

ANIMAL CONTROL COMMISSION

Minutes of the Regular Meeting

November 24, 2008

A regular meeting of the Fairbanks North Star Borough Animal Control Commission was held at the Borough Administrative Center Chizmar Room at 8:09 Pioneer Road, Fairbanks, Alaska. Ronnie Rosenberg, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ronnie Rosenberg, *Chair*
Shellie Severa, *Vice Chair*
Mary Ann Fortune
Jamie Marschner
Karen Wilson

GUESTS PRESENT:

Sandy Klimaschesky
Lynn Orbison
Pat Streeter

ABSENT:

NONE

STAFF PRESENT:

Matt Ruger, Animal Control Manager
Rachel Seale, Secretary

The agenda for this meeting was unanimously approved with no comments, corrections or additions to the agenda.

The minutes of the October 27, 2008 meeting were approved with no additions, corrections, or amendments.

Rosenberg, while reviewing the agenda, noted that the agenda is now posted on the Borough website. The Animal Control Commission (ACC) agendas were being posted under "public meetings" but now there is an "Animal Control" link. The recording of tonight's meeting will be posted as a sound file on the Borough website.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Rosenberg noted that the ACC received written public comment via email from Jeanne Olson, received on November 17, 2008. Olson asked that this email be submitted as written public comment. Rosenberg made copies for commissioners and the email was submitted as written public comment and part of the official record.

SHELTER REPORT:

Matt Ruger presented the Shelter Report.

The new ACC meeting secretary, Rachel Seale, was introduced and welcomed by the commission.

Ruger discussed old business first. The new Admissions Clerk began work on the 19th; the interviews for this position were mentioned in the October meeting. Animal Control is operating at 100% of its authorized staffing again.

Animal Control had another dog from the Farmers' Loop/UAF transfer site turned in by a citizen on October 28th, which generated some questions about how long the shelter would keep her. The decision process is the same for all animals regardless of how they're turned in: daily assessment of temperament/behavior, health and space. The dog was kept until November 20th and then she was rescued due to space.

Rosenberg clarified that the dog, Camille, was in a foster home, and Ruger further clarified that she was in a rescue's foster home and not adopted yet to a permanent home.

For several weeks space has been an issue for the shelter as well as the rescues due to the usual cold weather influx, military deployments, and slightly lower return-to-owner rate. Adoption has remained steady, however, and the shelter has been able to rescue and foster enough animals that the increased intake hasn't dramatically affected their euthanasia numbers. Currently, the euthanasia rate for Animal Control for the year is 13.46%.

The FEMA process for the August floods has been completed and the Borough stands to recoup up to \$313k to be distributed back to the departments after the beginning of the year. Ruger did not have any prospective figures for Animal Control to present.

The additional budget request list—including vehicle and equipment requests and capital requests developed by directors—is December 2. Ruger mentioned he will be out the remainder of this week and forwarded his budget request information to the Chief of Staff.

Ruger clarified what he requested: new paint for the outside of the shelter because of peeling and degrading of current paint; pavement work where the vehicles park due to the damage done to the pavement by trees and brush that are pushing through; replacement of the back gate on the dog yard; repair and repainting of the cat condo area because the walls are falling apart, paint is peeling and door frames are rusting out of the floor; and paving of the parking lot in the back area. The high-priority repairs are the building repairs and one vehicle (AC1) is due for replacement. Ruger requested that it be replaced with a super-duty truck (3/4 – 1-ton) so that Animal Control can better haul the stock trailer when fully loaded.

Rosenberg reminded Ruger to pull the heater out of the back compartment that was separately purchased and Ruger assured her that they always pull accessory heaters and Cache Campers off before they go to auction.

Fortune referred back to the painting and repair of the cat condo area and inquired whether Animal Control would be able to safely keep the same population of cats during this repair and if there is a place they can safely be housed to escape the fumes while the paint dries.

Ruger said in his budget request regarding this repair, he asked that the cat area be painted or covered with waterproof material (e.g., marine epoxy paint, vinyl covering, etc.).

