



# 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 Rancho Mirage

Mayor Pro Tem 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, March 12, 2015

9:30 a.m.

Commission Meeting

CVAG

73-710 Fred Waring Drive

Palm Desert, CA 92260

### 1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

### 2. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The Animal Campus Commission Meeting was called to order on Thursday, March 12, 2015 at 9:30 a.m. at the CVAG, 73-710 Fred Waring Drive, Palm Desert, CA, by Chairman Dana Hobart, Mayor Pro Tem 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 Pro Tem, 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  
Mark Carnevale, Councilmember, Cathedral City  
Fred Saunders, Ex-Officio, Animal Samaritans

#### Others in attendance:

Jason Chan, Sr. Management Analyst, Indio  
Earl Moss, Police Captain, City of Cathedral City  
Tom Snyder, Chief Operating Officer, Animal Samaritans  
Frank Corvino, Deputy Director, County Animal Services  
Dr. Allan Drusys, Chief Veterinarian, County Animal Services  
Veronica Ramos, Customer Service Chief, 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:

David Kirk (Forever Meows): Live release rate for feral cats is at 44% which is 50% above the national average. David Kirk stated the cost of spaying/neutering (s/n), particularly feral cats, is what prohibits them from achieving even more live releases. They currently receive s/n services through Animal Samaritans. Currently after the surgery there is an \$18.00 pain medication fee that can be purchased for \$1.75. With money saved they can s/n 60% more cats. Chairman Dana Hobart asked if Deputy Director Frank Corvino had any information regarding this subject.

# Coachella Valley Animal Campus

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Frank stated these services would not be able to come through the County but would need to come from a group such as Animal Samaritans. Tom Snyder, Chief Operating Officer with Animal Samaritans will look into this cost difference.

Dr. Paula Terifaj: Dr. Terifaj missed the last meeting and was interested in clarification on the different classifications of behavior for animals in the shelter. Dr. Terifaj would like to see the topic of, what is untreatable euthanasia, sick and injured euthanasia, and healthy euthanasia on the next meeting agenda. Dr. Terifaj would also like to know if the decision for euthanasia is based off behavior, and if so who makes those decision regarding behavior, untreatable, sick and healthy. Deputy Director stated that this was presented at the last commission meeting where the Animal Behaviorist for the county attended and provided clarification for these questions. Deputy Director Frank Corvino stated it is not just the Behaviorist that makes the decision. It is a group decision - the APET (Animal Placement Evaluation Team) is the name of the group of staff that observes the animals while at the shelter, and decisions are made by those who observe the animal and make notes within our database. Chairman Dana Hobart stated he received satisfaction and clarification from the last meeting.

Councilman McKee asked if the process has changed for determining animal behavior since the opening of the new facility. Director Robert Miller stated the Thousand Palms facility has been open for 9 years. Councilman McKee shared an adoption experience 8 years ago when the Thousand Palms shelter initially opened. Councilman McKee stated that the animal campus can be a very stressful environment for the animals which can probably cause them to have behavioral issues that they wouldn't normally portray. Councilman McKee mentioned the untreatable statistics were high. Director Robert Miller explained that one common factor is that the cats coming into the shelter are feral. Director Robert Miller also wanted to clarify that all euthanasia is a tragedy; the manner in which healthy euthanasia is classified is almost irrelevant because we should strive to bring more resources to the "treatable" category to rehabilitate animals, and bring all categories down to zero.

