

August 21, 2019

**BURKE COUNTY ANIMAL ADVISORY BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING**

The Burke County Animal Advisory Board met in special session on Wednesday, August 21, 2019, at 5:00 p.m. The meeting was held in Burke County Board of Commissioners Chambers, located at 110 N. Green Street in Morganton, North Carolina. Members present were:

PRESENT:

Debbie Hawkins
Amy Burnette
Gwen Stephens
David Coffin
Jeff Robinson
Allen Keller
Dr. Linda SCHILKOWSKY

ABSENT:

ALSO, PRESENT: Rebecca McLeod, Health Director
Kaitlin Settlemyre, Animal Services Director

CALL TO ORDER

Rebecca McLeod called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. Members introduced themselves to the other Board members.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: To approve the special Animal Advisory Board agenda for August 21, 2019

RESULT: APPROVED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER: Debbie Hawkins
SECONDER: Allen Keller
AYES: Amy Burnette, Jeff Robinson, Debbie Hawkins, Gwen Stephens, David Coffin, Allen Keller
ABSENT: Dr. Linda Schilkowsy – arrived late

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Rebecca opened the floor for nominations for Chairperson. Debbie Hawkins was nominated. Nominations were closed. Vote taken by group and then Chairperson will run the meeting.

Motion: To elect Debbie Hawkins as Chairperson for Animal Advisory Board.

RESULT: APPROVED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER: Allen Keller
SECONDER: Dr. Linda Schilkowsy
AYES: Amy Burnette, Jeff Robinson, Debbie Hawkins, Gwen Stephens, David Coffin, Allen Keller, Dr. Linda Schilkowsy
ABSENT:

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Ms. Hawkins began to chair the meeting and moved into the nominations for Vice-Chairperson. Mr. David Coffin was nominated. Nominations were closed. Vote taken by the group.

Motion: To elect David Coffin as Vice - Chairperson for Animal Advisory Board.

RESULT: APPROVED (UNANIMOUS)

MOVER: Allen Keller

SECONDER: Jeff Robinson

AYES: Amy Burnette, Jeff Robinson, Debbie Hawkins, Gwen Stephens, David Coffin, Allen Keller, Dr. Linda Schilkowsy

ABSENT:

Ms. Hawkins moved into the Secretary nominations. Discussion from the group. Amy Burnette was nominated. Nominations were closed. Vote taken by the group.

Motion: To elect Amy Burnette as Secretary for Animal Advisory Board.

RESULT: APPROVED (UNANIMOUS)

MOVER: Allen Keller

SECONDER: David Coffin

AYES: Amy Burnette, Jeff Robinson, Debbie Hawkins, Gwen Stephens, David Coffin, Allen Keller, Dr. Linda Schilkowsy

ABSENT:

REVIEW/AMEND OF BY-LAWS and RULES OF PROCEDURES

The Board discussed the Rules of Procedure. Debbie Hawkins asked if anyone else had noticed that both the regular scheduled Board meetings and the non-voting working session verbiage was the same. After discussion, the board voted to combine the verbiage of non-voting with regular scheduled meetings to clean up the document. Debbie stated that she had a draft already completed and would be sending out if approved by the vote.

Motion: To combine the verbiage of non-voting sessions up into the paragraph of regular scheduled meetings to clean up the document by using bullet points.

RESULT: APPROVED (UNANIMOUS)

MOVER: Allen Keller

SECONDER: Jeff Robinson

AYES: Amy Burnette, Jeff Robinson, Debbie Hawkins, Gwen Stephens, David Coffin, Allen Keller, Dr. Linda Schilkowsy

ABSENT:

Ms. Hawkins asked that discussion of the By-Laws be deferred to the discussion of the Animal Ordinance.

MISSION STATEMENT for the ANIMAL ADVISORY BOARD

Ms. Hawkins distributed a proposed mission statement for the Animal Advisory Board. She proceeded to read so that members of the audience would know what was in the statement. There was discussion from Board members regarding certain points and explanations given.

The Burke County Animal Advisory Board's primary mission is to advocate for the humane treatment of companion animals. This will be accomplished through: 1) encouraging responsible pet

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ownership by promoting and protecting the health, safety and welfare of the companion animals and citizens of Burke County, 2) monitoring animal welfare groups providing care for the animals, 3) providing support to Animal Services, 4) partnering with rescue organizations to promote owner retention and adoptions, and 5) advising County Commissioners on best practice for improvements to the Animal Ordinance, ensuring compliance with statutes pertaining to the care and treatment of animals.

Motion: To approve the mission statement for the Animal Advisory Board as presented.

