



TULSA ANIMAL WELFARE COMMISSION

**Tulsa Animal Welfare Commission
Regular Meeting | June 8th | 6:00 pm
One Technology Center 175 East 2nd Street Tulsa OK 74103**

Commissioners Present: Susan Savage, Robin Ballenger, Teresa Burkett, Cordell Dement, Christine Kunzweiler

City of Tulsa Staff Present: Jack Blair - Mayor's Chief of Staff, Patrick Boulden - City Council Administrator, Dwain Midget - Department Director of Working in Neighborhoods, Marshelle Freeman - Special Administrative Aide, Kathrine Weston – Animal Placement Coordinator

Meeting Minutes from Monday, June 8, 2020

Welcome and Introductions

Commissioner Chair Savage opened the meeting at 6:05pm.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Savage called for review of the draft minutes of the Animal Welfare Commission February meeting. Commissioner Ballenger made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Burkett seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Shelter Operations Update - Dwain Midget, Director of Working in Neighborhoods

Dwain Midget provided an update on COVID-19 procedures put in place, stating there have been no new issues as staff and the public are following the recommendations outlined by the CDC and City of Tulsa. Intake and adoptions appointments, which allows staff to manage intake and provide adequate resources to adopters, is going smoothly. Scheduling in these areas will continue and be implemented on a permanent basis.

Return to owner procedures are being developed so that field staff can help manage intake and shelter space. The program allows for animals found in the field with a microchip or tag to be returned to its owner without ever going to the shelter.

Veterinary care at the shelter is being provided by relief vets, Dr. Kelly Fry and Dr. Melissa Montgomery, through July.

City Engineering and WIN staff were advised to start working on design plans for an expansion of the shelter which will include the land south of the current facility. Dwain concluded his report.

Commissioner Chair Savage commented that she is appreciative of the work being done, especially given the intensity of the situation and emergency like manner in which decisions had to be made.

Foster Placement of Animals Held for Cruelty Confiscation - Kat Weston, Animal Placement Coordinator

Kathryn (Kat) Weston thanked Assistant District Attorney Leah Asberry for working with shelter staff on moving the process forward and finding a legal path to placing confiscated animals who are still considered evidence into foster care. Mrs. Weston also thanked the kennel staff, volunteers and community partners who have long advocated for these animals. There are currently nine (9) confiscated dogs at the shelter because the bond forfeiture process was not followed. Staff can only provide the animals with basic care.

Foster care is a legal extension of the shelter's capacity of care. Mrs. Weston stated that she is working on revamping the foster agreement and writing policy to mitigate the risk of the animals being injured, harmed, or encountering any problems. The goal is to fit animals with well vetted foster homes to receive humane long-term care, in our jurisdiction, where staff can get the animal back to the shelter if needed.

Mrs. Weston thoroughly reviewed the policy with Commissioners. She ended her presentation with a video of Ruby, a foster dog who is thriving in her new foster home.

Commissioner Kunzweiler asked what happens to animals if the owner's rights are terminated. Mrs. Weston advised that the foster would get first option to adopt.

Commissioner Ballenger thanked Mrs. Weston for her work and asked about foster capacity. It was explained that based on availability, trained fosters are contacted on a rotating basis to avoid burnout. Cruelty animals have special needs so fosters would be chosen based on their capacity to meet those needs. There are currently over 100 fosters.

Commissioner Ballenger requested clarification regarding the statement under Criteria for Placement that "physical or medical evidence cannot be compromised if an animal is placed in foster care." She did not believe the wording clearly explained that an animal can be medically stable without being able to be placed with a foster that did not have the capacity to ensure the animal's healing continued. Commissioner Ballenger offered to work on the policy wording.

Commissioner Ballenger also asked what it would take to get the policy passed. Mrs. Weston explained that the policy would be included in an agreement for fosters to sign and be part of the foster handbook. The policy does not need to go through the City Council or Mayoral approval process. Implementation is contingent on ADA Asberry's approval on the legalese so that cases are not compromised.