Director Robert Miller also clarified that each animal is evaluated on a day-to-day basis and there is no process in place determining whether or not an animal will be euthanized days in advance. The APET system is not associated with a time frame - it is an evaluation system. Dr. Terifaj asked if no animal was euthanized without significant reason. Dr. Allan Drusys clarified what is considered significant, and that the category of an animal's health changes each day and the Shelter has limited resources to treat the illness or injury. Chairman Dana Hobart asked how often the shelter sees a situation where the animal develops an illness in a day or a week. Dr. Drusys said the evaluation of the animals starts upon our first interaction with the animal, whether it is in the field or front counter. Based on the collection of past comments and present day observations from staff, this determines the future. Chairman Dana Hobart clarified that animals are not medically examined every day, and that additional examinations occur based on observations from staff. Councilmember Elaine Holmes asked if there is a "treatable" component where the dog can still be adopted and be taken to a Veterinarian or a Vet can volunteer their time to treat the animal. Director Robert Miller said in respect to Kennel Cough, it is not life threatening, however it takes a tremendous amount of time to help treat the animal. Animals are more likely to overcome illnesses in a home environment verses the shelter which is why programs like fostering are so important. Director Robert Miller wanted to ensure the Commission knew it is not just a fundamentally broken shelter system, but that there are components that can enhance the system and boost the animal's chances of being adopted. Deputy Director Frank Corvino also reiterated that the

shelter treats animals every day for various illnesses such as Kennel Cough. Also, the shelter is an open door facility and cannot limit the constant flow of animals coming into the shelter. Director Robert Miller gave a positive example of dogs that had symptoms of illnesses who were then fostered and taken to the Date Festival. Because the animals were removed from the shelter environment where cross exposure is possible, the animals were able to get well and be adopted.

5. **ANIMAL CAMPUS COMMISSION MEMBERS AND DIRECTOR COMMENTS:** Councilman McKee would like to know the percentage of animals with microchips that our returned to their owners. A majority of residents in Desert Hot Springs are renters and therefore their address may change frequently, so he would like to know how effective microchipping is in this type of environment. Councilmember McKee would also like studies that prove the licensing programs currently in place are working. Chairman Dana Hobart asked that Councilman McKee place his questions in written form and send them to County Animal Services.

Councilman Mark Carnevale introduced himself as he was late to the meeting.

6. **CORRESPONDENCE:** Letter appointing Mayor Ty Peabody as the Indian Wells representative. Letter appointing Councilmember Betty Sanchez and Councilmember Maggie Zepeda as the Coachella representatives.
7. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Councilmember John Pena motioned to approve with one correction, his city was listed incorrectly. m/s Pena/Moss

8. **COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES:** Director Robert Miller addressed Councilman McKee's question pertaining to the effectiveness of microchipping in a high-rent environment. He stated it was a good question but did not have the answers to it. The County tends to look at statistics in years rather than months but will have an answer for him.

**County Staff Report:** The Asilomar Accords were developed nationally in order to categorize animal incomes and outcomes. Not all animal organization report statistics the same way and do not categorize and report the outcomes the same way to the public. Robert Miller stated that the goal of the statistical report is for it to be used as a tool for the department to review the current rate of euthanasia and be able to obtain enough resources to bring the number to zero. The intent is not to be non-transparent with the public. Robert Miller suggested that if any commission members would like to see the report changed, they can email Executive Assistant Carol-Ann Myers to bring to the commission for approval. Chairman Dana Hobart asked if Director Robert Miller felt personally there should be changes to the report. Robert Miller would like more detailed statistics, major program changes as well as policy updates. The commission gave direction for the department to move forward with those changes.

**Case Updates (Frank Corvino):** The person responsible for placing a rubber band over a dog's mouth has been charged with felony animal cruelty. There was a case in Coachella where 23 animals were found dead due to the owners neglecting to feed or water their animals. The owners were charged with 32 felony counts. An owner who refused to release his dog after it bit a child was charged with failure to produce the animal and concealing information to a health officer.

**Kimberly McWhorter (Program Chief):** The department will be holding a rescue symposium on September 20-22 regarding shelter rescue relations. The Symposium will take place over the course of three days at the Marriot in the City of Riverside. County Animal Services will be partnering with the ASPCA and the ASK foundation.

The Department will also be organizing an Annual Conference that will be an all-day conference mandatory for staff to attend. There will be various tracks and 15 total classes that cover all pertinent topics pertaining to the organization.