RESULT: APPROVED (UNANIMOUS)

MOVER: Allen Keller

SECONDER: Dr. Linda Schilkowsy

AYES: Amy Burnette, Jeff Robinson, Debbie Hawkins, Gwen Stephens, David Coffin, Allen Keller, Dr. Linda Schilkowsy

ABSENT:

SET GOALS FOR REMAINDER OF 2019 and 2020

Ms. Hawkins opened the discussion of establishing goals for the remainder of 2019 and 2020. She discussed having not more than three goals. Ms. Stephens asked if they needed to be short term and long term. The group agreed that there needed to be both. Jeff Robinson talked about the fact that there needed to be a goal on animal welfare. Ms. Stephens talked about the need to look at the ordinance and see if it is compatible with what the State requires – this could be done as a whole group or sub-group. Allen Keller stated that along the lines of the ordinance, he would like to look at the procedure for when things are addressed and a timeline. He had brought up at a previous meeting about the fact that an approved rescue had to have three references before they could pull. He wanted to know why licensed rescues are required to get three recommendations, not sure why they have to wait when they are information is on the computer from the State. Discussion about this and for him to meet with Kaitlin separately to discuss.

There was a question from David Coffin about animal cruelty. He asked what the procedure for someone was to report and the timeframe on the requests. Lt. Massey stated that the calls all go to the Burke County Sheriff's Office and they are investigated by officers. They try to work the caseloads within two days based off the nature of the call (i.e. animals are in distress), number of animal control officers available and call volume.

Ms. Hawkins also discussed that she had fifteen years in animal welfare in many capacities. She stated that there are many silos and distrust among animal welfare groups. She stated that this saddens and angers her. Therefore, there are here today for the true welfare of the animals not individual groups. This board could be the bridge to breakdown those silos and to begin building trust.

Ms. Stephens talked about the charge from the commissioners. She stated that they believe this can be a strong board that can support animal services. She also stated that this board is not about agendas, hidden or otherwise, they are there for the animals. Ms. Hawkins also stated that there needed to be a Board philosophy, of where they knew that they were not going to agree all the time on issues and subjects, so they needed to put these on the table and work off consensus. This would be an uncomfortable process but by not letting things slide and getting the discussion to the table, that this would work for the welfare of the animals.

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The group verbally agreed to use this process, since the former members had already established this process of the past two years.

Ms. McLeod asked for a point of clarification. She stated that in their mission statement (5), that they approved to make recommendations on changes to the animal ordinance. She asked the Board members to turn to page 20, Section 6-13(a) in the current approved Animal Ordinance. She read this aloud for the members in the audience and the board. She clarified that if a goal of the group is to make recommendations of best practices in the ordinance to the Commissioners, that the ordinance would have to be changed. Their charge from the ordinance is to “advise the county commissioners, county manager, and animal services director on matters related to the organization and operation of the county animal services center.” It is noted under the By-Laws, VI. 2 – that they are to make recommendations as determined by the majority of the voting members regarding ordinances relating to the control and welfare of animals in the County.

So, this vote was not needed since it was already approved in November 2017 by the Burke County Board of Commissioners. Minutes changed to reflect what is currently approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gwen Hood addressed the board asking questions about the new procedures for animal intake. She questioned the fact that she felt there was no intake of owner surrenders. That there was no way for the rescues/foster based organizations to keep track of the animals being turned away. She stated that the organizations wanted a copy of the records of where the animal went. Ms. Settlemyre addressed her question. There will not be a list of owners given to anyone, it is not legal to give out this information. She went on to say that when owners came in and wanted to surrender their animals, they were educated about the managed intake process because they may not have room to accept the animal that day. Owners are educated about bringing the animal back later, given a list of the approved rescues/foster based organizations, and asked to return later. Owners have been very receptive to this. Discussion back and forth between the board, Ms. Settlemyre and the audience because Ms. Settlemyre told the audience that she did not want them being harassing by standing in the parking lot. Ms. Settlemyre asked the members of the audience to trust the staff in their new procedures and that owners would call them if they chose to. Ms. Hawkins called for an end of that discussion. She thanked Ms. Hood for her questions and to give the new staff time to work through the new procedures.

Ms. Ellen Galloway, from a rescue in Black Mountain, addressed the board. She stated that there are many rescues present tonight and wanted the animal advisory board to know that they are all there to give compassionate care and want to help.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Review of the Animal Ordinance

Ms. Hawkins led the discussion about the review of the animal ordinance as amended by the Commissioners on August 6, 2019. She stated that the ordinance was cleaned up by switching where appropriate all the animal control functions that deal with shelter operations over to animal services. They will discuss the ordinance later after the recommendation is made to the commissioners.

Discuss of Quarterly Audits

Ms. Hawkins then brought up the Quarterly Audits to be conducted by the board. She had had suggestions made for the audit form to be more user friendly and she had taken it upon herself to make changes and had

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animal control functions that deal with shelter operations over to animal services. They will discuss the ordinance later after the recommendation is made to the commissioners.