Competitive Sealed Proposal - Jack Blair, Mayor's Chief of Staff and Commissioner Susan Savage, Commission Chair

Jack Blair discussed the Competitive Sealed Proposal (CSP) process. On February 13, 2020, the city issued a request for CSP for management of the City Animal Shelter. Two (2) pre-bid meetings and facility tours were attended by over a dozen interested parties and generated a lot of follow-up questions. Three (3) proposals were submitted on April 8, 2020: City of Tulsa Animal Welfare Staff, Brandywine

Valley SPCA and Humane Society of Tulsa. A letter from the local SPCA recommended that the City maintain management of shelter functions and to formalize partnerships with other agencies.

A panel (Jack Blair, Commissioner Savage, Terrie Correll - Tulsa Zoo Management, Inc., Abby Moreno – OU Tulsa), reviewed the proposals and interviewed the three respondents. Results of an OU Tulsa analysis that evaluated eleven (11) animal shelters from around the country and interviewed fifteen (15) animal welfare shelter professionals served as a benchmark for review. The panel recommended that the City retain direct responsibility of shelter management with the caveat and solid commitment expressed in the proposal to address specific deficiencies in current shelter operations.

The panel determined that close coordination between shelter and field staff is a significant factor in the success of an animal welfare systems. Mayor Bynum is inclined to support the panel's recommendation but has made it very clear that proceeding will not be business as usual. Some critical issues must be immediately addressed, namely shelter management. The staff proposal calls for complete organization change and new leadership that is "inclusive, transparent and accountable." The thrust of the staff proposal is really encouragement to tap into the full potential, ingenuities and passion of staff while operating more transparently in a way that really engages staff in the success of the shelter.

It is imperative that staff formalize subcontracts with partner agencies for certain specialized functions to help relieve some of the pressures on intake and focus on animal cruelty, law enforcement and open access shelter management. Inadequate facilities are really at the heart of the persistent challenges the shelter faces. Staff presented a smart approach of utilizing the city owned land to the south of the current facility to build an adoption center and make the entire facility more customer friendly. The panel recommended starting the process immediately with the funds on hand. Mr. Blair also noted that there is also some potential to engage private funders throughout the process.

After evaluating the attributes of the other respondents, the panel concluded that empowering and supporting city staff with the critical elements of success previously mentioned are the most likely to lead to long term success and development of a world class animal welfare system. Mr. Blair concluded his report.

Discussion ensued about the need for strong leadership, construction schedule, funding currently available and a real strategy for addressing issues. It was noted that the Commissioners will be part of the needed community engagement and fundraising. Mr. Blair also detailed the process of final approval of the panel's recommendation.

Animal Ordinance Revisions - Patrick Boulden, City Council's Administrator

Patrick Boulden reported that the Council's review of the Ordinance has been put on hold as long as we continue to practice social distancing. They are being very cautious to protect themselves and staff. There was some discussion around discussing the Ordinance chapter by chapter, but a consensus on how to proceed was not reached.

Spay & Neuter Subcommittee Update – Commissioner Robin Ballenger

Commissioner Ballenger reported that she is working on a report of the information received at the meeting held at Morton. The issues of disagreement will probably not be resolved, and she had questions on how to approach those. Commissioner Savage advised that review of the staff proposal may bring clarity to the issues and provide a more cohesive view of spay and neuter goals through partnership with other agencies.

**Humane Treatment and Animal Cruelty Enforcement Subcommittee Update -
Commissioner Teresa Burkett**

Commissioner Burkett has been working and consulting with others, including ACOs, Investigators and the Police. She has also been looking at other community's ordinance and reaching out to other animal welfare groups for best practices to include in the final report. State law supersedes local creating concern for police, ACOs and citizen advocates about the legal liability of rescuing animals in certain circumstances. We may be able to adopt policy to cover this issue, but not an ordinance. City resources is also a challenge and should be reviewed as Investigators reported not having enough funds to adequate investigate cases.

New Business

No new business was discussed.