Fortune commented that epoxy paint has a toxic smell.

Ruger stated that this project wouldn't be done until summertime and then the cats could be moved outside. Ruger further explained that this is assuming that this repair gets put into the budget. Ruger also mentioned the area between Davis Road and the shelter, being made into a visiting area. The justification for making this area a visiting area is that it would provide a secure place for people to visit with animals outside and free up the backlog in the visitor's room. It would also allow local organizations to do animal behavior training.

Rosenberg asked if Ruger requested for any more staffing in terms of a 6th officer in his budget requests.

Ruger noted that these budget requests were for the capital budget which is only for equipment (including real property) and vehicles.

Continuing with items from previous meetings, Barry's replacement, David Gibbs, the Emergency Operations Manager, accepted the Director's position the second week of November. However, Ruger will continue to report directly to the Chief of Staff until the vacant Emergency Operations Manager position is filled.

Rosenberg asked if she could request that when David Gibbs has the time, maybe in January or February, that he come to lunch and to an ACC meeting to get acquainted w/ the commissioners.

Ruger mentioned that Gibbs is very interested in getting involved. Ruger believes it goes without saying that they will lunch with Gibbs.

Rosenberg acknowledged that she has met Gibbs but would just like to talk to him about how the fund works and to formally invite him to lunch and a commission meeting.

Shelter Operations training has been confirmed for September 28 – October 1 of next year [2009]—one two-day class for staff and one two-day class specifically for managers. It is on the books at Pioneer Park and is posted on the American Humane Association website.

The shelter management software (Chameleon) has arrived.

The commission is thrilled with the long awaited shelter management software; it had been in the works since the beginning of Ruger's employment.

Ruger further explained that the shelter management software has been installed on the proxy server and the workstation software is installed on the machines at the shelter. Staff is familiarizing themselves with it as time allows until December 8th. From December 8th-15th the trainer will provide formal on-site training for the staff and the staff will go to paper for a few days while the data transfer (data moved from the old system to the new system) is occurring. Once the data transfer has been completed and everything has been working properly on the proxy server, the staff in computer services will migrate the program from the proxy to the main server and Animal Control will be fully active with the new system.

Fortune asked: "How will this (the new software) change our intake pattern? Will this have any effect on the, uh, intake area?"

Ruger answered that at some point they would like to make some physical changes to the intake area and that is part of the strategic plan; however, he clarified that the new program is just a different software program that will get rid paperwork. It can track animals as they come in on real time.

Rosenberg supports the new shelter management software capability to have updates in real time because animals will be on website as soon staff gets the animals entered, rather than the current system that is based on volunteers entering animals into the website.

Rosenberg stated that when everything is up and running this should be advertised in the News-Miner, the radio and television so that the public can be aware that the shelter's website is updated more quickly. This allows owners of missing animals to check the website that day or the next to see if their animal is posted on the website.

Ruger continued that the new shelter software allows better updating of information and that the staff will experiment with the best methods to upload updates.

Rosenberg mentioned that this software will also allow people who are looking to adopt animals know whether the animal on the website is still available by the time they drive down to the shelter.

Ruger added that the new software has modules you can add so that if there is a terminal installed at a local feed or pet store, people could look through the shelter's records to see what animals are at the shelter and available for adoption. Ruger acknowledged that setting up a terminal would have its expenses and that Animal Control would see what the public wants first. Ruger also brought up that the software could dispatch directly to shelter vehicles.

Ruger mentioned the trainer for this new software said he will train staff for a week but teaching and learning the entire system in one week is impossible because of its many capabilities

Rosenberg wanted Ruger to remind the software trainer that roughly half of the community still utilizes dial-up and that Janice currently loads quickly onto www.petfinder.com because she uses small picture files.

Ruger responded that they will not be loading with large files (e.g. tiff), and so the time to upload/download pictures should be no different than it is now. Rosenberg clarified that the pictures will be taken with a web cam and that web cams do not have a high resolution; therefore, the picture uploads on the Petfinder website will still continue to be smaller files that upload quickly onto people's computers.

