



# Coachella Valley Animal Campus

## COMMISSION MINUTES

### Animal Campus Commission

#### City of Cathedral City

Councilmember  
Mark Carnevale  
Mayor Stan Henry  
(Alternate)



#### City of Coachella

Councilmember Magdalena Zepeda  
Councilmember Betty Sanchez  
(Alternate)

#### City of Desert Hot Springs

Councilmember Joe McKee

#### City of Indian Wells

Mayor Ty Peabody  
Mayor Pro Tem  
Dana Reed (Alternate)

#### City of Indio

Councilmember Elaine Holmes  
Jason Chan  
(Alternate)



#### City of La Quinta

Councilmember John Pena  
Mayor Pro Tem Kristy Franklin  
(Alternate)



#### City of Palm Desert

Frankie Riddle

#### City of Palm Springs

Tamara Hedges  
Vice President

#### City of Rancho Mirage

Mayor G. Dana Hobart  
Chairman



#### County of Riverside

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

#### Animal Samaritans

Betty Maytag, President  
Ex-Officio



#### County Staff

Carol-Ann Myers  
Executive Assistant I

Thursday, May 14, 2015

9:30 a.m.

Commission Meeting

CVAC

72-050 Pet Land Place

Thousand Palms, CA 92276

### 1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

### 2. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The Animal Campus Commission Meeting was called to order on Thursday, May 14, 2015 at 9:30 a.m. at the Coachella Valley Animal Campus, 72-050 Pet Land Place, Thousand Palms, CA, by Chairman Dana Hobart, Mayor with the City of Rancho Mirage.

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

#### Members in Attendance:

Dana Hobart, Mayor, Rancho Mirage  
Patricia Cooper, County of Riverside  
John Pena, Councilmember, La Quinta  
Betty Sanchez, Councilmember, City of Coachella  
Ty Peabody, Mayor, City of Indian Wells  
Elaine Holmes, Councilmember, City of Indio  
Joe McKee, Councilmember, Desert Hot Springs  
Frankie Riddle, City of Palm Desert  
Stan Henry, Mayor, Cathedral City

#### Others in attendance:

Jason Chan, Sr. Management Analyst, Indio  
Earl Moss, Police Captain, City of Cathedral City  
Tom Snyder, Chief Operating Officer, Animal Samaritans  
Robert Miller, Director, County Animal Services  
Frank Corvino, Deputy Director, County Animal Services  
Dr. Allan Drusys, Chief Veterinarian, County Animal Services  
John Welsh, Public Information Officer, County Animal Services  
Deanna Burnett, Operations Chief, County Animal Services  
Carol-Ann Myers, Executive Assistant, County Animal Services

### 3. FINALIZATION OF AGENDA:

The agenda was approved as submitted.

### 4. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Jacque Mercier-Berman (Animal Activist): One year ago a woman named Dorothy Davis, who Jacque serves as her trustee and executor, asked to set up a program with the commission and County Animal Services in order to provide no cost spay/neuter services in the Coachella Valley. A check for \$2,000 was sent to the County's non-profit organization, the ASK Foundation. Mrs. Davis received a thank you letter; however she stated she did not receive a report on where and how the donation was allocated. After Jacque wrote a letter to the Department of Animal Services

# Coachella Valley Animal Campus

## PUBLIC COMMENTS:

requesting this information, it was provided. Because Mrs. Davis felt she did not receive a timely response on her request, she wrote a letter expressing her dissatisfaction and discontinued donations to the Animal Shelter. Mrs. Davis has since been working with Animal Samaritans on designating the money to them in order to provide no cost services to residents of the Coachella Valley in partnership with Animal Services. County Animal Services does not have a stationary clinic, so they will begin working with Animal Samaritans in order to re-visit the partnership and begin offering services utilizing her donations. Director Robert Miller thought it would be a good idea to give out vouchers in conjunction with the licensing canvassing program. Jacque stated that the commission members should be a part of the decision as to where the money will be allocated.

