

ANIMAL CONTROL COMMISSION

Minutes of the Regular Meeting

March 9, 2009

A regular meeting of the Fairbanks North Star Borough Animal Control Commission was held at the Borough Administrative Center Assembly Chambers at 809 Pioneer Road, Fairbanks, Alaska. Ronnie Rosenberg, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM. Due to a problem with the sound equipment, the FNSB ACC was recessed at 6:32 PM and Rosenberg stated that it would be re-adjourned when the sound issue was corrected. The meeting was re-adjourned at 6:47 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ronnie Rosenberg, *Chair*
Shellie Severa, *Vice Chair*
Mary Ann Fortune
Jamie Marschner
Gail Gardner
Tone Deehr
Karen Wilson
Lauren Tuori
Gidget Hagan

GUESTS PRESENT:

Marie O'Neil
Pat Streeter
Sandy Klimaschesky

STAFF PRESENT:

Matt Ruger, Animal Control Manager
Rachel Seale, ACC Secretary

Rosenberg conducted a role call because there were new commissioners. She asked the commissioners if they had the opportunity to review the minutes and if there were any corrections or additions. There were no corrections. Motion to approve by Hagan, seconded by Fortune. Rosenberg stated the minutes were approved without objection.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

SHELTER REPORT:

Matt Ruger presented the shelter report. He noted he followed up on a citizen concern brought forward at the last meeting by Mary Bruso. He investigated the complaint and found that both of Bruso's complaints (made on Aug 8, 2008 and Sept 5, 2008) were followed up within 15 and 20 minutes respectively, though it appeared there had been no contact with Bruso from the Animal Control Officers to let her know the complaint had been run. He also noted he was not able to contact Bruso to update her with his findings.

The new Casual Admissions Clerk resigned after 2 hours on the job. Advertizing for this position may be re-opened as the reference checks for the second person did not pan out.

The Mayor's Office will present an ordinance at the April or March FNSB Assembly meeting consolidating all of the shelter's small projects into one large project under the Reserve Maintenance Fund. Though not in the ordinance as it will be presented to the Assembly, the Mayor's Office is also open to discussion of funding an engineering study to assess the feasibility of updating the current shelter to meet current and future needs versus building a replacement facility if there is public interest during public comment.

In addition to the small projects Ruger has submitted, he noted Facilities Maintenance added replacement of the shelter's "antiquated" fire alarm system that has been giving them trouble.

Bob Shefchik submitted his resignation to the FNSB because he is taking a position at UAF. Sally Stuvek will take over Shefchik's duties until his position is filled after October.

RUGER presented the first monthly statistical report from Chameleon. He noted that the breakdown of the discretionary and owner-requested euthanasia statistics appeared to have some data input errors and that was being worked; however, the rest of the information was correct to the best of his knowledge.

ROSENBERG stated it would be helpful if the commissioners picked up copies of the ordinance that will be discussed at the April 9th Assembly meeting from the Clerk's Office. She also suggested it would be helpful if the commissioners attended the meeting. Severa responded that she would go to the April 9th Assembly meeting but will go per Rosenberg's instructions as a private citizen not as an Animal Control Commissioner because AC has not passed a resolution in regards to the ordinance.

FORTUNE made no commitment but stated she would try to go to the meeting and asked if the photographs she had taken could be made use of for the repairs that will be addressed in regards to the ordinance.

There were some questions and discussion about repairs in the ordinance and the engineering study Ruger brought up earlier and he clarified that the repairs are in the ordinance and they will be done if the ordinance passes. Regarding the engineering study, that would simply add funding to pay for an engineer to come in and perform a cost-benefit analysis assessing the shelter's needs and the cost of upgrading the existing facility versus the cost of building a brand new shelter.

TUORI questioned what repairs were being discussed and Ruger summed up all of the repairs, stating they were rolled up into a big project and will be taken care of with the proposed facilities ordinance.

ROSENBERG asked for a possible meeting or work group session with the FNSB Assembly, the ACC and shelter staff before the voting on the aforementioned ordinance and Ruger agreed to ask if this was a possibility.

MARSCHNER questioned the cremation statistics under euthanasia and Ruger stated that he suspected the cremation statistics Marschner questioned are errors as the cremation statistics should match the owner requested euthanasia number minus those returned to the owners since the animals put down by the shelter are always cremated so there are no cremation statistics for animals euthanized by the shelter because cremation, in that case, is a given.

ROSENBERG questioned what the request for disposal and cremation statistics meant.

RUGER clarified that “request for disposal” is an automatic cremation and that requests for disposal are usually animals brought in by vets.

ROSENBERG added that animals that die at home are also included in this statistic for request for disposal statistics.

RUGER agreed.

There were no further questions.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Division of Animal Control budget for upcoming year

ROSENBERG summarized Ruger’s earlier statements about repairs being rolled up into one request and brought up Ruger’s request for a vehicle upgrade for an AC truck that is due to be replaced; an upgrade from an F150 to a Super Duty so that the truck can safely pull the AC stock trailer.

HAGAN questioned the cost-effectiveness of upgrading the vehicle and asked if the use of the Super Duty would justify the cost.

RUGER noted that Transit told him they would not allow AC to fully load the trailer behind a half-ton truck due to safety reasons.

