

ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)
Meeting Minutes

Regular Meeting

Thursday

April 2, 2026

Members Present:

Cynthia Homen-City of Patterson representative
Melinda Martin-City of Modesto representative
Piper McKnight-Stanislaus County representative
Linda Ford-City of Hughson representative

Staff Present:

Jesus Mendoza, Deputy County Counsel
Lily Yap, Executive Director
Megan Morriss, Confidential Assistant IV

Guests and Dignitaries: None

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Secretary, Megan Morriss.

1. **Welcome:** Megan Morriss, Secretary
2. **Roll Call:** All members present.
3. **Public Comment Period (Limit of 5 minutes per person):** None
4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting:** None
5. **New Business:**
 - A. Meet the Advisory Committee members - (Discussion item)
 - a. Cynthia Homen-representing City of Patterson
 1. Retiree from Stanislaus County. Member of the senior commission. Has a passion for Animals Services. We can do some great things now that we have a quorum.
 - b. Melinda Martin-representing City of Modesto
 1. Has a background in Animal Services in the public and private sector. Worked in a setting of a public shelter partnered with a non-profit for the money gap. The non-profit did spay/neuter for free. She went from cleaning the kennels all the way up to shelter manager.
 - c. Piper McKnight-representing Stanislaus County
 1. Has an interest in the online representation of the Shelter. Has paid attention to the feedback online about the shelter. Animals are near and dear to her heart. Did

many years of fostering and transporting. Has previous Board experience as the chair of a historic commission and experience with the Brown Act.

- d. Linda Ford-representing City of Hughson
 - 1. 33+ years working at Animal Services. Stayed seeing things getting better every year. She knows the history of this agency. It's important to remember where the shelter has been and where the shelter is now. Huge reduction in euthanasia numbers over the years. Let's create a more positive online presence.
- e. Lily Yap-Executive Director-SASA
 - 1. Upcoming one year at SASA. She sees 2026 as a year of change. Has 15 years of animal welfare experience. Wants to look at addressing the overpopulation challenges in our jurisdictions. Also, we see that our communities have needs that need to be met.

B. Motion to Elect Piper McKnight as Chair and Linda Ford as Vice-Chair.
(City of Patterson representative/City of Modesto representative; 4-0)

C. Town Hall Recommendations – (Discussion item)

- a. Lily expressed that she wants the Advisory Committee to be about listening. Listening to the community and the shelter needs. Town halls would be more of an open forum; inviting guest speakers, prioritizing hot topics to address concerns and allowing for back-and-forth conversations. Confirmed it is state law that dogs be fixed prior to adoption. We have a Foster to Adopt program that allows dogs to go home and then make an appointment to come back for the spay/neuter. Lily highlighted current partnerships, such as Best Friends, supporting community cat needs.
- b. Linda Ford recommended resuming student education efforts through school visits and assemblies, using a staff-and-volunteer team. She also suggested promoting current SASA programs in these outreach efforts.
- c. Piper McKnight recommended increasing online promotion of shelter events and connecting with neighboring jurisdictions to learn effective practices. She noted the different demands between dog spay/neuter and cat TNR, and supported hosting a town hall meeting.
- d. Cynthia Homen encouraged greater promotion of available services with clear program guidelines. She stressed the importance of spay/neuter in reducing overcrowding and recognized the critical role of rescue partners. She also supported gathering public input through a town hall meeting.
- e. Melinda Martin emphasized the need for transparency in adoption timelines and the impact of prolonged shelter stays on

dogs. She suggested integrating this transparency into the adoption process and expanding education efforts from kindergarten through high school.

Public comment:

Nancy Klein-provided a handout.

- Has worked with the shelter since 2015.
- Stated that town halls, communication, and education are essential.
- Believes the shelter should feel welcoming, like a library.
- Expressed concern that the community may not understand the volume of dogs entering the shelter or the limited time available to find placement for many dogs.
- Questioned why any doors are locked on the shelter floor.
- Emphasized that animals need consistent human interaction.
- Called for data transparency and noted that three years of past shelter data appear to be missing.
- Asked what the shelter is doing to address owner surrenders, describing them as emotional and frustrating for all involved.