Kim Hardee (Coachella Animal Network): "CAN" will be doing another low-cost Zeuterin clinic at the ABC Recovery Center in Indio during the month of May. As of 2013, "CAN" has sterilized 1,769 animals. Councilman John Pena inquired as to how Kim is getting the word out to the Spanish communities. Kim said she would like to utilize a Spanish radio station or a local newspaper to accomplish this.

Janet McAfee (Loving All Animals): LAA will be having their 7<sup>th</sup> annual Super Pet Adoption event on November 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>. The theme of the event is "Wizard of Paws". Last year over 500 animals and 45 animal welfare groups were involved. Janet would like to see everyone involved in the event this year.

Lisa Blodgett (La Quinta resident): Lisa Blodgett feels she is not satisfied with the answers from the past meetings. One question pertained to the lack of signage on Interstate 10 for the Animal Campus so that people are aware of where the campus is located. Lisa spoke on "Hercules" case and that she feels it is not an isolated event. Lisa discussed the staff report, and that there are healthy animals being euthanized at the shelter, and that the numbers provided needed to be accurate. She also inquired as to where "Hercules" fell on the staff report. Lisa suggested that the commission tour the Coachella Valley Animal Campus as well as the Palm Springs Animal Shelter.

Dr. Paula Terifaj (Desert Hot Springs Animal Activist): Dr. Terifaj spoke regarding Save-A-Pet (SAP), and their back story. Save-A-Pet was founded by a small group of people and was an asset to the community. Last summer they were in need of finding a new facility due to the barking dogs in the kennels. Dr. Terifaj stated that "Orphan Pet Oasis", renamed "Humane Society of The Desert" (HSOD), approached SAP in order to possibly assist their need for a new facility and merge. Dr. Terifaj stated that a merge never happened, and the Save-A-Pet board did not do their due diligence. Dr. Terifaj feels that it was a "hostile takeover", and has since written a press release of her account of the events that took place. Dr. Terifaj stated that all of the volunteers and employees were released from SAP. Dr. Terifaj has since staged a protest due to information she received that healthy animals were being euthanized. She stated that 40 animals were transferred, but that she is unable to locate them now, and two animals she learned were euthanized. She discussed a dog named "Frodo." A member of the public was told "Frodo" was adopted, however she later learned he had been taken to an HSOD operated hospital and was wrongfully euthanized. Mayor Ty Peabody asked who oversees this. Director Rob Miller stated he could not speak in detail on behalf of the topic, but that Animal Services has recently performed a kennel inspection, which included inventory of all of the animals at the facility. The report can be obtained by submitting a request for records to the department. Also, Director Rob Miller will be meeting with District Attorney Mike Hestrin regarding the matter. Mayor Ty Peabody asked for details on the report's content. The report is an inventory of all of the animals and their status and conditions. The department did not find any evidence of animal cruelty taking place in the

facility. Rob felt it was important that the department perform the kennel inspection early, should inventory of the animals from Save-A-Pet need to be available as evidence. Mayor Ty Peabody asked if the DA was informed because Animal Services felt there was something going on. Rob stated he could not offer any comments on the matter.

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

Mayor Stan Henry notified everyone that he will now serve as the alternate and Councilman Mark Carnevale will serve as the member to the commission.

Councilman John Pena stated that he agreed with the need for better signage on the 10 freeway advertising the shelter's location. He also stated the importance of having the link to the animal shelter on the cities' websites. Rob Miller stated Cal Trans did allow them to add signage, but not on the freeway. Supervisor Benoit's office asked the shelter to start doing "Pets of The Week", in order to increase awareness. Animal Services is currently working on advertising this at the weekly Board of Supervisor meetings.