ROSENBERG said that they debated the same thing when the Shelter Fund bought the Rhino; although it does not get daily use it is emergency equipment and it was necessary to have on hand. Rosenberg further added that when Transit buys, they buy fleet rate and it will not be the same price as when an individual purchases an upgrade. In addition, Rosenberg added that AC is only requesting the upgrade and that it will be up to the FNSB Assembly to decide.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Open Meetings Act, Conflicts of Interest

ROSENBERG mentioned that they were asked to discuss this as various case law has passed, it is broadly construed and they need to clarify what a “public meeting” is so that the ACC does not violate the Open Meetings Act. She described various scenarios of AC Commissioners violating the Open Meetings Act and summed up that commissioners are free to talk to the AC staff and the public but commissioners are not free to talk among themselves. She cautioned that it is easy to unintentionally violate this act and provided more examples of how ACC members can unintentionally violate it. She concluded by directing commissioners with further questions to contact the FNSB Clerk or Attorney’s offices.

ROSENBERG moved on to “conflict of interest” and provided several examples of how commissioners may find themselves in a situation that is a “conflict of interest.” She concluded that if the commissioners had doubts, they should always ask.

B. Temperature Cut-Off for Meetings

ROSENBERG stated that Ruger found an old letter from Laura Hood specifying a –25 meeting cut-off and that Rosenberg had also contacted 18 other commissions and—of the 12 responses she received—none of the responders had a temperature cut-off policy. She described what it would entail for the ACC to implement a policy and also described the FNSB’s policy (policy 65.15). She concluded that if they missed meetings due to bad weather those meetings would have to be made up.

FORTUNE suggested not having a cut-off policy since they already confirm with Ruger if they can make the meeting or not.

SEVERA and Ruger discussed regarding contacting each member before each meeting to verify who would be able to attend or not. Ruger noted that since the meetings are scheduled and everyone is aware of the dates, commissioners should contact him prior to a meeting if they cannot attend.

FORTUNE motioned to approve not having a temperature cut-off.

SEVERA seconded Fortune’s motion.

C. Animal food pantry disbursements

[Please see attached 1 page document regarding to this agenda item.]

RUGER stated that AC started a program in 2006 to benefit pet owners in crisis, using donated pet food to assist families in need. He summarized the issues involved: the program has grown tremendously and there is a need for some type of needs assessment to ensure the pet food gets to those in need and not just those first in line (which has been the rule). He noted the food is donated by private individuals and merchants with the understanding it will be used to help those in need, not to subsidize people who should be the merchants’ paying customers. He further stated that if he

cannot come up with an objective means to determine who should get the food the pet food pantry program may become unmanageable and could be terminated.

After calling several organizations he noted that Love, Inc. and The Salvation Army were willing to screen patrons referred to them. He concluded that he wants to refer people to at least those two organizations for needs assessment and this way the food pantry can remain viable. He noted the American Red Cross currently refers people to the shelter but they aren't staffed to screen patrons the shelter refers to them.

RUGER fielded questions from Fortune, Tuori, Deehr and Severa regarding the history of the pet food pantry program and concluded that he is not comfortable determining or assessing patrons' need and that it is not his place to do so.

TUORI commended Ruger and the shelter for helping the community in this way but questions using the referral system as some people may not want to go through the extra step of being referred.

RUGER stated that having the pantry moves the shelter outside of their core mission and that is the primary issue—keeping it viable while not detracting from the mission.

Further discussion arose between Ruger, Rosenberg, Tuori and Fortune on utilizing outside agencies (Love, Inc. and The Salvation Army) to assess needs of people who want to utilize the pet food pantry program and getting referrals from the aforementioned organizations. The commissioners mentioned above and Ruger also discussed ways of accepting referrals and how the shelter could be flexible with those in immediate need.

ROSENBERG stated that since the food pantry program issue is a procedural change it is not something that the ACC needs to vote on.

RUGER agreed that the decision to use outside agencies for needs assessment is at his discretion but he felt that the nine commissioners could provide good feedback since this is a shelter program that serves the community.

ROSENBERG opened public comment again to ask for general consensus.

The general consensus was yes, the shelter should get a referral from a service agency. It was also agreed that other recognized private and governmental social services agencies, as identified, should also be recruited to assist in screening.

PUBLIC COMMENT

O'NEIL asked if someone fostering dogs came to the shelter's pet food pantry and asked for assistance for food, if they, too, would have to get a voucher.

RUGER replied “No!” He and Rosenberg told O’Neil that fosters are a priority and are taken care of first. Those who foster animals for the shelter are provided with whatever they need.

The topic returned to the issue of making sure the shelter does not bear the burden of needs assessment and to keep people from taking unnecessary advantage of the pet food pantry program.

O’NEIL agreed that the shelter’s generosity and good will should not be abused and had just wanted to make sure that people who foster AC animals were taken care of.

ROSENBERG clarified that people fostering are provided with whatever support they need, including dog clothing, vet care (even vet care in Anchorage) and equipment.

No other public comment.

COMMISSION COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

ROSENBERG reminded everyone the next meeting will be April 13th in North Pole and asked Severa for the exact location.

SEVERA stated that it will be at the North Pole Fire Department Annex building at 121 Snowman Lane.

ROSENBERG brought up bite hearing training for the commission and any ACOs who have not had the training or need a refresher course.

Training date options were discussed the training was tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 18th, from 4-7 PM.

ROSENBERG asked for further comments.

FORTUNE stated she had no comments but she is very happy with position the shelter has maintained as far as helping with dog food in the community, it makes her proud to be on the ACC and part of Animal Control because “this is what it’s all about”, being able to help the community in need, but noted the needs assessment is a delicate situation—to try to make sure those in need get assistance—and she applauded the work being done.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 pm.

Submitted by Rachel Seale on behalf of Matt Ruger