## Alachua County Animal Welfare Advisory Committee Minutes

May 10th, 2023

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Members Present**  Chelsea Bower  Melissa Moomaw  Meredith Montgomery  Stacy Hudak  Brandi Ormerod | **Members Absent**  Amy Tate  Shannon Murphy |
| **Staff Present**  Julie Johnson  Sarah Gilley  Faye Gould |  |

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 1:00pm

**Approval of the Agenda**

**MOTION:** Chair Brandi Ormerod made the motion to approve the agenda, unanimous approval; motion carried.

**Approval of Minutes**

Chair Brandi Ormerod addressed the committee, stated statistics discussed at last meeting were uploaded to our website. Moved to address the previous minutes from the November 16th and February 22nd meetings. Chair made the motion to approve minutes from November 16th, unanimous approval. Chair made the motion to approve minutes from February 22nd, approval from Melissa Moomaw and Brandi Ormerod.

**Zoom Meetings**

Chair asked County Attorney Diana Johnson if Zoom meetings were possible for committee members. Diana Johnson responded it is advised to meet in person as Zoom participants cannot vote on motions, technical difficulties are a possibility. The committee members can review circumstances to determine if the circumstances would warrant a Zoom meeting. Chair asked if votes could be made via proxy, Diana stated they cannot.

**Public Comments**

Floor was opened for public comment. The following was discussed:

* Volunteer Pamela Blasetti stated concerns that dogs are not getting time out of kennels for enrichment and exercise since the shelter became short-staffed being down 3 kennel technicians, shelter supervisor, and enrichment coordinator. Stated the current system for communication to hold staff accountable is not being utilized, this is an issue that has existed for a long time but is becoming more evident because of the staff level. Stated the shelter has addressed these concerns and is working on actions to remedy these issues and applauds the efforts in doing so but requested that the committee makes a recommendation for standard of care and that Dr. Crawford from the University of Florida be consulted to ensure we are meeting an average and acceptable standard to keep dogs in adoptable condition and determine appropriate staffing hours. The shelter has had many positive changes, but this issue warrants quick attention and a temporary standard.
* Volunteer Cathy Calderon stated there is a decline in the frequency of playgroups and dogs getting out of kennels. Requested the relationship with Camp Run-a-Mutt be prioritized to give dogs more time out and money be allocated for Temp Force to assist staff in cleaning tasks.
* Citizen Kathleen Rupert asked if Zoom meetings were an option or if evening meetings were possible. Asked if the University of Florida was allocating property for the new shelter facility. Asked what was included in the ordinances that would help expedite hoarding or cruelty cases. Asked if language surrounding warrants could be detailed.
* Citizen Adele addressed Kathleen Rupert, stated inaction of previous staff was to blame for the slow process of cases.
* Diana Johnson addressed Kathleen Rupert’s question about the University of Florida, stated we are still in communication, and that deal is still on the table, but both organizations are still in discussions.
* Chair Brandi Ormerod addressed the question about evening meetings, stated the time and dates for the meetings were decided upon by the committee to ensure members could attend.
* Volunteer Lynn Moore requested we look into other options for exposure for the animals. Suggested utilizing newspapers, printing flyers, radio and posting ads to reach older adopters and reach more potential volunteers and fosters. Requested additional venues for adoption events in local farmer’s markets and out in the community. Requested our front office does a better job explaining our resources when community members find dogs. Requested better adoption packets to provide with adopters.
* Volunteer Chris Deutsch requested the shelter share more about the struggles of the shelter, focus on urgency for long-term dogs to trigger adopters to act now.
* Citizen Adele stated activity cards from hoarding cases do not accurately represent the condition of the animals, requested that pertinent information is current and accurate.

**Annual Work Plan and Annual Report of Accomplishments**

Chair stated the committee needs to plan for the preparation of the Annual Work Plan and Annual Report of Accomplishments, stated she has examples that can be shared.

**Agriculture and Equestrian Center**

Diana Johnson reintroduced the Agriculture and Equestrian Center, requested the committee’s assistance in reviewing the proposed edits and new activities. Many activities are horse related, but the committee’s feedback regarding the welfare of animals participating is valued. The committee requested readdressing the activities at a later meeting after every member had time to review the new activities. Meredith Montgomery and Stacy Hudak shared concerns about zoontic diseases and potential for animals to be stressed. Director Julie Johnson will look into standards for livestock animals.

**Update about Committee Vacancy – Law Enforcement Officer**

Director Julie Johnson updated the committee that the Sherriff’s Office is working on going through their deputy list to find us a new member, and this new member should be onboarding in the near future.

**Impact of Kitten Season on ACAR**

Director Julie Johnson, Faye Gould, and Sarah Gilley confirmed that the shelter is in full swing of Kitten Season and is seeing many kittens surrendered over the counter daily. Sarah Gilley provided updates that the shelter has switched over to Breeder’s Edge formula and has been seeing many donations coming in for that and all supplies, informed the committee that the shelter has been working with Kind Kitty, a new non-profit that assists shelters with bottle babies, and the Humane Society of North Central Florida has been instrumental in pulling cats and kittens in large numbers. Also informed the committee that we have plans in place for our new Foster Coordinator to focus on matching animals with fosters and creating a more personalized experience. Stacy Hudak requested fosters be provided with more supplies, stated that as a foster she has not received many cans of food in the past. Sarah Gilley stated the new Outcome Center will have a foster lobby with access to supplies fosters can choose from. Meredith Montgomery asked if high school students could foster for volunteer hours, Sarah said they can and shared an update that the shelter is in the process of bringing the age to volunteer without a chaperone from 18 to 16. The shelter is hopeful for more high school students volunteering as groups and individually.

