

**HENDERSON COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY
October 14, 2021**

Advisory Committee Members Present:

Lauren Hathaway
Jack Walsh, Chair
Gaby Johnsen, Vice Chair
Teri Bentcover
Donna Young
Angela Prodrick
John Lynn
Paul Blackwell

Advisory Committee Members Absent:

Carolina Gunther

Staff Present:

Brad Rayfield, Animal Services Center Director
Joy Edwards, Animal Services Center Supervisor
Vince Griggs, Henderson County Sheriff's Office

Meeting called to order: Chairman Walsh called meeting to order at 5:32 PM.

Informal Public Comment: There was no public comment.

July 8, 2021 Meeting Summary: Meeting notes were approved as written.

Discussion

Addition of N.C.G.S. 19A-70 to Chapter 16: Mr. Rayfield shared that on October 4, 2021, the Board of Commissioners' voted to add N.C.G.S 19A-70 to Chapter 16 as suggested by the ASAC.

Scheduling of Dangerous Dog Hearings through January 13, 2021: Committee members decided what dates they could participate in Dangerous Dog Hearings through January 13, 2022.

Process for Reclaiming Animals Surrendered for Euthanasia:

- As instructed by the ASAC at the July 8, 2021 meeting, Mr. Rayfield introduced the concept of an appeals process to the County Attorney. The County Attorney thinks the biggest obstacle is deciding who can and can't appeal. He also said that if the animal has been signed over then an appeal process may not be possible.
- It was decided that a better option could be to form a panel, maybe called the Animal Disposition Panel. In situations where staff needs an "extra set of eyes" a panel would

help determine disposition of certain animals. The panel would determine if the animal should be adopted or euthanized.

- The County Attorney suggested at least three and no more than five ASAC members on the panel.
- Panelist would receive information about the situation and could come see the animal in question. Staff would also have a professional come evaluate the animal at the panel's request.
- Mr. Rayfield said these cases don't come up often; however, if a process were in place staff may elect to use it more routinely and on a variety of situations. The process could be a good first step if an appeal process is developed. The problem with the appeal process is that once an animal is signed over and becomes county property, there wouldn't be a party that exists who has the right to appeal.
- When asked by Mr. Walsh, Mr. Rayfield explained the panel was his idea and the County Attorney thought it was a better option.
- Mr. Walsh asked if there would be language somewhere that would empower the ASAC to serve in this role. Mr. Rayfield said that it could be an informal panel or the functions of the panel could be outlined in Chapter 16 or the ASAC Charter. Mr. Walsh and other members agreed that the panel should be recognized in either Chapter 16 or the Charter. Mr. Rayfield said it could be included in the Charter like the Dangerous Dog Appellate Board. Mr. Rayfield said this would need to be clearly separated from Dangerous Dog Appeals because if a dog has been deemed dangerous any process with a panel would not ever be applicable.
- John Lynn asked if any other shelters have a similar process. Mr. Rayfield said he was not aware of any other shelters utilizing this kind of process.
- Mr. Walsh said that he would like for staff to come up with a couple different options for the process and he feels three people are enough for this process. Mr. Rayfield said that he is not sure what the process will be like, but a panel's decision would need to be memorialized.
- Members discussed possible processes. One aspect being the members visit the animal and that this could be done independently to avoid scheduling. In addition to a visit, some type of form that each member would complete independently giving their decision regarding the disposition of the animal. If the decision is not unanimous then the panel would convene to make a determination.
- Mr. Walsh voiced concern that members could get sued if an animal is adopted out then bites someone. Sgt. Blackwell asked if the discussion is about a random animal or about a dog that has bitten someone? Mr. Walsh and Ms. Johnsen told him it is for an animal that has been surrendered for euthanasia.
- Ms. Prodrick said she would send staff some examples of checklist that other organizations use to determine avenues for animals.
- Sgt. Blackwell referenced a situation in which a rescue pulled a dog that had a bite history from a shelter. In the situation he described a person was severely bitten. He

said he was concerned about liability if a dog that is dangerous is adopted out. Ms. Johnsen said that any dog that is adopted has the potential to be dangerous. Mr. Rayfield said this process will not be a process to adopt out dangerous animals. The process is to provide an extra set of eyes for staff and help make decisions.

- Sgt. Blackwell also said that once an animal is surrendered it becomes property of the county and the person shouldn't have the right to request euthanasia. Mr. Rayfield said that is what the County Attorney said which is why a panel was being discussed versus an appeal process.
- Ms. Prodrick said there are numerous situations to consider. The animal may just be stressed in a shelter environment, but it doesn't mean the animal is dangerous.
- Mr. Rayfield said he would get the checklist and the ASAC could review and discuss them in January.
- Ms. Johnsen made a motion to adjourn, the motion passed.

Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned by Chairman Walsh at 5:56 PM.