

Approval of the meeting minutes from October 13, 2016

MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONAL CENTER FOR ANIMAL CARE AND PROTECTION HELD AT 11:00 A.M. ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2016, IN THE COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM LOCATED AT THE NOEL C. TAYLOR MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 215 CHURCH AVENUE, ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dan O'Donnell
Christopher Morrill
Barry W. Thompson
Captain Rick Morrison-Roanoke City

MEMBERS ABSENT: Gary Larrowe

OTHERS PRESENT: David Flagler
Andrea Trent
Tony Zerrilla

Mr. O'Donnell called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. and Ms. Trent called the roll.

Mr. O'Donnell made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 14, 2016 meeting; the motion was seconded by Mr. Morrill and carried by a voice vote, all members present voting in favor. Mr. O'Donnell made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 26, 2016 special meeting; the motion was seconded by Mr. Thompson and carried by a voice vote, all members present voting in favor.

The next item on the agenda was the operations update. Mr. Flagler commented that in July the live release rate was 98% for dogs and 52.1% for cats with 15,600 people finding RCACP using the google search. In August the live release rate was 91.9% for dogs and 68.6% for cats with 9,607 google searches. In September, the live release rate was 92.5% for dogs and 44% for cats.

For adoptions, there were 23 cats and 34 dogs adopted in July; 38 cats and 44 dogs in August and 26 cats and 51 dogs in September.

Mr. Flagler next made comments concerning two episodes of Feline Panleukopenia that they had at the Shelter and explained how they handled the situation. They are currently watching a third episode that developed this morning. During the outbreak, they stopped performing cat adoptions.

With regard to the average days in care, in this quarter the average for dogs was 17.5 days and 18.3 days for cats, which is an increase of three days per dog and four days for cats for the same period last year.

For the volunteer program, they had 173 hours at RCACP in July with one new volunteer. In August they had 153 hours and four new volunteers. In September they had 281 hours.

With regard to marketing, Mr. Flagler commented that Roanoke County did a segment on RVTV to highlight the Shelter. They have also held several adoption events. Angels of Assisi has partnered with them to supervise the volunteers so animals from the pound can be taken to their adoption events. Also, State Farm insurance is sponsoring a contest to raise funds for RCACP.

For grant updates, PetSmart Charities awarded \$42,500, of which \$2,500 will be allocated for a Pet Retention Program and \$40,000 for the emergency generator. Also, Mr. Flagler commented that he had recently applied for a \$30,000 grant to purchase an adoption trailer under the category of disaster preparedness.

This trailer will be able to house 12 animals and will be climate controlled with water and sewage tanks. When not in use for disasters, it can serve as a remote adoption trailer. He also applied for a \$10,000 grant to provide an incentive to people who are reclaiming their animals to have them spayed or neutered.

Under unfinished business, the contractors are completing the replacement of the roof and then will be installing the skylights.

The next item was the report from the Operations Committee. The Committee met on August 17th and Denise Hayes spoke to the group concerning how to define the RCACP and the RVSPCA. She wanted to make sure that the animal control officers were not giving the wrong information. Mr. Flagler updated the Committee on the PetSmart Charities grant.

Mr. Flagler next commented that Roanoke City Animal Control has requested that when an animal is brought in for rabies quarantine, they not be vaccinated. If that animal has a reaction to the vaccine, it may falsely appear that the animal is rabid.

With regard to the play area, Mr. Flagler commented he has identified the location, but it is currently being used as a staging area for the roofers. As soon as it is cleared, it will be fenced off. Also, a Scout who is working toward his Eagle Scout will be making a walking loop near the Shelter by cutting back the trees and clearing a trail. Another area that trails will be created is the entrance into the rear parking lot.