Ruger handed out template copies of the new contract between Animal Control and local rescue organizations. Ruger noted that everyone involved agrees that the new contract is a better document.

Ruger followed up with Rosenberg's announcement at the beginning of the meeting that the Animal Control Commission agenda—as well as the approved meeting minutes and meeting sound file—are now posted on the Fairbanks North Star Borough website. He noted that after his vacation the evening's sound file will be uploaded and available on the website and, with the exception of this meeting because of his upcoming vacation, the goal is to have the recordings posted the day after the meetings.

Rosenberg noted that the other commissioners may submit agenda items to Ruger or Rosenberg a few weeks before a meeting and they can go on the agenda. It must be a few weeks before the meeting because Ruger and Rosenberg submit the agenda to the Clerk's office and Computer Services for public posting at least a week before the meeting. If an agenda item is not posted in time it will be postponed to another meeting. Commissioners may also comment on items not on the agenda during the commissioner comments portion of the meeting.

Ruger clarified that for a Monday meeting the agenda can be published no later than the prior Tuesday but to post it by Tuesday he needs it for submission by the previous Wednesday. The agenda is posted in two places: In the Borough News and on the "Animal Control" link on the FNSB website. The minutes will take roughly a month to be posted on the website because they have to be approved and will be archived on the website for several years.

Rosenberg stated that the meeting has already been posted in the News-Miner and that the Borough has a public meetings ad and there is a sequence in how the ads are put in.

Ruger concurred and added that this [the sequence of public meetings] is why he needs a two-week heads-up for the mandatory News-Miner posting.

Orbison returned to the subject of the new software and asked if the posting of strays with the new software will differ from Petfinder.

Ruger replied that the new software will automatically import the information to several websites, including Petfinder, alleviating the need for someone to manually update the website.

Orbison stated that strays are not on Petfinder.

Rosenberg noted that they are to the extent that (the volunteer) can get them on and the cats are slow to be posted because volunteers are responsible for getting the information updated and the cat volunteers are not as regular. Many of the volunteers have full-time jobs so the work gets done when they are able to make time in their schedules.

Ruger further clarified that sometimes animals come and go before it can get updated. With the new software everything can be done in real time so the updates will be more accurate—what is reflected on the web will be more representative of what is available in the shelter.

Rosenberg agreed that animals should be up on the web by at least the next day.

Ruger provided copies of the monthly statistics to the ACC. He noted that while this is not in the shelter report and he does not verbally brief the statistics every month, he likes to hand out the copies because—while Animal Control is not “driven by numbers” but by doing the right thing—the numbers usually reflect this.

Rosenberg asked if there were any questions for Ruger about the shelter report.

Wilson asked if the shelter has rescue agreements with individuals.

Ruger responded that anyone can be a rescue if they are a tax-exempt organization.

Rosenberg clarified that it has to be a non-profit tax-exempt organization.

Ruger agreed that it must be a non-profit tax-exempt organization like a Federal 501(c)3 or State of Alaska exemption and that some rescues the shelter works with are both. The shelter will send an officer to visit, just as they do with foster applicants, to ensure they are capable of meeting the standards. Ruger mentioned there have been some new people interested in rescue who have not worked with the shelter before.

Rosenberg saw the Boatel ad for the medical fosters; it was an ad for people who want more medically-complex animals to foster.

Ruger mentioned that he spoke with his advertising account representative for Fox about adding a couple of spots that encourage fostering for Animal Control and address the requirement of the use of leashes on trails. The account rep is looking to see if a local business would like to sponsor the ads. He noted the latter subject arose during a meeting that Streeter attended for Ruger with the Trails Commission. A need was identified to minimize the conflict between lawful trappers and people running their dogs on trails. He noted the importance of recognizing that leash laws are as important on trails as they are in town due to the fact that people legally have a right to trap.

Wilson pointed out that the Trappers' Association also has an educational DVD available.

