

Gwinnett County Animal Task Force Minutes
March 27, 2012
7:00 p.m.
884 Winder Highway
Lawrenceville, Georgia

Members Present:

Kelly Alder, Vice Chair	Angie Peevy
Elizabeth Burgner	Jon Richards
Dr. Solveig Evans	Tatiana Romeo
Dr. Cathy Fish	Jane Stewart
Wanda Johnson	Joel Taylor, Chairman
Curtis Northrup	Dr. Wayne Wallis

Members Absent:

Donald Bush
James Freeman
Suzanne Pruitt
Pattie Szanti

Staff Present:

Major Dan Bruno, Gwinnett County Police Department
Theresa Cox, Law Department
Shaunieka Taste, Public Relations Coordinator

I. Call to Order

Time: 7:00 p.m.

II. Opening Remarks

Animal Task Force Members introduced themselves

III. Approval of Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

Motion to Approve: Jon Richards

Second: Curtis Northrup

Vote: 10-0 (Members Johnson & Stewart absent)

IV. Subcommittees – Brief Overview of Subcommittee Work

A. Partnership

Mr. Northrup provided a brief overview for the Partnership Subcommittee. The Subcommittee was tasked with looking at opportunities to bring in organizations to aid Animal Welfare and Enforcement. The Subcommittee has looked at

partnerships with AVMA, Meals on Wheels, and Gwinnett TV. The Subcommittee has also looked at instituting volunteer days for the shelter.

B. Policy

Mr. Northrup provided a brief overview from the Policy Subcommittee. The Policy Subcommittee was tasked with reviewing the County's animal control ordinances and a portion of the Unit's Standard Operating Procedures. The Subcommittee has compared our ordinances with those of surrounding counties as well as ordinances from Boulder, Colorado and New Hampshire. The Subcommittee is looking for areas that the County's ordinances and SOPs can be tweaked to better provide safety for citizens and animal welfare.

C. Program

Ms. Burgner provided a brief overview from the Program Subcommittee. The Program Subcommittee was tasked with reviewing policies and programs regarding the treatment of animals once they arrive at the shelter. The Programs Subcommittee is working on recommendations in the following areas: temperament testing; euthanasia criteria and methods; rescue/adoption coordinator job description; marketing program; website improvement; full-time staff veterinarian; and enhancing volunteer program. The Program Subcommittee is also working on a feral cat program that they are already working to put in place.

D. Structure

Mr. Richards provided a brief overview for the Structure Subcommittee. The Structure Subcommittee was tasked with reviewing the composition of the Animal Advisory Council and its functions and making recommendations for improvements or changes. The Structure Subcommittee was also tasked with looking at the Structure of the Animal Welfare and Enforcement Unit and making recommendations for changes, if any.

V. Public Comment

Ten members of the public spoke:

1. Joyce Durdin

Ms. Durdin spoke about the need for qualified people to work in the Animal Welfare and Enforcement Center. Ms. Durdin also suggested that ride-alongs would be beneficial for citizens as well as Task Force Members, maybe the creation of a citizen program for Animal Control similar to the citizen fire academy. Ms. Durdin also spoke about the need for rescues to have enough notice to be able to accommodate animals before they are euthanized. Ms. Durdin would also like to see policies and procedures for the Animal Welfare and Enforcement Unit posted on-line for full-disclosure. Ms. Durdin also stated that the Gwinnett Animal Welfare and Enforcement Center had way too many kennels open.

2. Jennifer Wagner

Ms. Wagner works with the Society of Humane Friends and the Jail Dog Program. Ms. Wagner informed the committee that the C.L.A.S.S. program had been ended at the Animal Welfare and Enforcement Center due to difficulties with staff specifically related to a dog within the program being euthanized. According to Ms. Wagner, Ms. Bruce had been promised a week to be able to find the dog a foster home, but the dog was euthanized before a week had passed. Ms. Wagner told the Task Force that a professional behaviorist was needed at the Shelter. Ms. Wagner indicated that there were too many orange tags indicating that the animal had a behavior issue. Ms. Wagner also indicated that she believes it is taking too long to get the website updated with regard to pictures of the animals. She indicated that volunteer staff could be used to update the webpage. Ms. Wagner stated that the Shelter was not marketing, managing, or evaluating animals effectively.

3. Virginia Keller

Ms. Keller has been a full-time volunteer at the Shelter since the Shelter opened. She stated that she was surprised that the Animal Task Force members had not made more of an effort to see what happens at the Shelter or spend time at the Shelter. Ms. Keller stated that she believes the Task Force should also concentrate on how operations at the Animal Welfare and Enforcement Center could be done more effectively to save taxpayer money. Ms. Keller stated that animal control was about cleaning up the mess of other people and a focus should be made on spay/neuter programs. Ms. Keller's wants everyone to focus on getting along to accomplish the goals.

