

MINUTES
Advisory Board to
Memphis Animal Services

May 12, 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:

Kristy Caylor
Amy Kalkbrenner
Cindy Sanders
Jackie Johns

Michelle called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Minutes from the March meeting were approved as corrected. There were no minutes for the month of April because our meeting failed to convene due to lack of a quorum.

Members expressed concern for filling the vacancy on the board and missed meetings due to lack of a quorum. Ernie reported that Ken Moody has forwarded a request to city council and expects that a new member will be appointed prior to our next meeting. Further, a motion made to change our procedural rules to the effect that: "The Board may terminate and request a replacement if any member misses any two out of six consecutive meetings." The change was approved unanimously. [Janice was not present for the vote and joined the meeting at 10:45 a.m.] The Board also agreed that it was appropriate to make reasonable accommodations for religious holidays, etc. when setting meetings.

Ernie lauded the success of the offsite adoption events and said that the new venue at WalMart in Germantown was very successful, having seven dogs adopted even though it was a rainy day.

Michelle expressed concern that one or more volunteers have a negative influence at these events. She felt this eroded the morale and spirit of the majority of the volunteers who are so dedicated to the animals and work very hard. Ernie suggested keeping a record of specific problems with volunteers and he would talk to them. Carol brought up the new volunteer agreement that required a background check and fingerprinting and felt that may be causing resentment. Ernie said it was required by the city, as well as a security precaution. Amy Kalkbrenner said that she feels controls are warranted and

although volunteers are necessary to the Shelter, they should not be allowed to run the Shelter. She said that the background check was standard procedure. The majority of the Board agreed the volunteer application and agreement was reasonable. Cindy Sanders opined that the volunteers are being held to a higher standard than the employees, some who, according to her, have criminal records. Ernie explained the need to know the background of all people who are representing the Shelter. He said that the new shelter will be monitored 24-7 by MPD's "real time crime" monitor.

Michelle requested that all negative comments be forwarded to Ernie. Carol said she was reluctant to do so as lines of communication to the community should be kept open. Allen said that Ernie should have complete decision-making with respect to volunteers. Ernie said this is the case and he keeps Ken Moody advised of matters concerning volunteers.

Ernie reported that the Paws & Whiskers van has visited six elementary schools and two senior centers, and that these visits seem to increase weekend adoptions. Michelle said these events, which are coordinated through Vince McCaskell, communications director with Memphis City Schools, as well as the off-site adoption events, keep energy up and motivate the staff and volunteers.

Michelle discussed the shelter website, "our entry to the world." The dogs and cats available for adoption and lost pets need to be posted on our web site. In furtherance of this, a regular volunteer photographer is urgently needed. It is a time-consuming task. Nathan Roye, the shelter webmaster, is assisting with uploading the photos and constructing the site. There are also two shelter employees currently assigned to this task.

Ernie and Michelle said that the managers at WalMart Germantown (Dorothy Craig), PetCo at Highland (Ronnie Dowdy), and Hollywood Feed on Union (John Sanders), have been extremely supportive and deserve our thanks. Ernie said that the euthanasia rates are improving, having gone from 85% a year ago, to the current rate of 78%. Ernie would like to have a mid-week adoption event at WalMart in addition to Saturday. Amy Kalkbrenner said that although adoptions help, only spay/neuter would bring the high rate of euthanasia down. Ernie said that MAS may never be a no-kill shelter but that is his objective nevertheless. He invited Amy to the adoption events to hand out spay/neuter literature.

Ernie reported that the Spay/Neuter Ordinance is presently held in abeyance for further study. It has not been presented to the city council. Its supporters on the city council are putting a group together to study the issue.

Ernie further reported that bids will be requested on June 5 for the new shelter and should be submitted within 30 days. Ernie estimated that construction is one or two years in future.

The Board business having been concluded, Ernie opened the floor to public comments. Cindy Sanders and Jackie Johns reported an incident that occurred during the trial of a cruelty case where MAS employees were observed fraternizing with the defendant in the case. The defendant, after several court appearances, was found guilty of cruelty and fined \$25. Johns and Sanders overheard the defendant threaten the life of the one MAS employee who gave adverse testimony in the case. Statements given by Johns and Sanders to the Prosecutor in the case were passed out to the Board. Ernie said that he received a court order barring this defendant from all area shelters as well as Memphis. Allen expressed his outrage that MAS employees were fraternizing with the likes of a convicted animal cruelty defendant. No action was taken at the meeting however.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Smith Katz, Secretary

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 9th at City Hall