Animal Care & Control

Maricopa County
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AD HOC TASK FORCE

PROCESS & SERVICE SUBCOMMITTEE

December 10, 2014 from 3:45 pm – 5:15 pm

The subcommittee approved the meeting summary from the November 24, 2014 meeting.

There was discussion on using the comments from CitizensForPets.org as a guiding force in subgroup activities. A member asked if the public comments from the website could be categorized by themes in a tabular format; while other members said that they preferred to continue receiving all of the unedited comments.

A member asked if the tallied or compiled comments are considered public record? Valerie Beckett stated that once the emails, reports or other documents are sent to the members, the information should be viewed as public as it is likely shared.

Based on the Levels of Consensus matrix as agreed to in the November 24th meeting, the Chair called for a vote on whether the committee wanted to receive the comments tallied or categorized by theme. Although the majority opted for the tallied summary, there were no volunteers willing to take on the task for each meeting.

During the vote, a member expressed that after some consideration that they are uncomfortable using the Levels of Consensus.

Moving to the next item on the agenda, the Chair asked for the three lead members of the sub-groups that were established at the last meeting to report on their findings.

1. Medical Triage and Assessment

The lead for the subgroup, Trish Manes, explained that due to scheduling issues the members have been unable to coordinate a meeting date/time.

AC&C staff advised that a flowchart of the medical evaluation process was sent to the Chair. The Chair said that the flowchart is a good start, but it is important that the medical triage sub-group conducts their own research and reports back to the subcommittee as a whole with their recommendations.

The Chair asked to be notified prior to the next meeting if a sub-group was unable to complete their task.

ACTION ITEM: The Chair will work with the medical triage sub-group to establish a timeline for completing their work.

2. Behavioral Assessment

The lead for the sub-group, Bob Crough, explained that a team of two or three people conduct the behavioral evaluations. The team typically consists of a person who

conducts the assessment, a recorder who documents the evaluation and an animal handler who retrieves the dog/cat from its kennel.

Samantha “Sam” Spinelle is in charge of training kennel staff to conduct the behavior evaluations; however, those involved with the evaluators do not report to Sam. The staff actually reports to the kennel supervisor.

Refresher courses are only provided at the request of an employee or the kennel supervisor. Another member offered that mentoring has been proven more effective than refresher training.

Ideally, all staff members on the evaluation team have completed the behavioral assessment training program. According to Dr. Silva, sometimes staff may not have completed the entire training program, but will be utilized when necessary due to other staffing having called-out sick or for other unforeseen circumstances.

A member asked what kind of training is done? Is the training conducted in a classroom? What evaluation methodology is used? Bob said that he did not have a lot of details regarding the training. Bob said that AC&C uses a behavioral assessment methodology that is an industry-standard (meaning other shelters throughout the country use the same assessment protocol.)

Dr. Silva said that the training program is a combination of webinars, classroom instruction by Samantha Spinelle and hands-on experience.

A member asked how long does it take to get a staff person trained? Dr. Silva said that it depends on staff availability. The system is overwhelmed with animals and kennel staff have many other duties and conflicting priorities with getting the training completed.

A member asked if the sub-committee can get a list of all the staff that has completed the training? How many hours of training did each person receive?

ACTION ITEM: AC&C staff will provide the subcommittee with the number of staff that are trained and the average hours of training that each person receives. No staff names will be disclosed.

A member asked is there an unwritten quota that “requires” a certain number of animals to fail? For example, what happens if on a certain day all animals pass the evaluation but there is no space available in the shelter to house the animals that passed? Is there a certain cut-off score on the behavioral evaluation that animals score above the cut-off pass and animals that score below are euthanized?

<Due to the faced pace discussion and interjections, the above questions were not specifically addressed or followed up.>

ACTION ITEM: AC&C staff will provide a flow chart for the E-List / euthanasia decision-making process.

A member, who leads the Second Chance team, explained this is a group of about five volunteers that serve the East shelter. The Second Chance team evaluates animals that failed the evaluation conducted by AC&C staff. The member stated the training consists of an overview of basic behavioral traits, SAFER model information (approximately two hours for dogs and the same for cats), overview of AC&C's evaluation process and then hands-on experience.

