

Lincoln County Animal Services
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
July 2nd, 2019

Attendees:

Dr. Ashley Oliphant, Chairman
Hannah Beaver, Animal Services Director
Dr. Karen Miller
Robin Franklin
Rick Lynn
Mark Connolly
Michael Hull, Senior Animal Services Officer
Lindsey Houser, Animal Control Administrative Secretary
Kelly Atkins, County Manager
Josh Grant, Program Operations Manager
Commissioner Bud Cesena

Guest Attendees:

Jenna Harmon
Chelsea Cooper
Ashley Parsons
Tyler Moore
Sebastian Beal
Rodney Karnes

Opening:

Director Beaver and Lindsey Houser handed out the following documents to the board as well as to the guests in attendance:

- July 2nd, 2019 ASAB Meeting Agenda
- ASAB Minutes from April 30th, 2019
- Animal Rescue League of Boston Euthanasia Policy
- Baltimore Humane Society Humane Society
- Remington's Profile
- Printout of July 2, 2019 Presentation
- Lincoln County Exotic Residence List

A sign in sheet was passed around to the guests in attendance.

Chairman Oliphant opened the meeting at 6:32 PM.

Commissioner Cesena then requested that those in attendance serving on the Advisory Board introduce themselves. After this, Chairman Oliphant moved forward to the approval of the minutes.

Approval of Minutes:

Chairman Oliphant asked the board if there were any suggestions or changes required for the minutes from the last advisory board meeting on April 30th, 2019. The minutes were approved with a motion from Mark Connolly and a second by Dr. Karen Miller.

Behavior Euthanasia Protocol:

Director Beaver began this discussion by stating that she was appreciative of the board's input on this matter because euthanasia is the hardest thing to do in sheltering. She stated behavior euthanasia in Lincoln County has been minimized to dogs mainly, as most cats with behavior issues can be sent to barn cat homes. Director Beaver stated that she hopes to clear up the gray area with dogs that are not clearly adoptable/ transferrable or to be euthanized. Currently, LCAS uses the following placement options for behavior dogs: adoption with a behavior waiver, a special condition adoption and a rescue or transfer out. LCAS has to consider liability when releasing behavior dogs. Director Beaver informed the board that the euthanasia of behavior dogs occurs when dogs are considered unsafe in the shelter and/or in the public, or are unable to be released due to legal or humane reasons. The gray area for behavior dogs is always a difficult situation when there is no clear answer. Director Beaver referenced Remington's Profile and a video of his behavior in the presentation. Remington is a prime example of a dog that currently resides at LCAS and fits into this gray area. Director Beaver defined the gray area in the following way: problems for the dogs- leading to an increased length of stay without a plan of action, problems for the staff- attachment issues, and problems for management- high tension

between LCAS staff members. Director Beaver's proposed solution is an "At Risk" Canine Protocol and "At Risk" Canine Protocol Euthanasia Position Statement.

The "At Risk" Canine Protocol would begin when the shelter supervisor places the dog in this category. Upon being placed in this category, said dog would receive a medical evaluation as well as a behavior. Director Beaver stated that she needed input from the board on the behavior evaluation portion of this. Should the evaluation occur in person or only with a case file? What qualifications should an evaluator have? Should there be one or two assessments? Following the proposed behavior evaluation, the "At Risk" Panel would meet. This panel would consist of the shelter supervisor, someone from programs, someone from Animal Control, someone from animal care, someone from the medical team and someone from the behavior team. The "At Risk" Panel discussion would occur in a calm and respectful way. Panel members would assess ultimate placement options and manageability of behavior in the shelter by reviewing medical and behavior assessments, case history, behavior notes and memos, intake paperwork and previous owner notes, information from various work groups and possible options to help improve behavior. This panel would be tasked with reaching a majority decision on the next actions to take- 3/3 splits would be reviewed by the Director of Animal Services. Recommendation from the panel may be a specific program and actions for the dog to attempt to improve behavior- leading to reevaluation or recommendation for euthanasia for the consideration of the Director of Animal Services.

