

**THE GOVERNING BOARD
OF THE JOINT POWERS AGENCY OF THE
STANISLAUS ANIMAL SERVICES AGENCY (SASA)**
Meeting Minutes

Regular Meeting

Thursday

February 15, 2024

Members Present:

Michael Pitcock, City of Waterford-Chair – Present
Allison Van Guilder, City of Modesto – Present
Jewel Warr, Alternate for Stanislaus County – Present
Merry Mayhew, City of Hughson – Present
Doug Dunford, City of Ceres – Present

City of Patterson – Absent

Staff Present:

Jesus Mendoza, Deputy County Counsel
Vaughn Maurice, Executive Director
Connie Hooker, Operations Manager
Megan Morriss, Confidential Assistant

Guests and Dignitaries: None

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 am by Chair, Mike Pitcock.

1. **Welcome:** Mike Pitcock-Chair.

2. **Roll Call (Silent):** See above.

3. **Presentations:**

- A. Connie Hooker provided an overview of some of the services SASA provides which includes seizures. The horses recently seized had been on a property where we had seized horses in late 2021. The horses had been fed grass with no nutritional value, leading to malnutrition and poor flesh conditions. A veterinarian had come out and provided specific details for care and feeding schedules. One horse has a crack in it's hoof with bone coming through, one had burrs in it's mane and tail, one had it's spine showing through, which means they are obviously being neglected and are in bad shape. A nursing colt is severely malnourished. These 18 horses were seized because the owner did not follow through on the care instructions provided by the veterinarian. Four staff, Oakdale Equine and two other people assisted with the seizure.

We arrived at 9:15 a.m. and were there until 5:30 p.m. As previously stated, this is the second seizure from this person and is a sad story. Officers are doing well in pursuing these cases. It is costly to feed and provide medical care. Presently we have a good relationship with the District Attorney who is assisting our pursuit. Oakdale Equine has been wonderful and are housing 12 of the 18 seized. One of the horses had to be euthanized. Previously we seized 149 Bull Dogs/Frenchie's which is very time consuming and impactful to staff and the shelter. We are hoping this case results in some jail time as there are other agencies that have been trying to catch this lady and SASA is much further along. Officers are getting knowledge and becoming better at handling these large cases and seizures. It is a lot different from loading up a dog. A horse can be 1500 pounds and dangerous.

4. Public Comment Period (Limit of 5 minutes per person):

Marissa Santoyo requests the following: Advertise free adoption events a week in advance. Screen adopters. Additional staff and training needed. Clerical team needs to be more knowledgeable. More pop-up events, home checks and fosters are needed. Shelter needs to expand to accommodate more animals.

Claudia Henley, a shelter volunteer mentions: There are not enough staff to assist people. Once a dog is pulled, they must wait in line, and it is always very busy and sometimes clients get so frustrated they leave. Open on Sunday for those that are out of the area, expand hours. Euthanize on Sunday. Give Rescues and opportunity to find adopters over the weekend. Fostering/Adopting/Rescued animals without being spayed or neutered can cause additional problems, like escaping and breeding. Seems to be taking months to get these animals spayed or neutered. Consider a voucher so they can see another vet to get them spayed or neutered rather than returning here for surgery at later dates.

Glenda Rojas shares the Rescue Sanctuary in El Salvador is better equipped for animals where it is a crime to dump, which includes jail time. Locally some that are calling the shelters are told to leave the animal on the street. Solutions for dumped animals – need shelter, address back yard breeders need tougher laws, make spay or neuter more affordable, additional vouchers, and more animal laws to punish for animal abandonment. Glenda says she is at our service for fund raisers.

