

CLARK COUNTY ANIMAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

**Clark County Government Center
500 South Grand Central Parkway, Pueblo Room
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101
June 6, 2001
6:30 p.m.**

MEMBERS PRESENT: HENDERSON, DAVID
 MARCH, DEBRA
 NOSEK, BARBARA
 RIVKIN, SAMUEL

1. **Call to order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:38 p.m.

2. **Approval of agenda**

A motion to approve the agenda was made and seconded.

3. **Approval of May 14, 2001 Minutes**

Motion to approve the Minutes was made and seconded.

4. **Discussion of plan to identify animal sheltering options**

DR. BERNICK submitted a hand out detailing the graduate students activities to date and areas where they have determined follow up is needed. Students were in contact with the nine major associations of the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy. This council is a major source of information on animal sheltering and animal control and serves as a basis for much of what has been done. The national council was formed to develop policies on pet populations.

DR. BERNICK met with Clark County staff and reviewed Animal Control data as well as the Dewey Center-s data to project out animal population. He also looked at study guidelines and worked on the survey questions. Examples of performance measurements enable them to compare our shelter to others. They have looked through the surveys and very few have been done that ask citizens about the shelter in terms of evaluating it. The major focus of many of the surveys is to understand why people leave pets off at the shelter. The students worked on a series of questions but DR. BERNICK thought it best to focus on the real issue - what do we want to find out?

DR. BERNICK stated there are a series of studies that talk about animal shelters and whether they are controlled by local government, private non profit, or private non-profit with contracts. The Committee would like the results by category. Currently about 38 percent of

shelters are local government controlled shelters, owned and operated by local government, 19% private non-profit with housing contracts. There are variations but we are looking and will be able to identify how those are managed and which agencies they are working with.

The primary guideline for the survey is that it has to have bearing on the task assigned by the commissioners. Some things are important such as location or distance of shelter, use of shelter for drop off and pick up. For some people distance is very important. A major place where animals are picked up is in low income communities. The farther it is to travel, the less likely they are to avail themselves of the shelter. The real issue is are citizens willing to pay for an animal shelter and how is that going to be paid. People without pets would probably say fees. Would you be willing to pay for a shelter that increases health and safety to the people? If they are forced to say yes or no, you get a better feel as to how many are willing to pay for a better or more shelter.

SAM RIVKIN mentioned that all the tax proposals on the recent ballot were rejected and asked where the funding comes from now. The County has always used the general fund.

DEBRA MARCH wanted to know how many questions will be in the survey and what survey population would be used.

DR. BERNICK responded that about 400 responses are required, which gives a margin of error plus or minus 5%. At least 1000 to 1200 people are identified to get the 400 responses. Survey in just unincorporated Clark County can be done a number of ways. One way is to draw random samples from voter registrations. You lose about 30% of the population because they are not registered voters. We can look at people who have been to the shelter at one time but that doesn't help with people who don't have pets or people who would use a shelter to get a pet. Another data set could be the telephone cross directory and pick specific streets.

The COMMITTEE decided the geography of the survey is the metropolitan area of Clark County. There are a variety of techniques to get a random sample, the easiest does not ask where a person lives, is less invasive in terms of privacy and brings more cooperation. Look at alternatives - work between UNLV and staff to bring results back in July

DEBRA MARCH would like to explore regional or satellite facilities and their willingness to travel. How long should it take you to get to the shelter? There are complexities that might influence a person's response. How far are you willing to go to find your lost pet as opposed to how far are you willing to travel to adopt. If there are multiple centers, in terms of pursuing a lost pet, the assumption made is that it is at nearest shelter. How do you deal with that in a questionnaire when the reality is they may need to go to several different shelters. Every possible scenario cannot be explored.

BARBARA NOSEK asked if the COMMITTEE has the opportunity to recommend practices and services along with more logistical aspects. Board direction was to consider shelter facility issues and to focus on facility insofar as facility is impacted by desirable services that is related in terms of kinds of areas or what you want in a facility. Could this be added because it is

related to a shelter facility as a secondary recommendation. JOY SALMON encouraged the COMMITTEE to focus on a future facility and not on responses to current shelter facilities.

Staff will work with UNLV in terms of finalizing the survey. UNLV will conduct it and come back in July to let the Committee know how it is going and will report on the national research at the July meeting. Survey results will be given in August.

DR. GLASSMAN has concerns with the random sample and thinks a phone survey will skew the results. As to willingness to travel and how far, Las Vegas is different than other areas in terms of concepts of distance people are willing to travel. She is concerned about survey issues addressing a shelter as a place to warehouse animals. We need to focus more on adoption and what can we do to increase adoptions. What would bring them out to adopt a shelter animal? This will determine size needed of shelter.

FERN JENNINGS volunteers at the SPCA at least once a week for 3 or 4 years. She has never had a call where anyone said the shelter is too far away. People can get there in just a short time.

JUDITH RUIZ stated that Commissioner Gates said various options should be considered. They wanted a laundry list and she believes it should include spay/neuter studies. The SPCA staying at Dewey was originally temporary so it should not be considered when the size of a shelter is considered. Over 6,000 animals were put to death last year. Taking animals out of a shelter and adopting is good, but we need to put more emphasis on the animals not getting to the shelter.