4. Joyce Krechting

Ms. Krechting provided a written statement to the members. Ms. Krechting stated that public comments should be included with the minutes of the meetings. Ms. Krechting also disagrees with the Structure Subcommittee's recommendation with regard to the structure of the Animal Advisory Council. Ms. Krechting would prefer that the changes approved by the Animal Advisory Council in May 2010 be approved. Ms. Krechting believes that the Animal Advisory Council membership should include animal advocates as well as regular citizens. Ms. Krechting also disagrees with the Structure Subcommittee's recommendation that rescue groups form a group similar to the Gwinnett Coalition. She believes that this would add another layer of government and take away the voices for voiceless.

5. Becky White

Ms. White works with Heavenly Tails Dog Training and also does rescue. Ms. White was also concerned with the situation regarding "Francis" the dog that was in the C.L.A.S.S. program that was euthanized. Ms. White would like to Lt. Respass reinstated and believes that she has received the run around since Lt.

Respass was removed. She believes that Ms. Bruce's C.L.A.S.S. program was very valuable and that the Shelter needs volunteers with knowledge on animal behavior and training. Ms. White also reminded everyone that other animals besides dogs are brought into the Animal Welfare and Enforcement Center.

6. William Street

Mr. Street had a contract with DeKalb County Animal Control for a year and a half for veterinary services and he is also a mobile vet. Mr. Street stated that Gwinnett's facility is state of the art. Mr. Street tried to duplicate some of the policies and programs of Gwinnett's Animal Welfare and Enforcement Unit in DeKalb to make DeKalb better. He tried to institute a spay/neuter program similar to Gwinnett's in DeKalb. Mr. Street also tried to use some of Fayette County's euthanasia process in DeKalb. DeKalb had very high euthanasia rates for dogs and cats. DeKalb would overflow with no place to put animals. Mr. Street likes the Task Force and wants to bring ideas from Gwinnett to DeKalb.

7. Chris Redenbach

Ms. Redenbach is a certified dog behaviorist who primarily works in DeKalb. In 2003, she began a humane education program for the public, but the program was ended due to lack of funding. Ms. Redenbach stated that some animal owners are not knowledgeable and believes we should use the power of children to spread the message. Educating children on responsible ownership will get the message back to the parents. Mr. Redenbach emphasized the need for funding of private education groups and the need to be innovative with animal education. Ms. Redenbach suggested the Task Force look into a mandatory education class for individuals who receive certain animal citations. She stated that the Task Force is an opportunity to be innovative in Gwinnett County.

8. Kim Neun

Ms. Neun has been a trainer since 1986. She believes animals with the shelter are killed due to lack of education and training about animal communication and behavior. Ms. Neun stated that the employees of the shelter need to be trained, the shelter would then save what is often considered not savable. Ms. Neun also spoke about an experience she had with the shelter about two years ago where a dog that she had rescued was almost put down because staff had not found the microchip. Ms. Neun would like to see the Task Force focus on keeping animals with owners. Ms. Neun stated that we need to educate the caretakers and provide a spay/neuter incentive (maybe a penalty). Ms. Neun also stated that HB 685 is a ridiculous law.

9. Kelly Brooks

Ms. Brooks stated that she attended her first Animal Task Force Meeting in January and that things have gone from bad to worse, with more and more animals killed daily. Ms. Brooks believes that the solution is to have a Full-time

rescue coordinator at the shelter. She believes the rescue coordinator should work with out-of-state rescue groups and local groups who partner with out-of-state rescue groups if the out-of-state groups did not have a permit to pull animals in the State of Georgia.

10. Randy DeCarlo

Mr. DeCarlo stated that the trouble with the Animal Welfare and Enforcement Center is that the government runs the shelter. He stated that across the nation police departments do not do a good job of running the shelter. He stated that Gwinnett is seeing the effects of hiring someone not qualified to run the shelter. He believes that the biggest thing the Task Force could accomplish is to institute the recommendations from Carla Brown and Dr. Montgomery regarding the Animal Advisory Council. He is upset that the Task Force has not looked at privatizing the shelter and believes the shelter should be given back to the citizens to hire a rescue group to run the shelter. He is also appalled at the way cats are euthanized. He asked that the Task Force make tough decisions and to look at where we going to be in next five years.

Next ATF group meeting

Next meeting will be on April 10, 2012 at 7 p.m. at the Animal Welfare and Enforcement Center.

VI. Adjournment

Motion: Jon Richards

Second: Angie Peevy

Vote: 12-0

Time 8:00 p.m.