Discuss of Quarterly Audits

Ms. Hawkins then brought up the Quarterly Audits to be conducted by the board. She had had suggestions made for the audit form to be more user friendly and she had taken it upon herself to make changes and had sent them out. She asked for discussion of the proposed form changes. Hearing none, the group voted to approve the changes and the audit form as emailed to them by Ms. Hawkins.

Motion: To approve the revised audit form.

RESULT: APPROVED (UNANIMOUS)

MOVER: Jeff Robinson

SECONDER: David Coffin

AYES: Amy Burnette, Jeff Robinson, Debbie Hawkins, Gwen Stephens, David Coffin, Allen Keller, Dr. Linda Schilkowsy

ABSENT:

Ms. Hawkins then led the discussion on the quarterly audit procedures. She had also developed audit procedures and emailed to the group for discussion.

Random Audit Procedures

- Obtain list of animals transferred to the Approved Rescue organizations in the past 3 months
- Select Random sampling for audit – 10% if the total number pulled by that rescue
- Notify Rescue organization of records to be reviewed
- Rescue organizations have five (5) working days to either email the required documents or documents may be mailed – need to be postmarked within the five (5)-day window to the Chairperson
- Chairperson distributes / Emails (s) documents to Advisory Board members for review within 5 working days of receipt
- Audit results emailed to Chairperson within five (5) working days
- Chairperson will enter results in database
- Rescue is then notified of findings within ____ (time frame)?

She explained that there needed to be clear procedures with an arbitrary number or percentage of animals pulled to be audited. She stated that for it to be a valid random sample that at least 10% needed to be pulled. She also discussed that a monthly audit would be better, more work on both the approved rescues/fosters and on the board, but that it would be better for the animals. After much discussion from board members, and since this will be a change for the approved organizations, Ms. Settlemyre volunteered to email all of them to get their input on this matter.

The group then agreed to table the review of the By-Laws until the September meeting.

Update from the Animal Services Director

Kaitlin Settlemyre gave her first update to the board. She stated that they have been in place three weeks and have been very appreciated with all the help that had been shown to them. She stated that as of August 5th there have been five citizen adoptions and fourteen return to owners. She thanks the Burke County Animal

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Welfare Alliance and its members for getting involved with donations and their assistance. She stated that their Instagram page is up and going Burke County Animal Services, and that their Facebook page would be up and running soon. They have applied for a Pet Finder Account. They are in the process of revising their Intake Procedure Forms and getting them in place so they can be used when they are opened back up from shelter renovations. She stated that their Standard Operating Procedures are being created and they have new fee proposals and new hours for better operation.

Ms. Settlemyre discussed that they are working to vaccinate on intake and are working on their volunteer program. It is going to the County Attorney for approval. She thanked the public and the groups again for all the donated items – food, toys, blankets, washer and dryer, etc. She also discussed that the Emergency Management Storage Building at the landfill would be available as an emergency shelter and the State Inspector agreed. She also discussed how the staff have signed up for pet food programs and were working on making photography more friendly.

Ms. Settlemyre went over the handouts that had been emailed and distributed to the board regarding the **New Hours and Fees Proposal and Veterinary Medical Care**. The group listened as Ms. Settlemyre went over the new hours of operation and the proposed fees. There was much discussion and opposition to the proposed pull fee and its impact on rescues. The rationale behind the fee was given to the board, but board members were not all in agreement about approving the fees.

Ms. Settlemyre also went over the proposed Veterinary Medical Care and gave the rationale for the preventive care. There was much discussion about what was required by law to be done for the animals and what is nice to be able to do. Discussion about possibly making a tier of services on implementation. Discussion about discounts for rescues and foster based organizations. There was discussion about a fund being set up to accept donations to pay for heartworm treatment and other medical bills and such. It was discussed that the County Finance Director had been asked about this, but no answer to date. She will send an email to Margaret Pierce following up on setting up a foundation.

As the group continued to discuss the fees and veterinary care, Ms. McLeod reminded the board that they are an advisory board only, and that the Commissioners set all fees for the County. She stated that their role is to bless and approve the recommendations put forth from Ms. Settlemyre, but not to approve fees and hours.

Ms. Settlemyre also told the board that the Animal Services Center has a 38% kill rate now.

ADJOURN

Ms. Hawkins then asked the board if they saw the need for another meeting prior to their regularly scheduled September 25th, 2019 meeting. Hearing no input about another meeting, a motion from Jeff Robinson and a second from Allen Keller to adjourn was made. All in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:52 pm.

Approved this the 25th day of September 2019.



Debbie Hawkins
Chairperson, Animal Advisory Board