Director Beaver then began to discuss the possibility of creating a euthanasia position statement. She references the Animal Rescue League of Boston's Euthanasia Policy, stating that it reads more like a position statement. She stated that the next to last paragraph of this statement was very important, and she would add "and the public" to this. Director Beaver then asked for the board's input on this.

Chairman Oliphant stated that this discussion into euthanasia policies show the advancements of LCAS to a No-Kill shelter. She stated that Lincoln County Animal Service's No-Kill mandates a policy on these issues.

Mark Connolly stated that he liked the way that the Animal Rescue League of Boston's Euthanasia Policy looked, but that the phrase "using positive training methods" should be changed to "using training methods".

Dr. Karen Miller stated that she believed that this is a very responsible idea because not all animals can be fixed, and ultimately human life is more valuable than animal life. Veterinarians see how hard euthanasia is first hand- but sometimes certain animals just need to be euthanized, for behavior or health issues.

Director Oliphant stated that high tensions between staff members in the shelter goes to show that the staff does care about the animals. She also suggested considering adding a seventh person to the "At Risk" Panel so there is no possibility of a tie. Commissioner Cesena stated that he believed it would be important to leave Director Beaver off of the panel because she is the ultimate decision if the panel has issues with coming to an agreement.

Mark Connolly stated that he has done lots of behavior assessments in his career, and there is no behavior assessment that won't give false positives. He stated that you can find cracks in every study on behavior assessments. Overall, the safety of people is the most important. Director Beaver responded, saying that his portion was important for the protocol because of the external input on the animal's behavior from someone who is not emotionally invested in the situation.

Mark Connolly and Chairman Oliphant both agreed that they liked that the protocol would require a behavior and medical assessment before bringing an animal to the panel for discussion.

Rick Lynn asked if LCAS could work with neighboring kennels and shelters for dogs that have declining behavior in our shelter. Director Beaver stated that most kennels wouldn't accept some of these issues/behaviors that behavior dogs could present. The problem in these situations is not just the decline of the animal, but the decline and the negative issues altogether.

Mark Connolly suggested that LCAS could benefit from a behavioral department, even though Lincoln County has a small budget. Robin Franklin suggested that this may help retention of placement even in dogs that wouldn't fall into the gray area.

Commissioner Cesena asked if the lack of a behavioral department at LCAS meant that we had a lack of staff, to which Director Beaver replied yes- there are currently not enough people in the shelter to do enrichment/behavior as well as it could be done. Commissioner Cesena asked Director Beaver where gaining behavior staff landed on her priority level. Director Beaver stated that LCAS needed a new facility first, and then new staff positions as there is currently not enough room in our facility for expanding staff. Commissioner Cesena replied to this, stating that getting a person for a behavior department would be easier than getting a brand new building.

Rick Lynn added in that the cost of behavior training and a new addition to the staff would be expensive, on top of getting the employee to stay at LCAS. He suggested possibly a part time position for a behaviorist.

Commissioner Cesena stated that he believed it would be better to hire a person with the necessary skills upfront rather than spending money on training an employee who may choose to transfer to another county.

Chairman Oliphant stated that Lincoln County's No-Kill achievement should make LCAS a more likable place to work.

Robin Franklin agreed, stating that LCAS has made great strides and that there are good comments she has heard throughout the community rather than bad comments like it used to be.

Chairman Oliphant then asked if there would be a vote on the "At Risk" protocol/panel tonight, to which Director Beaver replied no- she was only wanting the ASAB's opinion on the matter.

Exotic Discussion:

Director Beaver began the exotic discussion with the Advisory Board by informing the board that NC law allows counties to decide how they want to regulate exotic animals. Changing the current exotic portion of the ordinance is not just as simple as banning exotic animals because there would be a significant kickback from the community because of how passionate a lot of exotic animal owners are. Director Beaver then references the Exotic Residents in Lincoln County as of 7/1/19, mentioning that some people may have moved to Lincoln County for the sole reason of being able to legally own an exotic animal. Director Beaver references the amount of venomous reptiles on the list and the fact that the anti-venom for these reptiles may not be readily available locally. She then asked the ASAB how they felt about changing private ownership of exotic animals.

Rick Lynn questioned what the current requirements are for owning an exotic in Lincoln County. Director Beaver responded stating that owners are required to register yearly and pay a \$25.00 license fee.

