

CLARK COUNTY ANIMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

**Parks & Community Services Administration Building
2901 East Sunset Road, Park Police Conference Room
Las Vegas, Nevada 89120
April 12, 2004
6:30 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: HENDERSON, DAVID
 HOFF, KARIN
 HORN, KENNETH
 KRISKO, SUSAN
 ROGERS, TODD

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 p.m.

2. Approval of agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made and seconded.

3. Approval of December 8, 2003 Minutes

A motion to approve the Minutes was made and seconded.

4. Presentation to Committee Members

JOE BOTEILHO presented a county logo shirt with Animal Advisory Committee printed on it to the Committee members from last year as a token of appreciation and thanked them for their service.

All members introduced themselves: Dr. David Henderson, DVM., Todd Rogers, General Public: Karin Hoff, Wildlife: Kenneth Horn, Animal Trainer and Susan Krisko, Humane Group Representative.

5. Selection of Chair and Vice-Chair

SUSAN KRISKO was nominated as Chair and KARIN HOFF as Vice Chair. Both motions were seconded and approved.

6. Information-sharing by Committee Members

Future agenda items – changing ordinance 10.24 regarding tethering. SUSAN KRISKO has a petition with over 190 signatures to show community support for this change.

7. Comments by the General Public

DR. MYRA GLASSMAN wanted to know who “we” was regarding the petition and was informed they can be obtained from the Las Vegas Humane Society.

JUDITH RUIZ, Las Vegas Humane Society, pointed out that the numbers have not changed much in

the last years. There are still more than 23,000 euthanized animals at shelters. They are working on getting county funding to help change this.

HAROLD VASKO, Heaven Can Wait, wants to put something on the agenda that would generate a penalty if their animal is not neutered. They are targeting areas now and have spayed or neutered over 1,000 dogs or cats in low-income areas but there is no incentive to get animals neutered. They offer free spay or neuter, free transport, \$5 and free food. Ten percent of people they target cause 70 to 75 percent of the problem. They can show areas where all they are doing is breeding. SUSAN KRISKO told him this could be put on as an agenda item and asked him to propose something in writing as far as penalties. KARIN HOFF would like to look at different ways to provide incentives. DR. HENDERSON would entertain a lot of different ideas to give incentives to spay or neuter their pets. We do need to provide incentives and at least try something different to see if we can impact the numbers and get it down to match the number of animals with the demand for them. JUDITH does an average of 100 cats a month and would like word gotten to the public to call them when they first see a cat. KARIN HOFF would like to couple the penalties and enforcement with a public information campaign specific to the problem. It would be nice if we could get some professional advice on how best to reach the target area.

KEN SONDEJ, Adopt A Rescue, is on 5 brand new pet law websites and they deal with penalties for no spay or neuter - \$25 fine or if a tag is required, \$25 or \$50 more for tag. Because of heat from “hobby breeders” incentives would have to be of a positive nature. Channel 3 does a lot of community service announcements. They are into animals, their plight and what is going on in this valley and he is sure they would be willing to do community service statements but depends on time of day. Media needs to be involved to either do pro bono or reduced fee. SUSAN KRISKO asked for it to be put on the next agenda and for concrete ideas for penalties and incentives. JUDITH suggested a videotape of one of Harold’s spay-a- thons so people could see the magnitude of the problem. KEN said some cities have put a euthanization process on the news that has caused all kinds of “hell” in their areas.

JOE BOTEILHO has some good news. The impound numbers went down in the county which points to some of the proactive programming in Clark County. Other entities are not working as proactively as Clark County. We need a program to target the other entities. AFI has been trying to give away free sterilizations in the past but it has to be not only a Clark County initiative but valley wide, including Mesquite. JOE BOTEILHO asked what happened to license plate? After talking with the DMV, JUDITH was told they will be available in September.

DR. HENDERSON - With Heaven Can Wait, we are talking 100’s of free sterilizations, 225 free sterilizations in 30 hours. Other entities have to get involved. Not just the county. When they do ground zero, high risk areas, trailer parks, Heaven Can Wait brings in a mobile vet. All the people have to do is open the door but they don’t bother doing it. It is frustrating. You have to make people understand they are the problem. Somehow we have to get animals sterilized.

TODD ROGERS sees the problem as irresponsible pet owners. It is an education process, public awareness. Budget or money is the bottom line. DR. HENDERSON has a captive audience when they come in to see him but often they don’t perceive themselves as the problem. Education is part. Realistically they are aware, but don’t apply it to them. Some may want their kids to see the miracle of birth or are going to sell puppies and make \$500 or \$600 each. We need to redefine responsible pet ownership.