**Media Updates (John Welsh):** "Cooper" was a dog in Coachella that was found by a good Samaritan in bad condition due to someone possibly purposely injuring the dog. The dog was treated by the Coachella Valley Animal Campus and with the help of Animal Samaritans and

transferred to a rescue group in Idaho. There will be a news release about the cat that made its way from South Carolina to California that is being returned to its owner. There will be a golf tournament in April with the proceeds going to the Coachella Valley Animal Campus. This will be broadcasted on the radio. Deputy Director Frank Corvino gave an update on the success of the Date Festival. Over the course of ten days, the department adopted out 247 animals. The next event will be the Perris Fair. The Euthanasia Reduction Plan presentation will be postponed until the next meeting due to technical difficulties.

License Tag updates: The Commission inquired at the last meeting whether or not the State would allow the County to engrave owner information on the back of the dog license tags. Dr. Allan Drusys confirmed that per the State there were no restrictions prohibiting us from doing so, we would just need the proper engraving machine that costs approximately \$3,000. Chairman Dana Hobart inquired as to where the machine would be located and who would issue the tag. Per Dr. Allan Drusys this could potentially be done by both the City and County Animal Services. A process and time-study would need to be in place in order for the County to charge appropriately. The machine would need to be centrally located. Dr. Drusys suggested better communication with businesses that already have this machine. The County has a tag machine; however we may not have plates that fit the license tag and the machine. There would need to be a system set up when pet owners purchase a new tag that would allow them to then get the owner information engraved on the license tag. All license tags are sequentially numbered so that they do not repeat in the system and can easily be identified should the animal come into the shelter. The County license tags issued are permanent, and therefore pet owners are not issued a new tag upon renewal. Only those who are purchasing a license for the first time would be able to have it engraved. Chairman Dana Hobart inquired on whether or not it can be done at the city level. Chairman Dana Hobart is going to bring the flyer back with the engraver cost to his City Council to possibly purchase a machine and begin doing it for free for residents. Chairman Dana Hobart inquired on whether or not there is anything that can be done at the County level. Deanna Burnett, CVAC Operations Chief, is going to look into comparing the size of the County license tags with the plates for the engraver the county currently has. Once the County determines if engraving with the current machine is possible, they can report to the commission the time and expense to begin engraving license tags. Councilmember Elaine Holmes suggested getting the machine donated.

Director Robert Miller thanked the Economic Development Agency for their contributions to the Date Festival. Director Miller stated they put a tremendous amount of time and money into the festival this year. Director Miller also thanked Animal Samaritans for the successful "Men of The Desert" event that they hosted on Saturday, March 7, 2015.

## 9. ANIMAL SAMARITANS:

Tom Snyder (Chief Operating Officer): At the Date Festival, Animal Samaritans donated "Critter Cash" to cover the cost for spay/neuter for up to \$100.00. Each day of the event the County raffled off the Critter Cash to those attending the fair. Tom Snyder presented a plaque to Chairman Dana Hobart and Supervisor Benoit in recognition of their support. Animal Samaritans had a fundraising event on March 7<sup>th</sup> and raised approximately \$18,000. Proceeds will go towards the purchase of a new emergency vehicle. Tom Snyder acknowledged the various sponsors of this event. The Indio facility is projected to open in May. Animal Samaritans is still offering low-cost spay/neuter for pit-bull and pit-bull mix breeds in the East Valley. Animal Samaritans is currently looking into obtaining grants to hopefully make the surgery free. Chairman Dana Hobart discussed a program they currently have in Rancho Mirage where the City pays up to \$200 for every adoption from a shelter or non-profit. Rancho Mirage City Council also brings an animal to their meetings in order to assist with getting the animals adopted.

The Adoption Alliance: The program has a replacement staff member named Christy Nelson. Christy will be working with Michelle Bergeron moving forward on rescue.

**10. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The next meeting is scheduled for May 14, 2015 at 9:30AM at CVAC: 72-050 Pet Land Place  
Thousand Palms, CA 92260

**11. ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Dana Hobart, City of Rancho Mirage, adjourned the meeting at 10:27 a.m.