Public Comment

Mayor Savage suspended public comments due to the newness of the meeting platform. She requested that comments, concerns, and questions be sent to Marshelle Freeman at mlfreeman@cityoftulsa.org for distribution to the Commissioners.

Adjourn

Commissioner Savage entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Kunzweiler motioned and Commissioner Ballenger seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

TAW UPDATES

Animal Welfare Commission Monthly Report

COVID-19

There are no major issues relating to COVID-19. Staff and the public are following all requirements outlined by the CDC and the City of Tulsa. Scheduling appointments for intake and adoptions has been working smoothly and as noted earlier will be implemented on a permanent basis.

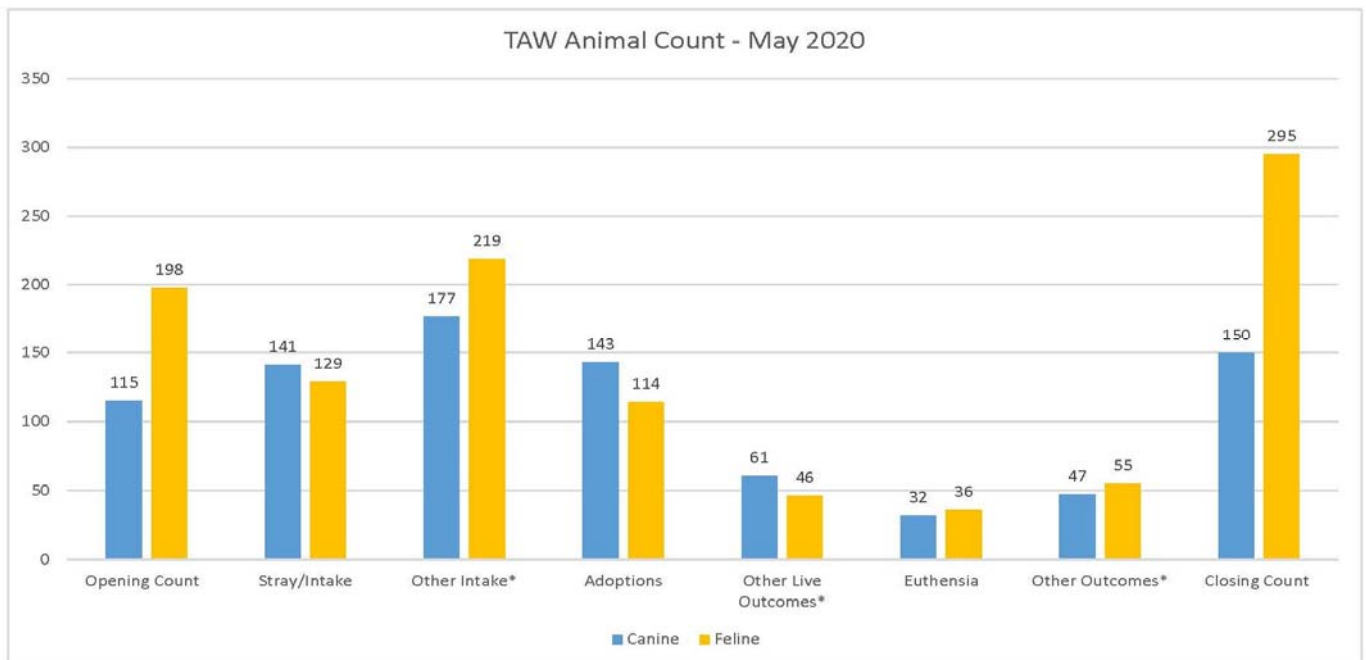
Return to Owner (RTO)



Procedures are being developed to fully implement a Return To Owner (RTO) program for all Field staff. The goal is to help TAW manage intake and shelter space as a means of avoiding unnecessary euthanasia. Equally important, as more and more shelters are implementing RTO programs from the field, they are also offering free or low-cost microchip to pet owners to significantly increase the RTO rate. If an animal is found and has identifiers such as an ID tag or microchip; the ACOs will be able return the animal to his or her home rather than having the animal enter the shelter.

