

Meeting Minutes

Regular Meeting

Thursday

March 16, 2023

Members Present:

Scotty Douglas, Alternate for Joe Lopez, City of Modesto-Chair – Present
Jody Hayes Stanislaus County – Present
Merry Mayhew, City of Hughson – Present
Michael Pitcock, City of Waterford – Present
Ken Irwin, City of Patterson – Present
Alex Terrazas, City of Ceres – Present

Staff Present:

Sweena Pannu, Deputy County Counsel
Vaughn Maurice, Executive Director
Brian Sterkeson, Business Manager
Connie Hooker, Operations Manager

Guests and Dignitaries: None

The meeting was called to order at 9:00am by Chair, Scotty Douglas.

1. **Welcome:** Scotty Douglas
2. **Roll Call (Silent):** See above
3. **Presentations:**
 - A. Operations overview by Connie Hooker. Having become Operations Supervisor in September of 2022, Connie highlighted some of the operational issues she has witnessed over the last several years. Stanislaus Animal Services Agency has a capacity of 188 dogs. However, since September there have been 4812 dogs brought into the shelter, an average of 802 a month with a daily intake of 28. Presently we house an average of 210-220 dogs daily, and this trend continues. Since the end of CoVid we experienced a rapid increase in daily intake and there appears to be many contributing factors. Though our intake has been quite high for what seems like forever, our staffing levels would ebb and flow during these same time periods. CoVid wreaked havoc on our staff at every level, from Client Services staff who process everything for incoming citizens; to kennel staff who maintain the kennels, including feeding, watering, cleaning, and adoption counseling. Many days we ran on an absolute skeleton crew due to illness and other issues. Staff have been exceptional at trying to keep up with daily operations, including animal care, adoption, rescue and foster inquiries. We have finally filled positions in Client Services, and we are very excited to have five new staff members as of March 13th. The staff at Animal Service do amazing work considering there are other agencies, with the same intake numbers, that have double the staff. Despite all our challenges our adoptions are up 15% compared to the national adoption average, which is down 7%. This shows how great our team is doing even with all the challenges they have had to

overcome. Staff continue to do everything they are asked and have managed to weather the many storms over the last several months/years since the onset of CoVid. Our staff deserve a standing ovation for their commitment to helping the animals and the public.

There were no questions, but Stanislaus County requested Animal Services provide a chart showing shelter capacity and where we stand each month. This would be a helpful, quick overview providing Agency Board members an understanding of where we are at any given time.

4. Public Comment Period (Limit of 5 minutes per person): None

5. Minutes of Previous Meetings:

- A. Approved the Agency Board Meeting Minutes from January 19, 2023 (City of Hughson/City of Patterson; 6-0)

6. Correspondence: None

7. New Business:

- A. Approved staff to accept the California for All Animals grant for \$238,070 and approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Dogwood, so as to move forward with implementing a low-cost public spay/neuter program beginning in July 2023 for the 23/24 FY. The budget will be adjusted to reflect the income from the grant and the expenditure to Dogwood in the 22/23 FY budget. (City of Patterson/City of Waterford; 6-0)
- B. Approved a new schedule for public adoption hours. Hours will reflect closures on Mondays and Wednesdays at 5 pm (due to very little business being done between 5 and 6 p.m.) and increase adoption opportunities on Saturdays when SASA will open at 9 a.m. rather than noon. (City of Patterson/City of Hughson; 6-0)
- C. Accepted proposal to direct staff to bring a draft amendment to section 3.3 of the Stanislaus Animal Services Agency Joint Powers Agency (SASA JPA) Agreement, with respect to the Agency's manner of exercising its powers currently subject to the restrictions applicable to the City of Modesto being replaced by restrictions applicable to the County of Stanislaus. (City of Hughson/City of Patterson; 6-0)

8. Committee Reports: Executive Director – Vaughn Maurice

- i. As Connie mentioned, our intake trends are very high and in February we were unable to transport (in any direction) due to the weather. However, our adoptions for January remained high at 225 and in February at 204. Adoption trends have increased by 15% year over year.
- ii. SASA is excited to report that effective Monday we are fully staffed. Thank

you to the County for recruitment and retention plans that are very helpful. Being fully staffed should help our numbers.

iii. In January you'll remember our Social Media efforts reached one million viewers. This was due to a program reaching out to truck drivers to assist with our on-off dogs. It makes February look like we dropped 70% in Social Media views, but we have 306,000 in organic reach of our posts. Yulia does an amazing job on social media, specially since she is a 20 hour a week part-time/extra-help staff member. She really gets our name and images out there and is one reason our adoption numbers are so high.

iv. Regarding regular media, I was at Fox 40 a total of three times in January and February, including the puppy bowl on Superbowl Sunday which was a lot of fun. I visited channel 3 twice and channel 13 once. We are getting a lot of regular media exposure and the regular media around here loves us. Any time I have a story, they always return my calls.

iv. We applied for PFF funding for two vehicles for our canvassers. I went to the PFF committee to present our case and they granted us \$10,200 for both vehicles, so we will be going to the San Joaquin Pollution Control district for a grant from them. They offer \$20,000 per vehicle, so we will be able to add that to the funding. To make up the difference, because it won't be quite enough to get electric vehicles, we are going to add \$14,000 to the budget that Brian is working on, \$7,000 per car to get our electric vehicles. Basically, at the end of the day the JPA is only paying \$14,000 for our canvassing vehicles. PFF funds are calculated by population growth. Population growth since 2002-2023 turned out to be 12%, so that's how they calculated our funding.