5. Report on Animal Control Audit

JOE BOTEILHO gave an overview. Internal Audit audited the Animal Control Division for the period from July 1998 to June 2000. The scope of the audit was to verify the accuracy of monthly lease, compare contracts, pet licensing and analyze responses regarding stray, injured, and loose animals. The audit revealed there was an underpayment to the vendor, and the Animal Control Division has remitted money to the Dewey Center. The audit recommended that Animal Control prioritize calls, and have supervisory personnel provide periodic reviews. A new coding system is in place to identify low level to high level calls when the dispatcher is determining call priority. It was recommended that trap deposits be deposited into the bank instead of being held and returned to the customers. We are still working this out as a matter of convenience for our customers. Follow up on officer sold rabies certificates was mentioned in an effort to insure compliance. At this time, we are not following up but are looking at it. As to animals released on certificate, Animal Control was to meet with Dewey and come up with procedures. They also recommended the removal of expired vouchers. Fanciers permits are followed up with a new system where officers go out to see if they are in compliance.

JOY SALMON noted that regarding follow up of officer sold rabies certificates, the difficulty is a staffing issue. If the governor signs SB 150, it will allow the county to implement civil penalties for certain code violations, like issuing a traffic ticket or fine. Instead of having to appear on a criminal cite for not having rabies, they can pay a fine or enter an alternative court

sentencing program. Instead of paying a \$50 fine, we will allow you to go to animal care school for \$25. If the governor signs the bill, we will come back to you to determine which items in county code you want to consider having a civil penalty rather than criminal and in addition, consider alternative sentencing. Animal care school can be part of the implementation and we will work with other jurisdictions to get this done.

Internal Audit found it important to see effectiveness of measurement tools to track pets that are returned to their owners. Animal Control will soon be automated to produce usable data in order to determine which method was successful and then compare costs to implement each method.

6. Review of sterilization policy for adopted animals

STAFF is seeking direction on the current policy requiring dogs and cats over eight weeks of age adopted from the Dewey Center to be sterilized prior to release. Currently, Clark County Code allows animals less than 8 weeks of age to be released on a sterilization certificate. 28% of the animals over 8 weeks of age have been released from the Dewey Center on sterilization certificates. The District Attorney's Office advised this practice is not in compliance with code and to allow the practice to continue, the code must be changed. DR. FREER stated that the huge jump in 2000 represents cycles such as when the community goes through parvo virus seasons. We also had an epidemic of cat respiratory virus and it was not medically feasible to sterilize the animals. As a public relations point, people have fallen in love with an animal, the animal has a fever, but a family would be told they can't have the animal because it can't be sterilized.

BARBARA NOSEK asked if there was any type of follow up on certificates. It was noted that the redemption percentage is low. Right now, they make an appointment for surgery at the time the animal leaves. Compliance is very low in coming back. Maybe a deposit which is refunded when animal is brought back will help.

NRS exempts from having sterilization but not exempts from leaving deposit. It triggers agreement and deposit. JOY stated that if it is determined that you want to allow animals to be released on certificate regardless of age, County Code will have to be changed. The agreement is very specific about what follow up has to be and it is quite involved. County code is more restrictive than NRS. Do you want to continue the restrictiveness or change to a less restrictive policy?

DR. FREER indicated that legitimate adoption agencies in the community are interested in adopting animals from Dewey and would spay and neuter them at their own facilities. It is a time issue and they want the animals right away.

DR. HENDERSON stated that shelter medicine is different than private practice. With such a low compliance in returns for sterilization, you have to consider that even if they eventually did get these animals neutered, it will add to the problem. In trying to save a few, you will end up euthanizing a couple hundred in a few years. You cannot put the same standards on shelter practice as regular practice. Until it is adopted, it is a county animal. DR. HENDERSON

suggested that a substantial deposit be something that would encourage them to come back along with an aggressive policy to make sure they come back.

JOE BOTEILHO does not like releasing them. If it is not a good candidate for sterilization, it is not adoptable.

BARBARA NOSEK is not in favor of releasing to other agencies without sterilizing them first.

DR. HENDERSON noted that rescue groups are great but they need to be patient and take ones that are already sterilized.

Motion to change county code to institute agreement and follow up procedure for spay/neuter for animals released 8 weeks of age or younger was made and seconded.

7. Information-sharing by Committee Members

BARBARA NOSEK asked about the puppy auction or game dog ad. It is a gray area on the auction. Unless they are actually engaged in fighting we can't do much without probable cause on the game bred. When you give an animal as a prize, it is against code.

In order to have a dog kennel in a backyard, M1 zoning would be required.

JOY advised that if SB150 is signed by the governor, counties will be allowed to require liability insurance for owners of animals that have been deemed inherently dangerous.

8. Comments by the General Public

None.

9. Set date, time and agenda of next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for July 23 at 6:30 p.m.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

POSTING LOCATIONS: This meeting was legally noticed and posted at the following locations:

Clark County Government Center, 500 South Grand Central Parkway

Clark County Courthouse, 200 S. 3rd Street

Paradise Community Center, 4770 Harrison Drive

Desert Breeze Park & Community Center, 8275 Spring Mountain

Winchester Community Center, 3130 S. McLeod Drive

Dewey Animal Care Center, 4800 West Dewey Drive