5. Minutes of Previous Meetings:

- A.** Motion to approve the Agency Board Meeting Minutes from December 21, 2023 (Stanislaus County/City of Hughson; 5-0)

6. **Correspondence:** None

7. **New Business:**

A. Item 7A, basically we want Stanislaus County regulations to stipulate that unlicensed unaltered dogs that are picked up by Animal Services shall undergo spay or neuter, before release, with associated costs being paid by the owner. Licensed unaltered dogs picked up for the first time within a three-year period will be released intact. Those impounded a second time shall be spayed or neutered, unless exempt. Just looking at some bigger picture stuff quickly, of the 4775 that entered our shelter in 2023, just over 4000 were stray dogs. Of the 4000 stray dogs this ordinance would not necessarily affect all dogs. In fact looking at January, the most recent month we just closed out, it would have affected 6 dogs, in total, which doesn't seem like a lot, but if only half of those dogs are responsible for litters and those litters are 8-10 puppies each, it really adds up. Typically, we would be looking at 11 dogs on average per month. So, we're not talking a huge number but certainly it is the small steps here and there that can really add up. Looking at similar laws in the State of California we identified Contra Costa County which basically we modeled our ordinance after, but in addition to Contra Costa, San Mateo County, Los Angeles County, Tulare County, the City of Visalia, the City of Oakland and the City of Berkley all have very similar laws in place. We talked at length with the Los Angeles County Executive Director, and she had nothing but positive things to say. She did say that there was for the first six months or so, lots of people complaining. There are certainly people that get upset about these things and she did say that was a factor, but after a while it died down, and its been a pretty effective ordinance to have in place.

This poor lady, 93 years old was a case that happed in Modesto in September. She was mauled and killed by two dogs, fully intact. We had the two dogs here unfortunately for three months, awaiting final court approval for us to say goodbye to them and put them to sleep. They were fully intact, and this isn't a one off. Fully intact males are 84.4% more likely to create a fatal dog attack. What that says is a big focus of this ordinance, while it does do many things, public safety is a big part of it. This study was done by the Journal of American Veterinary Medical Association, an in-depth study on dog attacks and dogs not being neutered or not being spayed as well. Up in the top right-hand corner there was a four-year study that happened in Harris County which

is the county that encompasses Houston, but this is an unincorporated area, I personally found this kind of fascinating, I was a little surprised that intact females are 126% more likely to inflict and unprovoked bite as compared to spayed females. Whereas intact males are 78% more likely to bite, compared to their neutered male counterparts. So you see altered males and females are less likely to bite. This doesn't affect just stray dogs, but also dogs in the home. Half of the dog bites reported in this particular area were children 12 years and younger, and it was kids bitten by their own family dog, which may have been less, had they been altered.

So, in addition to the public safety issue, I believe there are several reasons why I believe this would be a helpful ordinance. Obviously, population control which we deal with every single day here at the shelter. The number of excess dogs in our community is staggering and very hard to deal with. There is also a lot of health benefits for both spayed and neutered animals. Those that do get fixed will live longer. They have less likelihood of getting different types of cancers, it will cost the owner a lot less money in the long run for veterinary visits they won't have to make. Behavioral improvements we already talked about, but in addition to being aggressive, a big behavioral improvement is it will be a lot less likely to want to run away. The instinct that dogs have, to run away, is because they are fully intact, and they are looking to find a partner. So, they will be less likely to want to get out and make puppies. Of course, a big one is the financial savings for each of the JPA partners. You pay for every dog that comes in, so fewer dogs coming in means you are paying a little bit less, and every little bit helps.

These are the basic reasons. The staff is recommending the JPA Board endorses and recommends the County Board of Supervisors that the following section be added to Title 7 of the Stanislaus County Animal Code. With that Vaughn read Agenda Item 7A. One thing added regarding the cost a couple of months ago we passed the idea of helping people in setting up a program to do \$50 spay or neuter for dogs, \$25 for cats, this would also qualify to that. I know the website wasn't updated at the time that Jewel and I talked, but it is updated now. Yes our spays and neuters are backed up, but we are working hard and covering every area that we can to try and find a spay neuter veterinarian and part time spay neuter veterinarians.

Board Members have some questions and concerns: Jewel requested additional education first before passing Agenda Item 7A. Vaughn says not at present but assures everyone that SASA will be stepping up education, including Modesto Bee publishing and Fox 40. Jewel mentions there is already an incentive in reduce licensing costs for altered dogs, however SASA is backed up on spay/neuter surgeries and wonders if that will be a concern, and will you have more pets waiting in your shelter if that is a requirement. Vaughn advises temporary licensing is provided until surgeries are caught up and right now it is touch and go. With the addition of the new RVT interviews, those hired will be of great help to the veterinarian. Currently we have six applicants, and they will be of great help to the Veterinarian, who should only have to focus on surgery. Merry asks if owners can get their dogs out and take it to their personal veterinarian for spay or neuter surgery. Connie adds they too could get a temporary license. Jesus reminds everyone that Vaughn will discretion on a case-by-case basis. Mike adds if the owner doesn't have funding to spay or neuter their dog, they may say just keep the dog. Vaughn says it happens daily. We give options every day, like adopt the dog after it's fixed. This is done on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, Vaughn can approve free adoptions through different programs.