v. We have two programs starting back up that have not been in effect since CoVid. The first is Workforce Development – Welfare to Work Program, we've hired an individual who is starting next week. She will be working full time in the clinic at 38 hours a week. She will be free to us, Workforce Development funds the position. Within six months or so she will have the skills to work in a veterinary clinic and will be able to get a job. Experienced veterinary employees are tough to get, so this will be a win/win situation. We get free labor, and she gets experience which will assist her in the job market. The next program to return in the FETCH Program through the Sheriff's Office. We will have inmates assigned to assist our Animal Care Specialists with feeding animals and cleaning kennels on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays.

vi. Lastly, I just want to give a quick update on our color-coding program. Basically, we give 35 days minimum notice on any animal who comes in healthy and adoptable. When an animal comes into our facility the first thing we do is determine if the animal is healthy and adoptable and 95% are, and they enter the color process. They are green for 14 days, if not adopted in that time period they go to yellow for 14 days, and if they have not been adopted in that time period, they go to red for 7 days. At the end of that red period is when they are at risk. We then provide a secondary warning (usually these animals have been here for 2 months) when we know an animal needs to be placed elsewhere soon, we reach out to our rescue partners letting them know we need help, and this is a desperate situation. An example is a couple weeks back when we had dozens of animals come in over a 2-week period and then Modesto needed to bring in 7 more animals due to an apartment fire, we reached out to our partners with a

secondary notification and our partners really stepped up. Our rescue groups and partners do an amazing job. Since I have been here, we've never had a list where we didn't have every animal taken care of by the end of the time on that list.

Informational: Business Manager - Brian Sterkeson

- i. Budget looks different this year first because we wanted to get you a draft and secondly because there has been a change in Stanislaus County's financial reporting system which caused some shifting of account numbers that don't quite line up. Budget challenges this year, I am new to the position and Stanislaus County just changed to Oracle Cloud and we are still working to minimize reporting issues. So today, we are providing a draft of what the budget estimate will look like. To review budget, you will notice the left-hand side is the current 22/23 FY budget and to compare, the 23/24 FY proposed draft budget is on the right-hand side. Page 2 will show the breakout of proposed operating costs to the Board and members. Accounts for salaries and benefits did line up and did not change in the switch. This allows you to see an apples-to-apples comparison. You can see we jumped just over \$300,000 in salaries and wages. The increase is based on being fully staffed, and includes the 5% increase that was not included in the 22/23 FY budget that all employees received for the start of the employee retention plan. Additionally, we are re-implementing the canvassing team, which increases part-time staff by four, and I estimated a 3% cost of living increase for all staff in the proposed draft budget. Another piece is the employee's choice bonus which is another part of the employee retention plan. Employees have a choice of a cash bonus, increased vacation time or having that cash go into a deferred compensation program. Bottom line is FY 22/23 Expenditures are \$5,603,370 and the FY 23/24 proposed draft budget is \$6,385,869. Our projected revenue for FY 22/23 may be down slightly, however that may change because some of our revenue may not be recognized with the new financial reporting system. We will update the Agency Board as time progresses.

Hughson asked about Revenue and Recovery. Brian stated we now have an Account Clerk II that will be dedicated to work with Revenue and Recovery cleaning up some of the records and work closely in bringing in revenue from those past due accounts.

Another question was, did SASA roll up accounts or was that due to Oracle is here now and you don't have a choice, so this is what you're going to do. Brian responded it was Oracle. Additionally, there were some state requirements to simplify reporting, and with nobody here, in my roll, we didn't have much of a say, that may change. In the meantime, I have been working with the auditors and we will have tracking mechanisms in place to track the old accounts that were blended over. This way we will be able compare year to year.

Brian added SASA budgeted for the purchase of a vehicle in 22/23 but due to the pandemic and global supply chains, specifically the chips, the projected cost for that vehicle jumped about \$14,000 so we bought the vehicle out of the 22/23 budget but still needed the truck bed

modification which has been added to the proposed draft 23/24 FY budget along with the \$14,000 needed to cover the gap for the electric vehicles needed for the canvassing team. PFF funds have not been recognized yet, but when they do come in we will roll those in too.

CAP charges are roughly equivalent to this year. There is a slight increase in health benefits. Brian is willing to drill down and show where accounts are blended.

Modesto and Stanislaus County reminded everyone that in previous years there were Ad Hoc committees to review the budget, trends, costs, etc. and they would like to see this continue. After some discussion County Counsel provided the language for the needed motion.

Approved the creation of an Ad Hoc committee to consider and discuss budget for this cycle and to report to the JPA Board. The Ad Hoc committee will consist of City of Modesto, Stanislaus County, City of Hughson, and will meet in the next few weeks. (City of Modesto/City of Waterford; 6-0)

9. Member Referrals: None

10. Closed Session: None

11. Adjournment: Adjourned meeting at 9:56am-(City of Waterford/City of Patterson 6/0)

ATTESTED: Linda Ford, Clerk of
the Governing Board
of the Joint Powers Agency
of the Stanislaus Animal Services Agency
State of California