DR. GLASSMAN spoke about a man in her neighborhood who told her about a feral cat living on his roof that had kittens. She suggested he catch her and the kittens and offered to get them spayed and neutered. Gave him info from 5 different places for spay and neuter. He never did anything. The

cat just had another litter of kittens. Education is important. They know about the birds and the bees. They are just irresponsible. KARIN HOFF brought up that sometimes the point of public information is to promote a political climate that will support the penalties. DR. GLASSMAN sees part of the problem with the penalty as the population doesn't have the money so they won't come forth and pay the money and from an enforcement point, Animal Control is spread so thin, the last thing they need is another enforcement duty they will not be able to do. She is all for getting animals spayed and neutered. It is one of the responsibilities of having a pet. They shouldn't have pets if they are irresponsible. KEN HORN - there are a lot of hobby breeders who don't know what they are doing. Don't sterilize animals because they don't understand the health problems and they need to understand they will not lose their drive. It is part of responsible ownership. They don't understand that when you have an unneutered male, he can smell a female a mile a way (especially in heat). Other uneducated people are not spaying their dog not realizing they are driving the male dogs crazy.

JOE BOTEILHO has good news on logistics. The City of Las Vegas is in the process of obtaining the mobile emergency shelter with homeland security grant money. This has been reinvigorated and hopefully they will get one self-contained unit with caging. This would be great for use in disasters. We would have a housing facility and a mobile sterilization unit. SUSAN KRISKO asked if it would be available all the time. JOE BOTEILHO - if all things go as originally planned; it will be operated and maintained by all the jurisdictions.

RHEA and ED COMINOLO bought a puppy from a pet store and lost it 4 days later. This person has 4 different stores in this town with 52 counts brought against him and he is still doing business. Average consumer is still not protected. Animals are dying left and right. They want to know what they can do to change the laws. There are 18 current complaints against the store. Animal Control's hands are tied. Animals get home and get sick. They are not on a headhunt for one store but for every one in this county. Puppies are disposable and families bringing them home as a new family member go through heart ache. Need to change laws so they are more than a misdemeanor. Filed a complaint with Sgt. March. Don't know what to do as citizens to change this. They want to make sure stores know they are not going to get away with this stuff. The guy is inflicting harm willfully and intentionally on the animals and hardship on the families.

SUSAN KRISKO is well aware of what he is talking about. The laws are not the problem. There are ways to get enforcement. The problem is it takes at least 2 hours to inspect a store and if he could go in and inspect every couple of days it would help. There are ways to increase penalties. Animal Control needs to have people to be able to do it. One of the issues that has to do with everything is that Animal Control does not have enough people. She has tried to think about best way to present it. They have gone since the 70's without a new officer. TODD ROGERS would like to know why it isn't tied to growth. Why doesn't Animal Control grow per capita?

JOE BOTEILHO – Roger Martel is not on the lease or the business license, although he may work for them. Animal Control has the toughest pet shop laws in the US on the books. Yes, it is a manpower issue but we are making great headway. Other pet shops are no longer here because they didn't meet our laws. The weak link in the chain is that it is not carried across the valley. It is a tough law and is time consuming to enforce.

ED COMINOLO will volunteer his time to go to stores. Darcy Spears forwarded all the e-mails. She is trying to get them to band together. What would be helpful for this committee? How can we best use groups. JOE BOTEILHO told him that if they have been impacted, they should take matters civilly and work with Animal Control on criminal prosecution. Civilly will really impact the business. SUSAN KRISKO told them they need to be fighting on two fronts. In the other prosecutions, citizens came in and cared. It is not an easy process. Judge continued the case a number of times.

They have to be willing to put in time and effort to come into court. They are doing this because they are making money. As soon as they stop making money, they will stop. Lawsuits will have an impact.

ED - What can we do to get background checks for pet shops? Does staff have training. Can they take care of multiple animals? Can we lobby for them to get money to do these things? It was suggested they contact legislators and county commissioners. We do have good laws. Animal Control has to prove they know the animal was sick when they sold it. More money has to be given to Animal Control. Ordinances cannot be enforced. Sgt. March does a lot of prosecutions and Animal Control now has weekend officers that are doing surprise inspections. We are trying to put heat on all fronts.

JOE BOTEILHO doesn't know if Business License would institute a privilege license for pet shops but Animal Control does inspect them prior to a license being issued. Anything we find that comes back in a criminal prosecution, we recommend they pull the license. ED COMINOLO would like to see if it could be tied in to health and welfare. Animals being cranked out by other shops and puppy mills are being turned out violent. Or disease control, consumers taking home sick animals and making other animals sick, spreading disease. In Clark County, before any animal is sold it has to be inspected. All animals have to be examined on an individual card for dogs and cats. It's part of how Animal Control looks at their operation. The pet shop's vet told ED that they do not administer vaccinations. In an investigation, Animal Control looks at forms, talks to the veterinarian. The 1st dog ED and RHEA purchased from that store was hypoglycemic. ED COMINOLO wants to be manpower. They will generate public outcry. JOE BOTEILHO would like to see the other entities in other jurisdictions step up to the plate and have a like ordinance so they can't go to another jurisdiction. Go after them civilly. KARIN HOFF suggests they go to public meetings, lobby for money. Animal Control competes with money for kids. There has to be an obvious need and if it is for public health, you are much more likely to get attention. The Commissioners are bombarded all day long with citizen complaints. The budget is always stretched. If they are unaware, they will not be able to respond.