**Update on Daily Exercise/Enrichment for all Dogs**

Sarah Gilley informed the committee that over the past week every dog in the shelter had time out of their kennels at least 2-3 times with staff, stated a decrease in volunteer activity in recent weeks was due to the end of the college semesters, and the shelter is expecting more frequent volunteers soon. Sarah also discussed the new shelter software, PetPoint, and how it will make record keeping and communication easier. Sarah informed the committee of the current system, a whiteboard, that is available to staff and volunteers, and it has recently been added to daily closing tasks to ensure staff members are dating when they interact with the dogs, and the shelter’s new Outcome Center will have a Doggy Day Out Station to help expedite the process of dogs getting out more with volunteers. Chelsea Bower remarked that they have noticed more dogs getting out much more frequently than in the past where dogs may never have gotten out with staff and stated the last walkthrough she had completed the dogs were much less stressed in the kennels. Meredith Montgomery suggested looking into AI assistance for bios and notes while the volunteers and staff members are interacting with the dogs. Chair Brandi Ormerod asked the committee their recommendations for how often dogs should be getting out and what is feasible, Chelsea Bower responded that once the shelter is fully staffed, once a day minimum could be possible. Julie Johnson responded that the goal is every dog, every day. Sarah Gilley also provided an update on enrichment, shared that a group of Scouts had made and distributed enrichment items to 70 dogs and shared that students from the University of Florida have been coming to the shelter every other Friday to create enrichment items and freeze them for later. Melissa Moomaw asked if cats were included in enrichment, Julie Johnson responded yes. Faye Gould also shared an update that we are in the process of onboaring a new investigator and new officer with law enforcement background, and a new Kennel Technician recently started. The shelter is still in the process of hiring Kennel Technicians, and these additions will assist the staff in getting dogs out more frequently. Melissa Moomaw commented on the positive PR the shelter has done and stated our social media pages were more adopter focused. The committee discussed urgent pleas for dogs, Sarah Gilley responded that the shelter is working to empower adopters and focus on highlighting their best attributes with more meaningful bios. Meredith Montgomery suggested having volunteers assist us with cross-referencing found animal posts to help increase RTO numbers. Sarah Gilley agreed with this idea and stated the shelter will develop more specific volunteer positions. Julie Johnson stated this will include volunteers assisting with play groups and being trained with Dogs Playing for Life.

**Event Updates**

Julie Johnson shared that the shelter is working on confirming several adoption events, including a Dogs Playing for Life Play Group Rockstar Event this weekend, an event with Petco Love in June, and Summer Lovin’ with the University of Florida in August. Sarah Gilley also informed that she would be meeting with the Humane Society of North Central Florida following the committee meeting to discuss North Florida Pet Adoption Days.

**Review of Ordinances and Edits**

At 2:32pm, Chair Brandi Ormerod asked the committee review the ordinances and referred back to the public comment about ordinances assisting with hoarding and cruelty cases, Julie Johnson advised that the state statuete is being used for cruelty cases, and the ordinances we were going to discuss today were county specific. Chair Brandi Ormerod asked the committee if they had edits to make, Chelsea Bower responded she did not have anything to add. Meredity Montgomery asked about the current system for rabies tags and requested the language not insinunate we were punishing owners who could not afford a tag. Faye Gould responded that the goal is not to punish owners but to bring awareness to the need for vaccinations and spay and neuter. Julie Johnson shared an update about a new tag system that is coming that will allow owners to purchase a tag online, and the shelter can provide steps for doing so to the veterinary clinics that provide rabies vaccinations. The new tags are smart tags that will have a QR code that can be scanned and will contain information about the animal wearing the tag. Stacy Hudak brought up GRACE Marketplace and asked the committee for ideas for ensuring dogs on their property are being vaccinated and sterilized, shared concerns of diseases being spread with mother dogs and puppies onsite. Chelsea Bower informed that GRACE has a new Animal Welfare Coordinator but can reach out to them. Chair Brandi Ormerod asked if microchips could be enforced with breeders applying for breeder permits, Julie Johnson responded microchips cannot be enforced because they are considered a surgical procedure currently. Melissa Moomaw went over her suggested edits, suggested the language when returning cats outside after spay and neuter services to state that cats are returning to their outdoor home instead of the field, asked if it could be emphasized we are returning cats to their home and not releasing them. Chair asked about her edits, specifically ear-tipped cats coming into residences. Melissa Moomaw advised that many people may take cats into their homes in an attempt to socialize them, but this is typically unsuccessful, and the current language can assist in hoarding cases when people bring too many cats into their residence. Brandi Ormerod also asked if the confinements for dogs could be more specific, Faye Gould responded that the animal must be able to stand up, lie down, and turn around comfortably. Julie Johynson also responded it can be difficult to enforce specific confinement requirements when animals are within a residence.

At 2:56pm, Chair Brandi Ormerod motioned to approve the edits to the ordinances, Chelsea Bower seconded the motion, followed by unanimous approval. Motion accepted.

**Upcoming Meetings**

The next Animal Welfare Advisory Committee is scheduled 3 months from this date, August 9th at 1:00pm in the same location. Unanimous approval of this date and time.

**Adjournment**

Chair Brandi Ormerod made the motion to adjourn the meeting, followed by unanimous approval. The meeting was adjourned at 2:58pm.