## Alachua County Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

November 16th, 2022

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

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 1:00pm

**Approval of the Agenda**

**MOTION:** Julie Johnson made the motion to approve the agenda, unanimous approval; motion carried.

**Public Comments**

Floor was opened for public comment. The following questions were raised:

* What is the status of the open investigator positions? Faye Gould informed the citizen the position recently closed and those positions should soon be filled.
* Are members of the public permitted to offer feedback on shelter SOPs? The citizen was informed by Julie Johnson and Diana Johnson that these procedures are internal, but citizens and committee members could offer input at these meetings.
* How often will these meetings be held, and what will be the duration of the meetings? The citizen was informed these meetings will be held at least quarterly, but meetings may be scheduled more frequently if needed, and meetings will likely be ~1 hour in length.

Julie Johnson informed attending citizens that they could make comments or ask questions at any point during this first meeting.

**Sunshine Law/Public Records Act**

Diana Johnson, Senior Assistant County Attorney, reviewed Florida’s Public Records Act and the Sunshine Law. The committee members and staff members were provided a document with this information and instructed not to discuss matters related to the committee outside of the meetings. Questions should be directed to staff members, so these matters can be properly documented. Meetings must meet the following criteria:

1. Must be held in a public meeting place with available parking.
2. Notice must be provided for both committee members and the public.
3. Minutes of meetings must be recorded and kept.

**Introduction to Committee Members**

Attending committee members went around the room introducing themselves, their professional experience, and work related to animal welfare and our community.

**Election of Chair**

* **MOTION:** Chelsea Bower made the motion to elect Brandi Ormerod the Chair of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee at 1:28pm. Unanimous approval, motion carried.

**Election of Vice Chair**

* **MOTION:** Brandi Omerod made the motion to elect Chelsea Bower as the Vice Chair of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee at 1:29pm. Unanimous approval, motion carried.

**Introduction to Leadership at ACAR**

Julie Johnson introduced herself and other leadership in attendance, Faren Healey, Shelter Supervisor, Faye Gold, Field Services Supervisor, and Sarah Gilley, Education, Volunteerism, and Outreach Coordinator.

**Public Comment**

* Question from attending citizen: Could Julie Johnson touch on some of the recent changes to the shelter and the status of the new building? Julie responded that new location has been discussed but is still in early stages of planning, did inform the citizen of improvements made to the current shelter, which included the removal of dogs being housed in crates, current pause of intakes to ensure proper care could be provided to current population and review of numbers of intakes vs outcomes, new flooring, removal of the incinerator before the end of the year, upcoming software, and shade for kennels coming soon.
* Question from attending citizen: Who is currently handling investigations? Faye Gould informed the citizen that she has been handling investigations and officers have stepped up to assist as well.
* Question from attending citizen: What is the status of anonymous phone calls to report animal cruelty? Diana Johnson responded and discussed code enforcement process, and anonymous complaints do not fall into that process unless an exception can be granted based on the severity of the complaint.
* Question from attending citizen: Can the committee make suggestions about new positions to the Board of County Commissioners? Diana Johnson advised that the committee can make these suggestions.

**Found Animal Guide and Rehoming Your Pet Guide**

* Julie Johnson called attention to new guides created, the Found Animal Guide and Rehoming Your Pet Guide, that were created to assist the public in locating an owner or new home for their pet. Discussed the importance of community assistance in keeping numbers in the shelter at a manageable level.
* Meredith Montgomery asked if these guides apply to veterinary practice and the University of Florida when found animals are brought in or animals abandoned. Faren Healey advised yes, suggested having paperwork owners sign regarding abandonment and what would happen if the owner abandons the animal at the practice. Julie Johnson informed the room that many practices belong to corporations, may have their own protocols in place. Discussed having a cheat-sheet available for receptionists at the University of Florida Small Animal Hospital when found animals are brought in.

**Upcoming Meeting**

* At 2:25pm, the next meeting date was set for February, 8th 2023 at 1:00pm in the same location, the Community Support Services Building.

**Social Media Discussion**

Stacy Hudak raised the question about the status of comments on the main Facebook Page. Diana Johnson informed this was a county-wide policy due to public record laws. The importance of volunteer-run pages such as the BAARC, Best of Alachua County Animal Resources and Care, Page was discussed, the public can comment on these pages to allow for better exposure of the adoptable animals.

**Adoption Event Discussion**

Following the social media discussion with the mention of more exposure for adoptable animals, Julie Johnson advised the committee that she has signed Animal Resources up to be a partner with PetSmart to process adoptions on-site. Melissa Moomaw informed the committee that the PetSmart on Archer Road lead the nation in adoptions in previous years for PetSmart stores.

**Public Comment**

* Question from attending citizen: What is the current diet for shelter animals, and is it related to the Hill’s Science Diet logo on the website? Julie Johnson responded yes, shelter animals have been converted to Hill’s Science Diet. The addition of the logo to the website was related to the deal with Hill’s when the shelter began using this food to thank Hill’s for providing the food at a discounted rate. Adopters are sent home with a sample bag of this food to allow for an easy transition to the diet the adopter decides on with their veterinarian.

**Public Comment**

* Question from attending citizen: How do we vet adopters? Julie Johnson explained our adoption process is currently lengthy, but we are moving towards a more open adoption policy and believing the best in the adopters that come in with the intention of adopting. Chelsea Bower explained that adoption agencies have to believe in what adopters tell us. Julie Johnson clarified we do ask for ID or Driver’s License and will check if the adopter has any red flags in the system, such as previous charges or citations related to animal welfare.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40pm.

The Alachua County Animal Welfare Advisory Committee is scheduled to meet again on February 8th, 2023 at 1:00pm in the Community Support Services Building.