Bond Forfeiture/Confiscation/Cruelty

In the last update, I mentioned the “Foster Agreement” was being reviewed and I apologize, it was the draft policy which was our goal to have ready for the Commission’s review by its June meeting. The draft policy was attached in your back up material. A new Foster Agreement is being developed between fosters and TAW to allow animals being held for an extended time to be moved to foster homes while the owner’s case is moving through the court system. Our goal is to have the draft agreement ready for discussion by the Commission during its July meeting.



TAW UPDATES CONTINUED

Bond Forfeiture/Confiscation/Cruelty

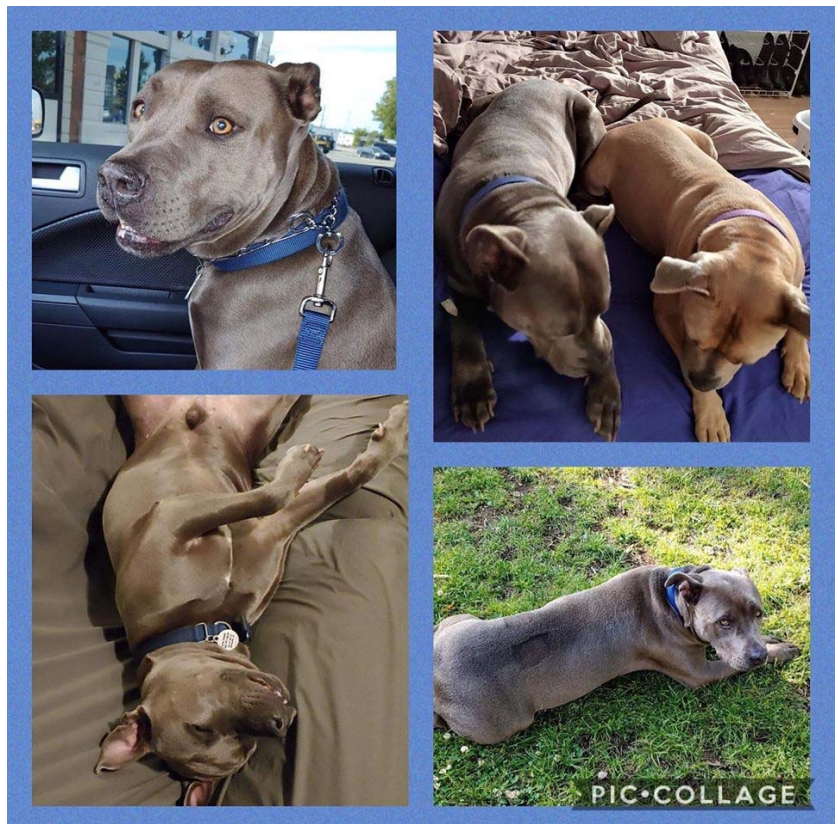
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TAW Center – Staff Veterinarian Services

TAW currently has 2 relief veterinarians performing surgeries at the shelter follow Dr. Melanie Foster’s departure. Dr. Kelly Frye and Dr. Melissa Montgomery agreed to work with TAW to ensure surgeries are being performed in a timely manner. With their help TAW’s veterinarian services is covered throughout the month of June. We are continuing our search for relief veterinarians until a new veterinarian can be hired for the Shelter.

Facility Expansion

City Engineering and WIN staff were notified in late May to move forward with designing the expansion of the Shelter to include the land due south of the shelter in the design footprint. The idea, developed through a staff engagement process – is to build a new adoption center with customer parking and administrative offices on the uplands immediately south of the current facility, and then rehab/refresh the existing facility for intake, kennels, and clinic. To move this project as quickly as possible, we will continue with gH2 as our design consultants. There is an available balance of \$554,552.29 for this project.



Slayer is one of the first beneficiaries of Paws in Need Tulsa (PINT’s) Heartworm Treatment Fund for TAW dogs! His awesome mom just informed us he graduated from treatment and is now Heartworm free !