Commissioner Cesena stated that he believed that a license fee should cover the cost of anti-venom. Josh Grant stated that LCAS should work with the Lincoln County Health Department and local hospitals on determining the availability of necessary anti-venoms.

Rick Lynn stated that some venomous snakes such as rattlesnakes are living in Lincoln County in the wild. At one time he was aware of a patient who had been bitten by a rattlesnake and had to be flown out of the county to get the proper anti-venom. He also stated that LCAS should give specific instructions for exotic owners on how to house their exotics. Director Beaver replied to this, stating that LCAS does not house experts on exotic animals, and most exotic animal owners are very knowledgeable on the animals that they own.

Director Beaver did suggest increasing regulations on exotic ownership, such as a plan for capture should the animal (s) escape as well as an Emergency Action Plan in case of Disaster.

Commissioner Cesena stated that the current fee schedule for exotic owners in Lincoln County. He believes that the fee schedule should be able to pay for capture equipment for exotic animals.

Chairman Oliphant stated that public safety should be the number one priority when it comes to allowing exotic animals in Lincoln County. Commissioner Cesena asked if the Communications Center and the Lincoln County Sherriff's Office was aware of the residences where exotic animals currently reside in Lincoln County. Director Beaver replied, stating that both departments should be aware of the exotic residents in the county.

Chairman Oliphant suggested keeping the \$25.00 license fee the same, but adding in an additional fees depending on the type of animal and for capture equipment and anti-venom.

Rick Lynn suggested a 30 day waiting period, giving LCAS time to do more research before accepting the animals into the county and increasing the fee to \$250.

Mark Connolly suggested increasing the license fee, and continuing to allow exotics in Lincoln County. With the fee increase, potential owners would be forced to pay the price if they want the animal bad enough. He also suggested grandfathering in the current venomous snake owners, but banning the ownership of venomous snakes in the future. He also suggested a weight limit on wild cats and hoof stock for public safety.

Director Beaver stated that with LCAS' current staff level, enforcing the exotic ordinance will be difficult. She does not want to ban exotics because of the potential bad situations that could occur with current exotic owners.

Josh Grant suggested talking to the school of government to find more information on how other counties handle their exotic ordinances.

Rick Lynn referenced the Lincoln County Exotic Residents list, asking if the information on the document was current. Director Beaver replied that it was, but some people are difficult to get information from and will dodge speaking with LCAS about their exotics.

Rick Lynn expressed his concern that people who may not be able to afford an increased license fee may opt to release their venomous animals into the wild rather than legally own them. Director Beaver responded to this, stating that Lincoln County didn't only deal with venomous reptile owners, but also traders and breeders.

Rick Lynn suggested talking to the Sheriff and giving him a compiled list of exotic residences in Lincoln County for the safety of the officers, especially those executing search warrants. Director Beaver agreed, stating that it would be simple to compile the list.

Chairman Oliphant asked if Director Beaver would be writing something to bring back before the advisory board, to which Director Beaver replied yes.

Public Comments:

Commissioner Cesena suggested getting rid of the phrase "potentially dangerous dog" in the draft ordinance because a dog would be either dangerous or not dangerous. He also suggested changing the 'animal services' portion of LCAS' name to 'Animal Care', as it is kinder and a more gentle name. Director Beaver responded to Commissioner Cesena, stating that it could be in discussion to consider a name change, but she did not wish to change the 'Animal Control' portion for Animal Control officers because it should be in an enforcement language. Commissioner Cesena also advised the board to be more intentional on the tethering portion of the ordinance that will be presented to the Board of Commissioners because there would be two commissioners that may be against tethering regulations.

Mark Connolly replied to Commissioner Cesena's comment on tethering, stating that "dog" should be added in front of the tethering portion. He also commented that there should be exceptions on being allowed to tether, and that if the exception is for training, it should be a time limit so people could not use that as an excuse.

Next Meeting Dates:

Tuesday, August 6th, 2019

Tuesday, September 3rd, 2019

Motion to Adjourn:

A motion was made by Mark Connolly to adjourn the meeting, with a second by Rick Lynn.

The meeting ended at 8:24 PM.