Kelly Ceglio-

- Asked the Committee to define its purpose and direction.
- Recommended engaging all customer groups, including rescues, and incorporating them into agendas.
- Highlighted the importance of town hall meetings and listening to community feedback, especially from those experiencing challenges firsthand.

D. Veterinarian Outreach – (Discussion item)

- a. Piper McKnight focused on identifying community pain points, including where residents can access services and whether low-cost options should be recommended. Suggested engaging local veterinarians with community ties who may be willing to partner, including exploring a cost-share model (e.g., shelter covering most of the spay/neuter cost and owners paying a portion). Recommended seeking vets motivated by community service and possibly reinstating voucher programs.
- b. Linda Ford proposed inviting veterinarians to a meeting, potentially aligned with Vet Appreciation Day on 6/18/26, as a “Meet the Director” event.
- c. Cynthia Homen encouraged partnerships with programs such as MJC Vet Tech, UC Davis, and other local schools. Suggested asking veterinarians to donate a day of service and emphasized building long-term relationships.
- d. Melinda Martin recommended partnering with the Animal League and SNIP buses. Noted that some area veterinarians already offer reduced rates to nonprofits and rescues and suggested exploring similar collaborations.

Public Comment:

Nancy Klein:

- Emphasized to leadership that hiring a second veterinarian is a top priority and recommended inviting local vets to the shelter.
- Stressed that Director-led veterinarian outreach carries the greatest impact.
- Noted that addressing spay/neuter challenges depends on strengthening veterinary capacity; suggested hosting vets at the shelter and providing catered meetings.
- Highlighted the importance of partnerships with SNIP Bus, Animal Protection League, MJC Vet Techs, and volunteers.
- Recommended having MJC Vet Tech students host a vaccine clinic at the shelter.

Kelly Ceglio

- Noted that the ASAC committee has an open veterinarian seat and emphasized the importance of filling it.
- Emphasized that hiring a second veterinarian remains a top priority and suggested each Board member contact their own vets to explore volunteer support.
- Suggested developing a local spay/neuter bus model similar to Stockton's Animal League.
- Highlighted that local vet tech programs may be eager to volunteer.
- Recommended contacting veterinarians to request rescue-rate spay/neuter discounts.

E. Code of Ethics/Rules of Behavior – (Discussion item)

- a. Lily clarified that the Code of Ethics applies to County staff, while the Rules of Behavior apply to the public. She noted the Rules of Behavior have not been updated since 2018 and may need review. She emphasized safety and mutual respect and mentioned exploring a future resource center through Pets for Life programming.
- b. Linda Ford emphasized that all staff should read and understand the Code of Ethics, as they represent the agency and County. She noted that Rules of Behavior guide public conduct and should be printed in a larger format and posted prominently in the lobby. She added that high emotions are common for visitors and that having visible reminders and accessible resources/referrals would be helpful. She suggested asking partners to share these resources as well.
- c. Melinda Martin asked whether adoption packets currently include resources and referrals and suggested adding them if they do not.

- d. Cynthia Homen recommended also listing resources and referrals on the website.

Piper McKnight asked whether SASA has an established brand. The group discussed having a logo and color scheme and the need for consistent branding to increase recognition.

Public Comment:

Nancy Klein:

- Asked whether the Rules of Behavior posted in the lobby are the current version.
- Suggested emphasizing communication in the Rules of Behavior, acknowledging the emotional nature of visits (e.g., surrendering or euthanizing a pet).
- Noted that the shelter environment can feel overwhelming and encouraged designing signage to be more welcoming and visually engaging (e.g., color, paw prints).

6. Adjournment: 7:18 pm

ATTESTED: Megan Morriss, Secretary
of the Animal Services Advisory Committee (ASAC)