A member asked how the kennel supervisors determine which kennel staff should be trained to do behavioral assessments. Linda Soto said kennel supervisors will make the recommendation on which staff is ready for behavioral assessment training based on their demonstration of basic animal handling skills. At the end of the behavioral assessment training, Samantha Spinelle makes a recommendation on whether or not the staff person has the necessary skills to be successful at conducting behavioral evaluations.

A member noted that there are several public comments posted to the website expressing concern with the evaluation process. According to one comment, a member of the public witnessed a small dog being evaluated in its kennel. The dog was housed with other dogs and was very fearful but the assessment continued anyway.

A member asked about where the evaluations are conducted. Bob Crough said that there is no designated location for conducting evaluations at West. Evaluations are done behind the building or on the sidewalk. Bob said that evaluations at East are conducted near the outside portable building. A member said that the Second Chance team conducts the evaluations near the outside portable building at East. Staff at East may conduct the evaluations in other locations including the intake ramp.

A member noted that there is not enough room for conducting evaluations, which is unsafe for staff and not fair to the animals.

A member suggested that the sub-committee should make a recommendation that evaluations not be done in view of public. The Chair said that the sub-committee was not at the point of making recommendations. Recommendations would be made at a later date once the sub-committee reviewed all the available information.

A member pointed out that some dogs are placed at a disadvantage based on the location of their evaluation.

A member asked if supervisors regularly monitor the behavioral assessment process to ensure that staff are following proper procedures. Bob said that he had previously witnessed one person conducting the food aggression evaluation. Two people are required to safely perform the food aggression evaluation. Bob said that this lapse in protocol was corrected before the task force started and that the evaluations he witnessed were conducted properly.

A member asked how was the Second Chance program established? Jason, the Second Chance volunteer on the sub-committee said that the volunteer group was established in 2009 in cooperation with Samantha Spinelle. The time commitment for volunteers is six to eight hours per week. Jason tried to establish a Second Chance program at West but did not receive support from staff.

Jason said that in his experience the most common reason that dogs "fail" the evaluation or are euthanized is because they are "aggressive" at the cage barrier. If staff feel unsafe removing the dog from its kennel, the dog will not be evaluated and will be marked as "failing" the evaluation.

Bob pointed out that West performs many more evaluations than East. A busy day at East is 18 evaluations. A busy day at West is 40 evaluations.

HALO conducts an evaluation for all animals at West. A member asked if county staff has access to HALO's evaluation when conducting their own evaluation. Al Aguinaga said yes staff has access to HALO's evaluations. HALO completes their evaluation on Day 2 of the animal's stay at AC&C. AC&C staff conduct their evaluation on Day 3.

A member said that there is a perception animals in the West shelter are euthanized quicker than at East. The member said that it was important to evaluate consistency in practices between East and West.

A member said that he was concerned about the animals that don't leave their kennels at West don't have a chance to be evaluated. The member said that the kennels are larger at West, which makes removing a dog from the kennel more dangerous. The member speculated that the logistics of the kennels (which make the staff feel fearful) might lead to more dogs being euthanized.

A member asked if the results are tracked by employee – are there employees that are failing more animals than others? Staff stated yes as the person entering the results can be reviewed. A member suggested this is a report that should be generated and reviewed internally by staff for possible trends.

The Chair pointed out that it was 5:15 pm and the group was out of time.

> **ACTION ITEM**: The behavioral assessment sub-group will complete their presentation at the next meeting and will make preliminary recommendations for improvements.
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> Samantha Spinelle will be asked to attend the meeting and provide more information on the behavioral assessment process and staff training.
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> **ACTION ITEM**: The Timeline, Holds, Classification & Building Logistics sub-group will present their findings and recommendations at the next meeting.

Next / Follow-up Action Items:
Action Items from 12/10/2014 meeting:

- Medical triage sub-group will establish a timeline and possibly be prepared to present tat the next meeting.
- Report of number of staff that are trained to conduct behavioral assessments.
- Answer to the questions regarding a "quota" for the number of animals that should pass/fail the evaluation.
- Provide flowchart for the euthanasia decision-making process.
- Report and recommendations from the Behavioral Assessment sub-group at the 12/22 meeting.
- Samantha Spinelle will be asked to attend the 12/22 meeting.

- Report and recommendations from the Timeline, Holds, Classification & Building Logistics sub-group at the 12/22 meeting