance that authorizes administrative civil penalties, you can also seek civil penalties and all of your attorney fees and costs for a quick, simple and effective resolution. Greg has found in most instances that the administrative citation process and even the criminal code enforcement process do not prove to be very effective. That is something every city can do. If you already have an ordinance that limits the amount of dogs you don't need anything else. If the fines are not paid, it is subject to contempt and the court will issue as a hoarder. Civil contempt is different and judges do not like their orders not being obeyed. It's a very different matter altogether. Judges tend to not like people willfully violating their direct orders. Moreover you will have the ability to now enforce that order. You can seek a court order for compliance depending on the nature of the violation. If you have issues regarding the safety and security of the animals, that can be added to the court order as well and they are given a period of time to comply. Failure to do so would result in a re-inspection and they would go back to court. The court would find them in violation and you would get an order to go back and remove all the animals. Greg stated he will provide Rob with a template to share with the commission.

**9. RIVERSIDE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SERVICES: Robert Miller, Director**

- **Robert Miller, Director:**

Rob stated that he understands Dr. Paula Terifaj's frustration with the Blaze Thrall case. He also spoke about the Charlotte Spadero case and the system of mental health that comes along with cases like these. At times in court, due to legal constraints our department often looks like the bad guys for not intervening. Greg Priamos, County Counsel for Riverside stated that we need to use the correct tools depending on the circumstances. Rob advised the commission to feel free to reach out and use our County Counsel at any time for advice or discussion.

Website Updates: The Fourth District website has been updated with current members, minutes and agendas. Rob stated that animal services will become the depository for all records and will process any and all records request regarding the commission meeting. We are in the process of obtaining all records, minutes and agendas from 2004 – 2010.

Rob stated that all of 2015 we have had live releases of 80% for dogs and it's about 20% for cats. The inventory is extremely low in all of our shelters. CVAC is one of the heavier populations right now for its size.

- **Frank Corvino, Deputy Director:**

**Case Updates:** Animal services adopted out 257 animals at the Date Festival last month! The total was up from last year and it was a great event. Frank gave updates on the 24 horses seized from a home in the City of Nuevo this past week. Many horses were underweight and one died of starvation. Animal Services will move forward with animal cruelty charges.

- **Dr. Allan Drusys, Chief Veterinarian:**

Clinic Updates: The department has two spay and neuter clinics and the bus. Through the years the ratio of dogs to cats surgeries have been about 17-19% for cats and the rest for dogs. Over the last 3 or 4 years it has slowly increased. Last year was almost 26% for cats. Hopefully this trend will continue to increase and affect the live animal release rate and the impound rate.

**10. ANIMAL SAMARITANS (Tom Snyder, CEO): Tom stated that the Feral Cat Program he spoke of at the last meeting is now back up and running. This was made possible by private donors and funding from Luke's Legacy. The program will be up and running for as long as the funding lasts. On March 12, 2016 the Super Heroes 5k walk event will take place at the newly renovated Rancho Mirage Park. There will be many**

adoptable dogs and many children activities happening as well. It will be a fun day so please come out and join us!

**11. PALM SPRINGS ANIMAL SHELTER (Tamara Hedges):** Tamara stated that like the county, Palm Springs shelter has a low inventory of animals at this time. She feels a large part is due to their retention efforts and hiring of a retention counselor. The retention counselor works with constituents in person or on the phone to offer solutions for the problems that make them feel they need to relinquish their pets. The program is working well, as is the pet food program to supply free pet food for those who are struggling financially. They are bracing for an anticipated 750 kittens during this kitten season. On a positive note, there is a good chance of Palm Springs receiving a partnership grant of over a million dollars over the next three years from Best Friends Animal Society. It will essentially provide 3,500 TNR surgeries over what they are currently performing valley-wide. The support of all the cities, county and everyone in this room is needed. This would mean funding for surgeries as well as funding staff by Best Friends. We would just need to come up with GAP funding of \$80,000 a year to supplement this grant between all of the cities. Rob stated he would help with the GAP funding and transports of cats from our facilities to any of the clinics. The grant decision will be made sometime next week.

**12. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The next meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2016 at 9:30AM at the Coachella Valley Animal Campus: 72-050 Pet Land Place, Thousand Palms, and CA 92276.

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Mayor Ty Peabody adjourned the meeting at 10:10 a.m.