

MINUTES
Advisory Board to
Memphis Animal Services

July 14, 2009

Present were:

Board Members:

Earnest Alexander
Carol Katz
Michelle Buckalew
Allen Iskiwitz
Janice Taylor Vaughn
Tara Walsh
Frank James

Visitors:

Kristy Caylor-Hughes
Cindy Marx-Sanders
Carol Word

Kontji Anthony with Channel 5 TV

Michelle called the meeting to order at 10:20 a.m.

Minutes were approved.

First order of business was to announce the changes in city administration. Keenan McCloy has been appointed Interim Director, Division of Public Services and Neighborhoods following Kenneth Moody's resignation. Ernie said that he expects to meet with her very soon regarding the shelter's challenges. Also, an internal audit is being completed and the audit department has submitted suggestions for changes already. MAS has not completed their part and Ernie will be meeting with Keenan regarding this as well.

Carol remarked that she has high hopes for the shelter with a new administration. Among other things, she hoped that the long awaited 501(c)(3) non-profit support group that has been languishing in the city's legal department for over six years may eventually become a reality. Ernie said that he would contact the legal department and give us a status report on the 501(c)(3) next meeting.

Ernie reported that \$7,167,641 has been appropriated by the city council for the animal shelter replacement and he expects construction to begin on the new shelter within three months. The building will be 34,000 square feet. New employees will be hired and there will be some additional operating costs connected with the new facility.

Michelle expressed concern with the staff and Cindy Marx-Sanders brought up the problems with hiring employees from Second Chance who will ultimately be given police powers/code enforcement as animal control officers. Michelle agreed to write a letter to Keenan, the Mayor, and City Council members regarding the problem with future, as well as current employees, who are ex-felons with police powers.

Several of the board members had received an email stating that the shelter had run out of dog food over the weekend. Ernie explained that there was a high influx of intake animals received over the weekend resulting in three to four dogs to a kennel. He categorically stated that they were never out of food, but that fights were happening due to the overcrowded condition. Allen wondered why, when the shelter was overcrowded like this, did it have to accept dogs from Millington, Arlington and other places out of the city. Ernie said that he is legally obliged to accept every stray that comes to the shelter. A heated discussion ensued regarding the breakdown that occurred in the fall of 2007 and seems to be continuing. Where is the funding for education, adoption events, Sunday shelter hours, and an improved website? (An employee complaint resulted in Ken Moody's cutting adoption events from four a month to two.)

Ernie admitted that euthanasia rates are up once again, after having declined, but the intake rate continues to present a challenge. At the present time, 55-75 dogs are being destroyed every day. The facility is obsolete and was a facility that was not originally built for the purpose of an animal shelter. Ernie explained some of the difficulties in holding adoption events, i.e., weather considerations, providing "adoption ready" animals, and staffing requirements both for the shelter and the Paws & Whiskers van.

The board decided and was enthusiastic in using the media as a positive. Up until now, the media was here after the fact but could be highly useful in a proactive manner. The board will try to get media exposure for a campaign designed to educate the public regarding its responsibility to spay and neuter their pets, and to get the shelter an adequate website that will enhance locating lost animals and adopting available dogs. Carol urged every board member to access the MAS website and compare it to others around the country. Sharon Woods is Webmaster for the city. Ernie will contact her with our recommendations for improvement.

Carol agreed to write a letter outlining our plans for public service announcement and billboard campaign, requesting that the director allow Ernie, at his sole discretion, to appear in any media events that will publicize the need for spay and neuter, and adoptions. The board agreed to assist in putting together a PSA.

A volunteer orientation will be held on Tuesday, August 11, following the next board meeting for board members.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Smith Katz, Secretary

Next Meeting: Tuesday, August 11th at 10:00 a.m. at Memphis Animal Service Conference, volunteer orientation following the meeting.