Under Special Report, Ms. Trent commented that Mr. Flagler did some research with regard to accreditations and facilities. Because the facilities are so regulated by the State, he did not find any facility accreditations. However, he did find information on staff accreditations and in the past the staff utilized a program through PetSmart. The Program was curtailed, but several staff members were certified under the Program. They believe the program will be started back up the first of the year. There are other training options that Mr. Flagler and his staff are researching to be sure that training continues.

The next item on the agenda was the Fiscal and Administrative Operations report. Mr. Zerilla commented that the report was for the first quarter of the fiscal year. Revenues are where they should be at 25% of the annual budget. With respect to expenditures, some are high due to one-time bulk purchases to get discounts. On an overall basis, the actual expenses are \$304,226.16 compared to the budget of \$1.3 million, which is 23% of the year versus a target of 25%. If you add in the encumbrances excluding the roof, it still adds up to 23%.

With respect to the building improvements, the amount spent to date is \$188,000. If there are no change orders, the bid came in along with some alternatives and options at slightly under \$200,000. In terms of reserve utilization, we do not have the final numbers, but will be getting those from the fiscal agent next month. It looked as though there was an ending reserve somewhere in the area of \$540,000.

The next item on the agenda was the Volunteer Task Force. Lisa O'Neil commented that they were asked to put together a Task Force composed of members close to the community, but not directly in Roanoke. The members consisted of a representative from the Salem Animal Shelter; a representative from the Lynchburg Humane Society; Megan Webb, who was appointed by the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies, which covers all of Virginia; Richard Birch, the Roanoke Animal Warden; Greg Fessler with PetSmart; Virginia Hudson, a citizen and Libby Carden with RCACP.

The Task Force reviewed the handbook and system on the computer that allows volunteers to sign up. They worked an ordinary day at the Shelter, went to an event at the pound and an off-site adoption event.

They spoke with the public, PetSmart and Petco Managers who oversee adoption events and to their customers who bring their dogs in the store. They spoke to clients who had adopted from the Shelter. Internally, they spoke to volunteers as a group and to a lot of people individually. They have one more person on their list to contact.

Ms. O'Neil next commented that everyone said that the structure and handbook were good. The computer system is good because it tracks hours and lets them sign in. It was suggested that events be put into the system for earlier sign-up. They found that the statistics were improving.

The structure is very good, but there are high levels of stress between the staff and volunteers and a lot of mistrust and concerns on both sides. This stress is due largely to the number of animals at the Shelter. She asked Mr. Flagler how many animals are at the Shelter at any given time and he responded 190. She commented further on what causes the stress and the symptoms of stress.

The Task Force recommends that the rules in the handbook need to be reviewed by staff and enforced. They also recommend a renewed respect for boundaries. The staff deserves to have a few moments during the day to do their daily work. With regard to the exchange of personal information with clients, they spoke with several clients who indicated they did not want to give out their Facebook information. Volunteers can ask, but it is not appropriate for clients to give their personal information to staff or volunteers outside of the normal paperwork.

Ms. O'Neil commented that she would like to see the Shelter opened every holiday. Angels of Assisi is opened on Christmas morning, but she realizes that this is a government facility. The Task Force recommends that the Sunday keycards be taken away and the program be ended.

Ms. O'Neil next referred to a Code of Culture from the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies which is for both staff and volunteers. They spoke with several organizations about their management of a volunteer program. She gave the example that if a business has 100 people that sign up for a volunteer program, you would not have one coordinator for 100 people. They recommends that the volunteer program at the Shelter start a mentorship program where a volunteer who has been at the Shelter for a while might have a team of 10 people to work with until the team members get comfortable with being a volunteer. They have some examples programs to go by.

A lot of concerns have been expressed by the volunteers concerning the leadership and staff. After they contact one more individual, she will submit a list of all of the comments to the Executive Committee.

With regard to the volunteers not working on Sundays, Ms. O'Neil commented that she hopes the partnership with Angels of Assisi will continue so that volunteers can assist with adoption events on Sundays or even Saturday afternoons. They recommend re-launching the "Adopt Mobile Campaign" during the holidays and the Shelter volunteers are invited to come to any event with Angels of Assisi.