Complaints must be adjudicated. They cannot be closed down for probable cause. It has to go to the Board of County Commissioners to revoke the license.

DR. GLASSMAN is all for signs telling people not to buy from pet stores in general. Tell them to adopt from a shelter. Educational campaigns – go to community centers and speak to people about not buying from pet stores or buy from a rescue group or a shelter. Thinks you can talk to the media. Get investigative reporters and bring them into a meeting with all who have been affected. SUSAN KRISKO would like to see community support for more positions for animal control. All stations have done stories on different pet stores. It is not getting to the majority of people. Change will happen when there are enough people to go out and consistently inspect the pet stores.

TODD ROGERS – given the Animal Control budget, how much money would make problems go away? JOE BOTEILHO would problems go away? Doesn't think so. They will always have a situation. Something new will come, a different way of doing it. We have tried to close all the loopholes. Would you like to see manpower double? Would that help problems? In public service you don't want to say you want to see budget doubled. NACA set the standard - 1 officer for every 18,000 people. We are at 1 officer for every 74,000 people. It is very trying. We work 7 days a week. We have a volunteer program. They work with officers. Supplemental budget is where you ask for additional people. We put forward a supplemental budget and it is prioritized at the department level and then county level. Now there really are few new county positions. We are dealing with human issues and other priorities. We cannot compete with fire and police in that realm. Animal Control was started 12/12/47 with the first dogcatcher. Jan. 1, 1948 they went under the

sheriff and then under public works. In 1997, we went to Admin Services and in 2001 Parks & Community Services. They took him and gave him double the workload. SUSAN KRISKO asked if the supplemental was already written up. JOE BOTEILHO submitted 2, one for an exotic animal officer and one for another officer. In the Department, we are 22 or 23. SUSAN KRISKO wants to skip from recommendation here to Board of County Commissioners. KARIN HOFF believes that unless it is presented as a public health issue, it won't go forward.

JOE BOTEILHO has an item that is important to examine sooner rather than later - NRS 202.500 for dangerous/vicious animals. City of Las Vegas is moving it into their city code. They are making a stylized version for their city code as a simple change to code that would make sense in light of animal bites and securing the animal. We should confine any animal that bites and use "at large" as a basis for animal being quarantined at a vet's office. Not for dog on dog attacks but bites to humans. We could change the code to make it easier to confine the animal and if it rises to the occasion, to declare it vicious. Some people have put the animal in their vehicle and left town. Most people are there at the initial quarantine and then they leave. He wants this on the agenda.

Needs spay and neuter ideas and amendment change. Animal Control had to underfill positions with dispatch or office staff and now we are trying to make up staff that was under filled. NACA is supportive. They did come and do an overview assessment in 1998 and went to the Board of County Commissioners. The unfortunate part is that we have been innovative and good at reducing services. Pre-1987 we were picking up owned animals, dead horses, and vet diseased animals that we have cut and still tried to maintain core service. We are now looking at what can we cut like the noisy animal procedure. It will be very contentious. We have been ineffective at prosecuting it. We need the public to take a more active role.

JUDITH RUIZ – what about the need for Animal Control Officers to witness abuse. SUSAN KRISKO – they cannot cite unless they see it happen. JOE BOTEILHO if citizens are willing to give us a statement and if accepted by the District Attorney, we can file a criminal complaint. As of today, they created a Q calendar with courts for Animal Control and Code Enforcement and we should be very successful in those cases. We need the public to be engaged.

ED COMINOLO – manpower – compared to man-hours. Spread thin – how thin? JOE BOTEILHO hard to answer – things are done on a priority basis. It becomes a response issue. How long do you want to wait to investigate a dog bite? We will get priorities first. On until midnight and then one person on call until 6 a.m.

TODD ROGERS – budget sometimes gets overlooked because it is not health and safety but it can be with vicious animals or dogs that attack. ED COMINOLO – with the exotics, how many big cats are up there? Is there a problem with exotics that come down into the valley? JOE BOTEILHO - Animal Control is usually the first on scene. It is the responsibility of the Department of Wildlife but we are usually the first to take care of it. Exotics law was to address a whole new issue – skill, facility and training to deal with the animal. We don't have a lot of Animal Control Officer positions but we have innovative programs. Board of County Commissioners has supported and fully funded an animal shelter. They have not shorted us. We have a good shelter program, sick and injured animal program. No licensing which enabled us to establish rapport with pet owners. An impound fee of \$50 that gives certificates back to owners and if unused, money put back to buy microchips and sterilizations every year. Have made it up in innovation and technology. Can we be better? Yes. Will it cure all ails? No. There will always be cause and effect.

8. **Set date, time and agenda of next meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for May 12, 2004, at 6:30 p.m. in the Park Police Conference Room at Sunset Park.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.