

Gwinnett County Animal Task Force Minutes
February 28, 2012
7:00 p.m.
884 Winder Highway
Lawrenceville, Georgia

Members Present:

Kelly Alder, Vice Chair	Curtis Northrup
Elizabeth Burgner	Angie Peevy
Donald Bush	Jon Richards
Dr. Cathy Fish	Tatiana Romeo
Wanda Johnson	Joel Taylor, Chairman

Members Absent:

Dr. Solveig Evans	Jane Stewart
James Freeman	Pattie Szanti
Suzanne Pruitt	Dr. Wayne Wallis

Staff Present:

Lt. Mary Respass, Animal Welfare and Enforcement Unit
Theresa Cox, Law Department
Shaunieka Taste, Public Relations Coordinator, Communications Division

I. Call to Order

Time: 7:07 p.m.

II. Approval of Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

Motion to Approve: Jon Richards

Second: Elizabeth Burger

Vote: 9-0 (Member Bush absent)

III. Approval of Minutes – Meeting Minutes from 2/7/12

Motion to Approve Minutes with one correction to change the word “Agenda” to “Minutes”: Jon Richards

Second: Angie Peevy

Vote: 9-0 (Member Bush absent)

IV. Feral Cat Discussion

- A. Guest Speaker – Rebecca Guinn, Director/Founder LifeLine Animal Project**
- B. Guest Speaker – Major Kathy Mooneyham, Director DeKalb County Animal Control**

Ms. Guinn and Major Mooneyham gave a presentation together to the Task Force Members and the public in attendance about Trap/Neuter/Release (TNR) Programs in general and DeKalb County's Feral Freedom Program. Ms. Guinn is the Director of the LifeLine Animal Project, a private non-profit, that has partnered with DeKalb County since 2007 to assist in the Feral Freedom Program. Ms. Guinn explained that TNR is a solution to the problem of feral cats and not a problem itself. Ms. Guinn stated that they start with the assumption that if a cat comes from an outside environment and is moderately healthy that they assume it has a home. If a cat fits that assumption, they spay/neuter, vaccinate, do an ear tip, and return the animal to where it was picked up. After the cat is spayed or neutered and returned to its environment, Ms. Guinn stated that the cat populations would then control themselves. Ms. Guinn also provided survey statistics that indicate that the euthanasia rate for cats brought into a shelter is 72% and the rate for feral cats is 100%.

Major Mooneyham provided information about the Feral Freedom Program which is a TNR program targeted to decrease euthanasia rates of healthy cats and reduce shelter costs. The DeKalb County Feral Freedom considers feral cats "community" cats. Major Mooneyham stated that DeKalb County does not have an issue with releasing cats as DeKalb's County's cat leash law applies to "owned" cats. The program includes a lot of public and community education concerning "community" cats. Major Mooneyham stated that the program did not have any costs associated with it for DeKalb. Ms. Guinn provided statistics that prior to the institution of the program, DeKalb's euthanasia rate for cats was 78% and that in five months the rate has reduced to 20%, which is a 73% decrease in the euthanasia rate for cats in DeKalb County Animal Shelter. Both Ms. Guinn and Major Mooneyham stressed that the program required the County to make a commitment to save lives, work with TNR groups, provide statistics, and agree not to impede TNR programs.

C. Ad Hoc Committee Update

Ms. Burgner provided an update on the work of the "Ad Hoc Feral Cat" committee. The ad hoc committee has met once and is working on a county program for feral cats. The Program would be a TNR program operated by private non-profits and with private funding. The program has been advertised in the AJC and the Gwinnett County water bill. Planned Pethood will loan traps and information on low cost spay/neuter operations are

provided. The Animal Welfare and Enforcement Unit is already cooperating with the program. The goal of the ad hoc committee will be educating the public, moving the relationship with the Animal Welfare and Enforcement Unit forward, and looking for volunteer resources.

V. Survey – Update

Mr. Richards provided an update on the survey results and provided the Task Force Members with a copy of the preliminary results. The preliminary results indicate that 608 individuals responded to the survey. Mr. Richards also went over some highlights from the preliminary results. The Task Force requested that staff make the preliminary survey results available on the Animal Task Force webpage. The Task Force also decided to leave the survey open through March 9, 2012.

VI. Animal Task Force Email Address

Ms. Cox informed the committee that an email address had been set up for the Task Force at the Task Force’s request (animaltaskforce@gwinnettcountry.com). The public can provide comments to the Task Force through the link to the email on the Task Force’s webpage. Depending upon the number of comments and emails received, the comments and emails will be put in a .pdf format and provided to the Task Force Members bi-weekly.

VII. Subcommittees

A. Reports

i. Partnership

Mr. Northrup stated that the Partnership Subcommittee did not have an update at this time as they have been unable to meet since the last Task Force Meeting.

ii. Policy

Mr. Northrup and Dr. Fish provided the report for the Policy Subcommittee. Mr. Northrup stated that the group met last week and were working on the Subcommittee’s recommendations to the whole group. Dr. Fish added that the Subcommittee had tabled the discussion on the SOPs as there was a concern that the SOPs that they had were not current, and the Subcommittee has not had a chance to meet with Lt. Respass concerning what is being updated. Mr. Northrup stated that based upon the information that he was able to obtain he believed that the issuance of rabies tags by Gwinnett Animal Control was due to lack of staff to input the data. Mr. Northrup stated that the Subcommittee is also working on provisions related to vicious animals, but HB 685, currently pending in the General Assembly, might preempt County ordinances with respect to vicious animals. Mr. Northrup also expressed his concern over HB 853, currently pending in the General Assembly,

which would preempt local government zoning ordinances with regard to the raising of animals to be used for food.

iii. Program

Ms. Burger provided the report for the Program Subcommittee. The Subcommittee met with Shaunieka Taste in the Communications Division of Gwinnett County. The Subcommittee is making progress with communications on the possibility of a Facebook page for the Animal Welfare and Enforcement Unit. Ms. Burgner also stated that the Subcommittee had a concern that the SOPs that the Task Force were given were not current, but the Subcommittee had also not had a chance to meet with Lt. Respass. Chairman Taylor asked the subcommittees to continue to review the SOPs that they were given so that any recommendations that the Task Force made could be incorporated into the SOPs as they were being updated. Ms. Burgner also expressed concern that Program Subcommittee could present recommendations opposite from the Structure Subcommittee on the rescue coordinator and an on-staff vet. The Subcommittee will meet again next week.

iv. Structure

Mr. Richards provided the report for the Structure Subcommittee. The Structure Subcommittee last met on February 14, 2012. The Subcommittee presented the Task Force with its preliminary recommendations. Those recommendations include reorganizing the Animal Advisory Council with a five member board appointed, one member appointed by each commissioner and removing specific interest groups. The Structure Subcommittee would recommend a organizations similar to the Gwinnett Coalition for the specific interest groups so that they could better organize and be more effective in their efforts. The Structure Subcommittee would not recommend any changes the rescue coordinator position at this time or recommend an on-staff veterinarian at this time.

Ms. Romeo asked on behalf of Dr. Evans if a vote would be taken on all recommendations. Chairman Taylor recommended that the subcommittees meet with each other to try to reach a consensus on recommendations.

VIII. Next ATF group meeting

No meeting date scheduled at this time.

IX. Public Comment

Three members of the public spoke: Susan Ruelle, Randy DeCarlo, and Joyce Kreching.

X. Adjournment

Motion: Jon Richards

Second: Wanda Johnson

Vote: 10-0

Time 8:43 p.m.