Ms. O'Neil next commented that the numbers are better and everyone should take a step back, regroup, put some of the changes into place and realize that everyone involved with the Shelter is there for the same purpose.

Mr. Morrill commented that after questions, he would like to have the information from the Task Force adopted as a report which can be updated at each meeting to make sure the recommendations are being implemented.

Mr. O'Donnell commented that the handbook was revised, but it does not seem to be followed. He asked how well is the handbook understood and if new volunteers receive a copy of it along with some training. Ms. Carden responded that there is an orientation provided and the Chain of Command is marked in the handbook.

Ms. O'Neil commented that once the Code of Ethics are submitted to the Executive Committee, the volunteers can review them and decide if that is part of the culture they want to be involved with.

Mr. Thompson expressed appreciation to the Task Force and commended them for their efforts. This is a good step forward. Ms. O'Neil commented that the split between the SPCA and the Shelter was a big undertaking with a lot of changes. Then the volunteer program was opened and the rules were not being enforced which created a recipe for disaster. We have come so far and there is a lot of momentum. Everyone needs to respect each other and follow the rules and hopefully everything will come back together. We have a good foundation and structure in place.

Captain Morrison expressed thanks for the presentation. With law enforcement there is a mechanism in place to deal with officers' stress. But as Captain of the warden unit, he does not think there is anything in place for wardens and their stress. He plans to go back and work with his wardens to see if they can put things in place. When a human is stressed and has anxiety, it translates into the animals. He had never thought about that.

A question was asked regarding the rescues and should we be focusing on that as well. Ms. O'Neil commented that Angels of Assisi pulls from many different areas. The animals that they get from the Shelter are updated on their vaccinations, many times are fixed and micro-chipped and have been combo tested or heartworm tested and that is unheard of from any other pound.

Mr. Morrill next commented that the report and the combined comments will be reviewed by the Operations Committee and the Fiscal and Administration Committee and they will work with staff to put a plan together.

Under public comments:

Delores Joinder commented that she is the author of a petition that is circulating on Facebook and on-line called "Time for Change". Currently there are 3,683 signatures on the petition. She requested the Executive Committee to review the petition and commented that it is important that the volunteers at the RCACP are heard. She also commented that the meeting about the findings from the investigation was all about numbers; however, to the volunteers the animals are living, breathing souls. She also requested a review to see if the current staff at the RCACP is the correct staff and if they are in the right positions.

Denise Hays with the SPCA commented that the sign at the intersection of Orange Avenue and 13th Street needs to be updated. About 14 months ago, Omnisource contacted the SPCA and offered to pay for a new sign if they could put their logo and a directional arrow on it. At that time, they approached the City of Roanoke and were told it would not meet the current zoning requirements. She commented that Omnisource has contacted them again and she requested the City to allow an exemption to the zoning ordinances the sign can be updated.

Dee Sheppard commented she is concerned about the euthanasia at RCACP and how the volunteers are being treated.

Kila Divers commented that she would like for the animals that are attending Field of Dreams to be listed on Pet-Finder. She would also like for the website to show the personality of the animals. She commented on a dog that was adopted by a friend at an adoption event that has health issues and suggested that information be given out about the animals before they are made available for adoption. She also commented that the dog behaviors links do not work on the website. She would also suggest offering some workshops for new pet owners.

Lisa O'Neil commented that for the Feline Panleukopenia issue, maybe the RCACP and Angels of Assisi could do a low cost vaccination clinic. They are getting a new transfer truck on Tuesday that could be taken out and set up for this purpose. Also, they are doing a trial amnesty day in Botetourt and would like to try one in the City of Roanoke.

With no further business to come before the meeting, the meeting was adjourned at 12:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barry W. Thompson
Recording Secretary