Ruger stated that Streeter told him the Trapper's Association was going to put together a letter requesting an advertising campaign but Ruger did not want to wait for the letter and thought it could be a subject for one of the ad spots. The spots running right now are about holiday gift certificates for pets and—in mid-December—they will start running a spot promoting the free vacation package Animal Control offers that helps ensure pets' well-being while owners are away on vacation. Ruger stated that Clear Channel called him today and is also developing pitches for Channel 2 and the CW which will be on regular digital Channel 18. He noted he will ask for some extra advertising money in the next budget so he can get advertising on all of the local broadcast stations. He'd like 60 to 90 monthly 15-second spots distributed among the stations.

Fortune asked if there are any public service announcements about pets riding in the back of vehicles.

Ruger said there are and those particular public service announcements are not being rotated out though they run more often during the summer months.

Rosenberg stated that, in her opinion, the more than can be done for animals at-large the better because animals at-large are the main cause behind bites, admissions, unwanted litters and complaint calls.

Ruger asserted that the public service announcements get two points across: that there is a leash law and that it applies throughout the Borough—including out of town and on the trails.

Rosenberg stated the problem is not that people let their animals loose on their property; the problem occurs when the animal does not stay on the owner's property.

Marschner concurred with Rosenberg.

Fortune asked for a refresher on what the vacation package entails.

Ruger noted the vacation package was developed a year and a half to two years ago. It helps create two copies of records providing points of contact and information about the

animal such as two emergency phone numbers, where the owner can be reached, the name of the caretaker, pet's medical records or location of medical records, proof of the last rabies shot, the vet who administered the shot, etc. One copy of this information sheet will be left with the caretaker and the second copy will be left with Animal Control. Ruger stated that this works because if the animals get loose and taken to the shelter the caretaker and Animal Control have proof that they are the person responsible for the animal and it can be released without trying to track down the owner for proof that the caretaker is acting on behalf of the owner. Providing the documentation to both the caretaker and Animal Control saves time and money for owners and caretakers. In addition, if Animal Control has documentation and the animal gets turned in and is tagged or microchipped, the shelter can contact the caretaker as well because they have the necessary information and know who to contact.

Rosenberg asked if there were any further questions for Ruger about his report.

Marschner had a question about a previous licensing issue with the software.

Ruger said there was an issue with SQL Server: if the new software is installed on the shelter server and they have 9 or more workstations they will need to get SQL Server software; however, to circumvent that problem, they put the shelter software on the main server in the Borough's Administrative Center. They are first installing the software on the proxy server to make sure data transfer occurs without any complications. Once the transfer of data has been successfully completed and it is verified to operate reliably, Computer Services will migrate the software and data to the main server. If the main server has interruptions or data flow problems then Animal Control will have to look into putting up the money, an estimated \$1,800-\$2,000, to move the software on their own server.

Rosenberg asked about security and password protection due to the occasional sensitive legal information.

Ruger replied that it has the same security and protection that they have now and that only authorized personnel and CS can look at the files.

Rosenberg asked if there were any other questions about the shelter report or the shelter.

There were no other questions.

OLD BUSINESS

- None

NEW BUSINESS

Rosenberg reminded the commissioners that they elect the Chair and Vice-Chair every January.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rosenberg announced the Shelter Fund is sponsoring Pet Photos with Santa, November 30th at 1:00 – 5:00 PM at Alaska Feed.

Marschner has just become a foster recently and wanted to thank the shelter, and to especially thank Sandy, Pat and Marcia, for their assistance with that.

Rosenberg asks for any other questions or comments.

Ruger thanks Marschner for becoming a foster because the shelter is always looking for fosters, especially for dog and cat litters.

Orbison asked if the December 29th meeting was in the same location as the November meeting.

Ruger replied that the December 29th meeting is in the Chizmar room at 6:30 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:11 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 29th at 6:30 PM in the Chizmar Room.

Submitted for Matt Ruger by Rachel Seale

December 15, 2008