



TULSA ANIMAL WELFARE COMMISSION

Tulsa Animal Welfare Commission

Regular Meeting | September 16th | 6:00 pm
One Technology Center 175 East 2nd Street Tulsa OK 74105
10th Floor North Conference Room

Commissioners Present:

Susan Savage
Christine Kunzweiler
Robin Ballenger
Teresa Meinders Burkett

Commissioners Absent

Cordell Dement

Others: Dwain Midget, Jean Letcher, Christina da Silva, Sarah Davis

MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order and Introductions

Commissioner Chair Savage opened the meeting at 6:00pm. Members of the Commission and City staff introduced themselves.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Burkett motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Burkett seconded. Meeting minutes were approved.

Reporting Results from the Tulsa Animal Ordinance Feedback Survey

Commissioner Chair Savage asked for Christina da Silva to review the results from the Tulsa Animal Ordinance Survey. da Silva shared that goal of the survey was to collect feedback from residents on draft revisions for Title II Animal Ordinance. The online survey was shared via email and social and was open from July 1st and closed on August 31st. There were a total of 1417 responses. da Silva thanked the residents and stakeholders who provided comments in addition to City Council staff that provided support in finalizing the report.

da Silva stated that the report demonstrated responses participants that identified themselves as Tulsa residents. Each chapter had a scale used to demonstrate the levels of approval or disapproval from survey respondents. Additionally, each chapter also included a summary of comments that were categorized according to themes. See appendix A.

Discussion with City of Tulsa Legal Department regarding Tulsa Animal Ordinance

Commissioner Chair Savage asked for City Prosecutor Shelton Benedict to come to answer questions that the Commission had regarding the ordinance. See appendix B.

City Prosecutor Shelton Benedict added that he believed that Chapter 9 Humane Treatment was not aligned with state statute, given that animal cruelty was already classified as a felony on a state level. He also shared that there are some parts of the ordinance that need to be clarified to ensure proper enforcement.

Tulsa Animal Welfare Department Updates

Dwain Midget shared that their department is currently hiring for three kennel worker positions. TAW Shelter is using temporary workers to help with maintenance and other duties however they may not always have the appropriate training or experience needed. The department has hired for all the open positions.

Jean Letcher also shared that they are working with IT Department to make advances in allowing online registration and pet licensing.

Commissioners discussed that they would work to review the information that had been provided. Commissioners also discussed the possibility of working with partner agencies, such as District Attorney and local law schools, to research and address animal cruelty enforcement.

Public Comment

Tina Nettles shared a public letter regarding Tulsa backyard poultry ordinances. See appendix C.

Julianne Browne shared comments about community cats. She shared that she served as president of the Yorktown Neighborhood Association, and during her tenure most of the complaints she received from neighbors were about feral cats that were causing nuisance. She stated several concerns about the proposed ordinances on community cats, including releasing aggressive feral cats into neighborhoods and impact on wildlife.

Patty Mandrell shared comments on tethering and enforcement practices. She conducted research on how other cities regulated tethering and shared best practices on human care for animals. She expressed that she believes that there should be clear language on tethering because it is a citywide challenge that could be addressed. She also shared statistics on the numbers of animals that Tulsa Animal Welfare processes. See appendix D.

Linda Adkins shared how Oklahoma City partners with a nonprofit called Target Zero to offer free spay and neuter services and how this could be a possible for model for Tulsa. She also expressed support for the proposal for community cats. She shared that she had worked with neighbors to offer trap neuter release for feral cats in their neighborhood and it helped with reducing nuisance issues. She also shared that she would like to see a position that would follow up on adoptions after they leave the shelter. Adkins also expressed that considerations should be made to ensure that the next TAW shelter is not built on a flood plain. Adkins also expressed concern about Chapter 2 -Agriculture Animals language on square footage and backyard poultry. She believed that it should be increased to 3 square feet per chicken. She also noted that the domestic animal definition did not include ferrets or other animals which could affect humane treatment and euthanasia processes.

Samantha Polen shared she leads the nonprofit organization, T Town TNR, and works to with residents to address the overpopulation of cats and large cat colonies. She works with volunteers to humanely capture feral cats and provide veterinarian services to be vaccinated, spayed or neutered, then if they are unowned or unadoptable, they work to return them to their

original colony. She addressed concerns about Trap-Neuter-Return(TNR). Polen shared that TNR works to humanely and effectively stabilize and reduce the cat population.

Mike Jones introduced himself as the Chair for Pawsitively Tulsa. He shared how responsibility is a key issue throughout all the discussions of the ordinance. He asked that the Commission ensure that the ordinance create process to enforce responsible animal ownership. He recommended that the Commission investigate creating language that enforces animal neglect as a misdemeanor and institute a solution to enforcing laws.

Jennifer Harmon, founder of Bard Owls of Midtown Tulsa, is working directly with several wildlife groups and conservationists. She shared that endangered birds and animals are protected by federal law. She stated that feral cats are still a non-native species and poses a threat to native wildlife. She asked that the Commission not consider the community cat ordinance and conduct a risk analysis. She also stated that the language “Animals Wild by Nature” should be compliant with migratory bird treaty act and federal law to protect endangered animals.

Ann Wheeler shared concerns about the impact on the environment if ordinances allow for a non-native animal into wildlife, including feral cats. Wheeler also shared that that she works to preserve the poodle breed. She shared that individuals who have the hobbyist permit are not responsible for the pet overpopulation problem. Instead, she encouraged that the city put its efforts to provide low-cost spay and neuter.

Constance Rogers asked that the Commission not reduce animal cruelty to a misdemeanor. Instead she encouraged that the Commission work with the District Attorney to ensure enforcement.

John Kennington stated that Tulsa has a local expert, Dr. Scott Loss, who has studied the effects of free-ranging cats on wildlife and the environment as well as information about TNR's effectiveness. He offered to connect the commission with Dr. Scott Loss.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D