**6. CORRESPONDENCE: None**

**7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: m/s Hobart/Holmes**

**8. COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES:**

Robert Miller (Director): Rob discussed the "Hercules" incident that was referenced in public comment. "Hercules" was a 4 year old pit-bull that was surrendered in April to the shelter by its owners because the owner claimed "the dog growled when their son grabbed his tail and rode him like a horse". Rob was appalled that the dog was euthanized. There is currently an open HR investigation regarding this case. Rob committed to preparing a final document detailing the case that would be available to the public. So far the department has released the employee due to developments regarding the case. In RCDAS' database Hercules was categorized as "untreatable behavior", however Rob disagrees with assessment and thinks Hercules was "treatable". In an effort to prevent this from happening again, Rob will be performing an audit on the manner in which we categorize animals at the shelter. Rob invited Dr. Lori Kirshner with "Advancing the Interest of Animals", to speak further regarding this case. Dr. Kirshner stated she is speaking on behalf of the animals, and that Rob has acknowledged the seriousness of the incident and is taking appropriate action to correct it. Dr. Kirshner also acknowledged that Rob has been transparent during all of their conversations. Currently Policies/Procedures are being reviewed and revised in addition to a data audit and HR investigation. The Department of Animal Services has agreed to allow a consulting group to visit the Animal Campus with a goal of changing the culture and improving the programs. Dr. Kirshner will be conducting a nationwide search in order to find the right candidate to be selected as the consultant. Jacque Mercier-Berman asked why this case was unique. Rob stated that "Hercules" was scheduled to go through training, and the trainer found an interested adopter. The family came in 3 days after "Hercules" was euthanized, unaware of this. Mayor Ty Peabody asked how this happened if the dog was reviewed by several staff prior to euthanasia. Rob stated that there were fundamental breakdowns, including untruthful information from the staff member coordinating with the interested party. Rob also gave a brief history of the department in that they used to be equipped with a full behavioral team, however due to the poor economy that program was lost. Frankie Riddle from Palm Desert asked in the meantime if staff handling these situations needed special training. Jackie Schart the county's behaviorist staff does receive targeted training; unfortunately this case was unique in that the problems started at the intake of the animal. Councilmember McKee asked if space is a factor in decisions for euthanasia. Rob stated that breeding is often attributed to the season, and there are different breeding

patterns in the west and east side of the county. Currently the department is working with a consultant group in order to analyze the culture within the department and lean management. The goals of this consultant group are to work with the department's management team and improve current processes keeping the organization lean in funding. The consultants are doing this at no charge to the department. Rob introduced Tamara Hedges Vice President with Palm Springs Animal Shelter. He would like Palm Springs to be a part of the commission meetings moving forward. The members voted unanimously to include them on all future meetings.

Budget update: The department may experience a 5 million dollar budget reduction in the next fiscal year. Rob will be doing a budget presentation at the next Board of Supervisors meeting and asked for support from the commission to attend and speak on the department's behalf. The budget hearings will be taking place in June. If the reduction were to take place, the department's critical infrastructure will fail and some contracts could be lost. Rob suggested the members send a letter of support. The commission motioned to have a special meeting in the upcoming weeks for further discussion of County Animal Services' budget.

Dr. Allan Drusys- Chief Veterinarian (Staff Report): Dr. Drusys addressed Councilman McKee's question from the last meeting pertaining to statistics. Dr. Drusys provided statistics that reflect animals impounded vs. animals returned to owners. Councilman McKee clarified his question in that he wants to know how many animals were returned due to having a microchip. Dr. Drusys explained that the Chameleon database utilized by the department does not allow you pull that type of specific information.

John Welsh- Public Information Officer (media updates): The department was able to reunite a cat that traveled from South Carolina and ended up in the Thousand Palms Shelter. The department will be flying the cat back to the owner out of the Palm Springs airport. A woman from Las Vegas, NV left her dogs in the car while shopping. Our officers were able to safely retrieve the animals from the hot car.

## **9. ANIMAL SAMARITANS:**

Tom Snyder (Chief Operating Officer): Save-The-Date, March 12<sup>th</sup> Animal Samaritans will be holding their annual 5k walk/run in Rancho Mirage. AS was successfully able to raise a majority of the money for their new rescue van thanks to a charitable event they had recently.

## **10. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The next meeting is scheduled for July 9, 2015 at 9:30AM at CVAG: 73-710 Fred Waring Drive Palm Desert, CA 92260

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Dana Hobart, City of Rancho Mirage, adjourned the meeting at 11:01 a.m.