



## TULSA ANIMAL WELFARE COMMISSION

**Tulsa Animal Welfare Commission  
Regular Meeting | Monday July 8<sup>th</sup> | 6:00 pm  
Morton Health Clinic 1334 North Lansing Ave, Tulsa, OK 74106  
Second Floor Conference Room**

**Commissioners Present:**

Susan Savage  
Christine Kunzweiler  
Cordell Dement  
Robin Ballenger  
Teresa Meinders Burkett

Others: Dwain Midget, Jean Letcher, Christina da Silva

### MEETING MINUTES

**I. Call to Order and Introductions**

Commissioner Chair Savage called the meeting to order at 6:05pm. Commissioners introduced themselves and welcomed the public

**II. Meeting Minutes from Previous Meeting –**

Commissioner Ballenger made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, Commissioner Kunzweiler seconded. Motion passed.

**III. 2019 Commission Annual Schedule**

Commissioner Burkett made a motion for the TAW Commission to meet on the first Monday of the month, unless there is a federal holiday. Commissioner Ballenger seconded the motion. The motion passed.

**IV. Public Feedback Process for Draft Title II Animal Ordinance**

Commissioner Burkett asked whether the items discussed at the June work session were included in the draft published online. Midget clarified that the only changes that were grammatical errors. Chair Savage confirmed that the ordinance was still in draft form, so no decisions or actions will be made on the ordinance until the Commission has received feedback from the public

Commissioner Chair Savage shared that the Commission does not provide operational oversight, the Commission can provide recommendations for policy changes. Commissioner Ballenger added that as the Commission can also ensure that residents are represented in the process of reviewing policies. Commissioner Chair Savage discussed that before the Commission had started, the City had worked previously with community groups to understand how to improve the City Ordinance. Commissioner Chair Savage invited Dwain Midget to present the history of how the City worked on drafting recommendations for changes to the current Title II Animal ordinance.

Dwain Midget shared that around 2008 there was a study established to understand ways to improve animal welfare services. Since then about most of recommendations had been implemented, including hiring veterinarian staff.

Apart from the recommendations from the study, Midget explained that at the time the City of Tulsa Title II Animal Ordinance had language that addressed animal cruelty. However, Oklahoma state law reclassified animal cruelty to a felony charge, which meant that the Tulsa Municipality did not have jurisdiction to prosecute. Subsequently, the animal cruelty language in the City of Tulsa Title II Animal Ordinance was taken out. Midget further explained that Tulsa City staff still wanted to address animal cruelty on a local level. In the process of reviewing how other cities implemented best practices, Tulsa City staff noted that other parts of the City of Tulsa Title II Animal Ordinance also needed to be reviewed.

In 2011, the City Council created a task force and developed recommendations to amend the ordinance, particularly to address the Hobbyist Permit and other sections of the ordinance. The recommendations were never voted on by the City Council.

In 2012, Mayor Bartlett created a new task force, made up of representatives from animal welfare groups, City staff and residents. This task force also made recommendations for changes to the ordinance, focused on providing ways for the City could address animal cruelty. The recommendations were included in a proposed ordinance in 2015, however the process was stalled during legal review.

In 2017, City Prosecutor's Office leadership worked with Tulsa City to address technical issues that were problematic in previous drafts. Using the current City of Tulsa Title II Animal Ordinance as a base, the draft ordinance contains recommendations from previous task forces, focusing on addressing concerns about animal cruelty and addressing pet overpopulation challenges. Midget further clarified that the current draft only serves as a starting point. Midget further explained that the publicly distributed draft ordinance is the beginning of establishing recommended changes.

#### **V. Public Feedback Survey**

Christina da Silva and Jean Letcher explained that the draft changes of the ordinance could be viewed on the Tulsa Animal Welfare on [www.tulsaanimalwelfare.org](http://www.tulsaanimalwelfare.org). In addition to the draft changes to the Title II Animal Ordinance, there was also a survey where people could offer feedback or provide recommendations.

Commissioner Chair Savage opened the meeting for public comments and addressed questions about the process for passing ordinance changes. Commissioner Chair Savage explained that the Commission will use the survey results reported at a public meeting, in addition to collecting feedback from residents during public comments to develop recommendations. Commissioners will submit recommendations to City Council, who will review the ordinance changes and afterwards may vote on the changes.

#### **VI. New Business**

There was no new business.

#### **VII. Public Comments/Announcements**

Someone from the public asked for an update about the Harvard Bloomberg Innovation Project. Dwain Midget explained that the Harvard Bloomberg Innovation Project was a program that selected city governments and helped city staff learn human-centered design principals to solve challenging problems. The City of Tulsa chose to use the grant to understand the problems that affect Tulsa Animal Welfare Services. Midget stated that on Friday July 12<sup>th</sup> the team of City staff and facilitates from the Harvard Bloomberg Project would be meeting with the Mayor to present an update and

discuss potential next steps. Midget shared that the work from the Harvard Bloomberg project and the information from the presentation would be made public.

Jamee Suarez, President of the Oklahoma Alliance for Animals and Member of Pawsitively Tulsa, shared the attached letter (see Appendix A).

Commissioner Ballenger asked how many spay and neuter surgeries would be needed to control the pet overpopulation problem and what the capacity would be required to reach the number of needed surgeries.

Someone from the public shared that it is hard to quantify the number of spay and neutering services needed, and further explained that at their peak, their organization was providing neuter and spay surgeries for up to 14,000 animals. However even at their peak, they were still unable to meet the demand. The person further shared that while it is unknown how many the spay and neuter surgeries the City of Tulsa completes. The resident further added that combining the number of surgeries that nonprofit organizations provides and the numbers of animals that the City of Tulsa takes in, it was rough estimate 20,000 surgeries a year would be necessary to control the pet overpopulation. Most of these surgeries would need to be provided for families who are low-income and who could not afford veterinarian services.

Several residents from the public shared concerns that draft ordinance allowing community cats would be a human health and animal health risk to natural wildlife. Many shared concerns that wild bird population could be negatively affected by having community cat or trap neuter release policies in place.

Coty the program coordinator of Unchain OK shared some of the issues that involve tethering animals. As a nonprofit organization, they work with residents to provide information and resources, such as fencing, so that pet owners do not have to chain their animals. She noted the ordinance has language that describes types of unsafe collars, however she noted that the language was missing information about the weight of the tether and language about how the tether is affixed to a house. Coty further shared that she has had experience in other cities, where shelters developed a list of animals that would be at risk for euthanasia, that would be distributed among animal rescue groups to alert them before action on the animal is taken.

Jana Proffitt Davis shared the attached letter (See Appendix B)

A resident from the public shared that she was a poodle breeder and would like to see language that does not restrict responsible breeders.

Mike Jones from Pawsitively Tulsa invited the public to learn more about their organization.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

Commissioner Chair Savage adjourned the meeting at 7:44pm

# APPENDIX A

# **APPENDIX B**