

MINUTES
Advisory Board to
Memphis Animal Services

March 10, 2009

The Board convened at 10:00 a.m. in Room 205 at Memphis City Hall, Michelle Buckelew, Chairperson, presiding. Present were:

Board Members:

Earnest Alexander
Franklin James
Tara Walsh
Michelle Buckalew
Carol Katz
Janice Taylor Vaughn

Visitors:

Ann Marie Easton
Amy Kalkbrenner

Ernest called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Minutes of the February 10, 2009 meeting were approved as corrected. Corrected minutes will be emailed to board members.

Ernie announced the resignation of Stephen Schwartz from the Board, which was regrettably accepted. Steve offered his help in future, but said business and other obligations required his resignation at this time. Carol will send him a note of appreciation for his contributions to the Board.

Carol noted the need for his immediate replacement since we had only a bare quorum present to convene today's meeting. (Janice arrived later during the meeting.) Ernie said he would request that the mayor select an immediate appointment.

Ernie related that Councilman Jim Strickland introduced the roadside ban on sales of animals at the city council's meeting of March 5. It passed its first reading and will have two more readings; dates for those readings were unknown. Copies of the roadside ban ordinance were passed out. Carol said that she had not seen the proposed ordinance and learned about it when she read in the newspaper that it was being presented to the council that day. Michelle said that no one on the board had notice in advance of the hearing. Ernie agreed to timely communicate all information that he received regarding ordinances to the Board.

In regard to communication problems, Carol expressed her frustration at not having information like policies, procedures, and budget information

that she has been seeking since November. She wondered that if we are not able to advise in an informed way, what is the function of the board? Ernie restated that the budget is subject to a public requests request. Carol said that the Board is not "the public," and that she has never served on a board where its budget is not known to the board, nor was any of the information she requested proprietary. (At this point, Ken Moody intervened and said that the requested information would be provided.)

Ernie will be attending all city council meetings involving animal or shelter issues, and will communicate with the board. Additionally, Ernie will contact the city council and request that the Board be kept informed of proposed ordinances, meetings and hearings concerning Memphis Animal Services and when they will be heard.

Ernie said he is not aware of any changes that have been made to the draft mandatory spay/neuter ordinance that was passed out at the last meeting. Kemp Conrad has done a good deal of research on this issue in its support. There will be two more reading on the roadside sales ban; Ernie is uncertain as to when the mandatory spay/neuter and breeders' license ordinance will be introduced.

Amy Kalkbrenner asked if there is any plan for low-income people to obtain the necessary spay/neuter services. Ernie said that he is looking at a way to put a low cost spay/neuter plan in effect by the city. However, he expects resistance from private veterinarians. Ann Marie Easton discussed using a voucher system. Carol felt the weakest link in the ordinance was that compliance might be difficult for people without means. Ernie noted that in this economy, the city has more budget constraints and has less revenue. Ernie stated that the economy is forcing surrender of more and more animals, contributing to the problem. Memphis euthanizes more than the number nationally. Michelle pointed out that attitudes that thwarted enactment of mandatory spay/neuter in the past are not necessarily the same attitudes of 2009. Janice felt all vets should be contacted to participate in a voucher system that guaranteed a set price to individuals, who would be need-qualified by the City of Memphis.

Regarding the shelter volunteers, Ernie said that there is a new agreement spelling out volunteer responsibilities that all are required to sign. Volunteers as well as employees must follow protocol, policy and procedures. It specified that volunteers must bring any problems to the supervisor before any other action is taken. This, Ernie said, is especially important to avoid any suffering by an animal, since the supervisor should

be able to address the problem immediately. If the volunteer is not satisfied by the supervisor's action, then Ernie is the next person to contact. Volunteers need to follow the terms of the agreement that they sign, or they may be dismissed. A copy of the Volunteer Agreement was passed out to the board. Janice said she felt this requirement was reasonable. Ann Marie said the terms of the Agreement were not unlike any other shelter where she had volunteered.

Frank expressed concern about what he perceived as low morale at the shelter. Ernie said that he has made changes that may inconvenience some employees, but discipline and accountability are now required of all employees. Ernie said that he is fair and honest to the best of his ability, but he wants results. Ernie also stressed that although employees may have complaints and volunteers may have complaints, daily operation must continue regardless and should not be disrupted. He said that it is important also to inspire and encourage his staff and he has tried to do this. Ernie stated that all disciplinary actions are confidential and subject to the grievance procedure contained in the collective bargaining agreement.

Michelle encouraged the volunteers and board to get together, possibly at a picnic. Ernie invited the board to visit the shelter at any time, unannounced, to observe its operations.

Ernie announced a new adoption opportunity at Wal-Mart, thanks to Michelle, who introduced him to the manager at the Germantown Parkway/Trinity store. The "Paw & Whisker" van will be held there the second and fourth weekends of the month. On the first and third weekends, the van will be at Petco on Poplar/Highland.

Michelle adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Smith Katz, Secretary

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 14th at City Hall