Ayes vote (4) - Waterford/Modesto/Hughson/Ceres

Noes vote (1) – Stanislaus

Absent (1) – Patterson

8. Committee Reports:

- A.** Executive Director report: Vaughn advises SASA is making steps in the right direction. In 2023 live intake was 7206, or 20 animals per day (which of course ebbs and flows), including owned animals (which are not being turned away) and police in take.

We had 9073 calls for field services (with just our 6 Animal Services Officers), which resulted in 248 law enforcement assists, which are very detailed, and takes a lot of officer time, this is an average of 5 per week. A sad statistic is 1169 dead animals were picked up.

Dog Intake trends

3787 in 2021

4014 in 2022

4775 in 2023

So, you can see we are trending in the wrong direction. Our intake is up 27% however adoptions are up 28% and rescue is up 18%.

Adoptions have been up so much due to our Free adoption events (sponsored by donors) which are working very well.

In 2022 we had 1400 dogs transported and in 2023 we had 1656. Chandra and a second full time person have been added to work rescue and transports. SASA works with Pilots and Paws, Dog is my CoPilot and Wings of Rescue. We are reaching far and wide to get these animals out of here and we are having some success.

Our 2023 Sheltering Intake and Release Comparison for dogs is impressive. We had 4775 dogs come in with a live release rate of 94%. Best Friends considers a live release rate of 90% and above as a no kill shelter. So, we are maintaining our no kill status and we did this with just 45 paid staff. Looking at similar organizations with much, much more staff, we are certainly doing a great job for what we have. Ventura County is a county similar in number but still significantly less in volume, beat us just by a smidge in live release rates but did so with almost double the staff. Sacramento County shelter who is most like our intake is at an 86% live release rate. Presently we are doing well. We could do much better with more paid staff, there is no question. I agree with the ladies, when people come in they can't find someone to talk to, the service is slow, people can only work so fast, but we are doing good with what we have.

We have lots of free dog adoption events. Not included in the fund raiser number that I showed you before, we have some corporate sponsors that have been doing some great things with us. One being the Yogurt Mill. The Yogurt Mill has a frozen treat for dogs, which is kind of cool and they sponsored an adoption event Saturday for us, from 9 am to 5 pm with 42 dogs adopted. Another opportunity we took for free adoptions was our Out of Space event. We did a big Star Wars themed event, which was a lot of fun, and people at Fox did a really good job with our Out of Space Theme. In addition to our free adoption events, we want to try to do adoption specials on Sundays. We will open on a trial basis from noon till 4:00 p.m. just for adoptions. We will promote it as Adoption Special Sundays. We will advertise and have signage so it will be clear that we will just be doing adoption specials on Sundays, eliminating a need for any staffing changes. Shelter staff that are here on Sundays can assist with adoptions and will perform an abbreviated adoption process and hand the paperwork off to the office staff on Mondays for completion of the adoption process. We are doing this primarily because we are looking at our offsite adoptions at PetCo on Sundays. We tried to get volunteers to assist, making that a volunteer activity and ended up with one volunteer that came for half a shift once. Since, it's been paid staff exclusively at PetCo without many dogs getting adopted out. PetCo is a boon for cats, and we get a lot adopted out. They are inside seven days a week, but when we are

down there on Sundays, we are not seeing dogs getting adopted. So, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to be paying staff to be down there with no results. We may, once every 8 weeks or so, send the adoption trailer down to PetCo and make it a bigger special. But we will stop every Sunday at PetCo when we start our Special Sunday adoptions here. Our first event will be on March 3, 2024.

9. Informational: None

10. Adjournment: Adjourned meeting at 10:16am. (City of Hughson/City of Ceres; 5-0)

Adjourned: 9:50 am

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