

MCAS Community Advisory Committee

Notes from Meeting on April 13th, 2015

Adopted as revised 5/11/15/ Revisions are highlighted

CAC Members in Attendance: CAC: Linda Caradine, Jeff Gosda, Marci Jo Carlton, Kara Kerpan, Aaron Ray, Tonia Wagner. **MCAS:** Mike Oswald, Ann Potter, Gail Wilson, **Others:** Jessica Morkert-Shibley, Multnomah County Communications; Sue Dicile, facilitator

The meeting convened at 6:30

Minutes from the March, 2015 meeting were approved as submitted.

Updates and Announcements

- Mike announced that:
 - The interview process is happening now for a Community Outreach Manager.
 - The satellite facility will open on or shortly after May 1st.
- Jeff noted that he has heard negative feedback in the community about the timeliness of lost pet notices. Notices placed in the morning do not appear until 6pm. Glenda also noted that she has heard negative feedback in the community on this and other issues related to MCAS. Tonya noted that OHS is part of Flash Alert and recommended that MCAS investigate that venue.
- Ann announced that MCAS is getting new state-of-the-art cages in the cattery that will allow for fewer out for adoption at a time. She also noted that they are piloting the use of an animal crematorium service.
- Nextdoor.com was raised as a potential venue for MCAS announcements. It is primarily a platform for Police and Fire to monitor and respond when an issue is within their arena. Jeff is going to be delving into nextdoor.com at his work and will report back about what he's learned in the coming months.

CAC Impacts

Mike gave an overview of impacts the CAC has had at MCAS the CAC's first year:

- CAC consideration and validation of the Shelter Review process provided the staff with an outside perspective and instilled more staff confidence in the approach.
- The policy discussion on returning pets to former owners after they have already been rehomed resulted in a change in policy. Formerly MCAS would make an effort to have the animal returned to its former owner. That will no longer occur except if there are extenuating circumstances, e.g. if during the initial check-in the adopters had expressed concern or doubt about the adoption.
- The CAC's advice on Ordinance-related fees for animal rescue agencies resulted in a decrease in the amount initially considered. Subsequent to that advice Multnomah County set the fee at \$35, which the county feels is based more on true cost. (Washington and Clackamas counties have set their fees at \$100.)
- Changes were made to streamline the adoption process after CAC members identified obstacles to adoption.
- Staff receives value from hearing what people are saying in the community from a knowledgeable group.

Media Focus on “Pit Bulls”

Karol’s comments that were previously sent via email were distributed.

During discussion CAC members agreed that their chartered role encourages the CAC to work via advising MCAS. CAC members noted however that they would like to see valid information provided in instances when mis-information has been circulated “in highlighted sound bites.” Mike noted that MCAS tries to use positive messaging around pit bull issues, such as the Pitties in Pink parade float.

CAC members identified the following disputes or concerns they have about the series of articles in the Oregonian, and misinformation they believe should be countered by MCAS:

- The Oregonian articles used an ambiguous definition of “pit bulls”, and since many pit bulls are unregistered the actual number is unknown. They also relied on information from dogbite.org which is not reliable. The National Canine Research Council is a better source of valid information.
- Multnomah County is one of the safest counties in the country for dog bites. The media is providing an “overheated” portrayal.
- The term “pit bull” does not describe a discrete breed.
- Many pit bulls are unregistered due to housing and insurance discrimination.

Noting that “the articles are horrible” Jeff asked MCAS and CAC members for ideas about how MCAS could respond in a way that is both instructive and constructive. Aaron recommended maintaining a non-defensive tone, for instance beginning by acknowledging that dog bites are an issue and emphasizing the value MCAS places on safety.

Mike suggested, and the CAC agreed that the MCAS website and FB page are good venues for messaging. CAC members agreed that a positive and constructive tone is essential. Messages discussed/proposed included:

- Highlighting county policies that are in place and working now.
- Comparing our safety results to counties or cities, e.g. Denver, that have breed bans.
- Illustrating that the term “pit bull” is ambiguous, e.g. “When is a pit bull a lab?”
- A “Tip of the Week” format can provide brief sound bites containing information of interest and importance to the public, with links embedded if people want more/deeper information.

The CAC recommended that the County initiate these types of informational pieces on their web presence “before parade season.”

The meeting adjourned at 8pm.

Handouts distributed at this meeting:

- Copies of Oregonian articles
- Comments submitted by Karol, who was unable to attend