

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE CADDO PARISH COMMISSION'S
ANIMAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 8th DAY OF MARCH, 2021

The Caddo Parish Commission met in an Animal Services Committee Meeting, on the above date, at 1:00 p.m., via Zoom teleconference, with Mr. Young, Chairperson, presiding, and the following members in attendance constituting a quorum: Commissioners Burrell, Chavez, Johnson, Taliaferro, and Young (5). ABSENT: None (0).

The invocation was given by Mr. Young, and Mr. Taliaferro led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADDITIONS

It was **moved by Mr. Burrell**, seconded by Mr. Chavez, *to expand the agenda and approve consideration of items under La.R.S. 42:17.1. Motion carried by acclamation.*

CERTIFICATE FOR TELECONFERENCE

WHEREAS, the Governor of the State of Louisiana has declared a statewide Public Health emergency, inclusive of Caddo Parish, in Proclamation Number 25 JBE 2020; and,

WHEREAS, the Governor, has further extended that declaration via Proclamations Number 158 JBE 2020 and Number 159 JBE 2020; and

WHEREAS, R.S. 42:17.1 allows members of political subdivisions to participate in its meetings electronically under certain limited circumstances.

THEREFORE, in accordance with the Provisions of R.S. 42:17.1, the presiding officer of the Caddo Parish Commission hereby certifies that this meeting is to address matters that are:

- (a) directly related to the public Commission's response to the Coronavirus Pandemic and are critical to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.
- (b) that if they are delayed will cause curtailment of vital public services or severe economic dislocation and hardship.
- (c) critical to continuation of the business of the Commission and that are not able to be postponed to a meeting held in accordance with the other provisions of Open Meetings Law due to a legal requirement or other deadline that cannot be postponed or delayed by the public body.
- (d) critical or time-sensitive and have been determined by the undersigned should not be delayed;*
consideration of matters under Paragraph (d) will initially require a two-thirds vote of those members present).

DATE: March 3, 2021



John-Paul Young, Chair

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Carla White called in with the following comment:

I'm calling in as a Caddo Parish citizen, and as well, I belong to two different organizations in the community. One of them is a good Samaritan rescue, and it is a group of girls—we're strictly volunteer. We work to collect dog houses, especially in the wintertime, and we collect hay from the citizens in our community. We pass them out to people in need for shelter for their pets who are kept outside, most of those are even chained up. We do this on our own dime, our own time, and our own gas. We just collect the doghouses and pass them out. During the snowstorm we had couple of weeks ago, we had to amp up our efforts. We were getting a lot of messages and phone calls that people were needing help. That Animal Control—we know they were shorthanded, but they were not able to get out and assess the situation or help do anything. So we had to take on a lot of extra work, but we just do that because want to. So we handed out over a dozen doghouses all the way from one side of Caddo Parish all the way to the northern part, and even into Bossier Parish. Our efforts were made fun of last week by Mr. Clark who confronted us last week. Did we find any frozen dogs laying around? We found that very insulting for the efforts that we do out of the goodness of our hearts. I just wanted to address that whether it's a rescue organizations or animal related organization, we are working hard trying to help the community. We understand that Animal Services is busy and shorthanded and there's a lot of animals in

need, but do not take what we're doing out of the goodness of our hearts and our volunteer time into a laughing matter. We take that seriously. We're trying to help. We do appreciate the animal control officers that were sent out to the location on Lexington Drive. Numerous neighbors came out and said that they called Animal Control that the dogs jumped the fence. That they can't be contained. One lady felt her son, who is handicapped, was in danger because the dogs kept coming out. She was afraid. To my knowledge, one of the neighbors is still saying that dogs are at large. That's another subject, there are areas where we are trying to help make a difference, and we would like to be taken seriously in this respect.

Susan Votow called in with the following comment:

I am a citizen of Caddo Parish also. I have a dog rescue. The reason I'm calling is because [inaudible]. That was part on [inaudible]. I just don't understand why it took so long and then we were supposed to be contacted when the dog was free to go. [inaudible] we didn't get an email until 12:51, almost 3 hours later. We were talked about. You know, we're just trying to be heroes. I don't appreciate that. We came up there to save some dogs. Why is there [inaudible] to watch we do because it was such a big request. We were asked to help with some burn dogs. We tried. We're trying to help. We're basically being slapped in the face. [inaudible] I don't appreciate it. Its ok. We will survive. I think it was handled wrong.

Jill Brown called in with the following comment:

What I would like to know is what is your standard procedures when you have dogs that are continuously at-large. They are owned by a certain person within a neighborhood. They are continuously running at-large all the time. I know that y'all have been out many, many times. I, myself, have actually contacted you via email. When you did not respond to me back within two weeks, I finally had to contact my Commissioners. He sent you a copy of the email, and amazingly, you responded within five minutes. So my question to you is, what is your procedure because these dogs have been taken in Animal Services. They have been released and released and released by you, to the homeowner back to the dog owner. Y'all have one of them that is currently in doggy jail, and the other one is still at-large. I want to know, I mean, at what point do you say, 'hey, enough is enough. We're just going to take these dogs and try to give them to a good home where they can be taken care of by responsible owners'.

At this time, there were no one else to speak, so the Chair closed Public Comments.

NEW BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Committee and said the following items will be discussed:

- *Review of the Animal Services Board and Shelter Advisory Board structure*

Mr. Young said that the purpose of this meeting is to determine the difference between the two boards.

Dr. Wilson clarified that the Commission has an Animal Services Board, which is spelled out in detail in the Code of Ordinances, Section 8-5. He also said that the Animal Shelter Advisory Board does not exist, however, there was a Citizens Advisory Committee to suggest changes to the Animal Ordinances. Several recommendations were made from that Committee, but the Commission did not adopt those recommendations. Mr. Young requested that Administration provide those recommendations to the Committee.

Dr. Wilson also explained that a few years ago, there was discussions regarding the Parish providing services versus being a shelter. At that time, they were directed to remove the word "shelter" and replace it with services. Dr. Wilson further explained that the Parish does not have the capacity nor resources to shelter animals.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know the difference between the Shelter Advisory Board and the Animal Services Board. Mr. Young said that Dr. Wilson explained that the Commission does not have a Shelter Advisory Board.

Attorney Frazier pointed out that the Citizens Advisory Board did make recommendations regarding the Code of Ordinances, and some of those changes were made.

Attorney Frazier also agreed that the Shelter Advisory Board is not listed in the Code of Ordinances, and in order for there to be a board, legislation would need to be adopted to form it.

Mr. Johnson agreed with Dr. Wilson that the Commission performs animal services and has to follow rules and regulations on how long an animal can stay there due to the overpopulation of dogs and cats in the community. He said that there is not enough space there to keep them for months or years.

Mr. Johnson also said that there has been great effort to get the animals out with a positive outcome. The euthanasia rate has decreased dramatically over the past few years.

Mr. Burrell wanted to know if the outcome for the animals are kept in some type of system. Travis Clark, Animal Services Director, said that they are utilizing PetPoint to keep track of every animal whether they have a positive or negative outcome. That data is posted monthly on the Parish's website.

Mr. Taliaferro said that he received a letter dated September 8, 1992 regarding the By-Laws and appointments to the Shelter Advisory Board. He wanted to know if anything was developed from that. Dr. Wilson said that they may have been an ad-hoc situation, but no Shelter Advisory Board has been codified in the Code of Ordinances.

Mr. Taliaferro wanted to know if it would be beneficial to have a Citizens Advisory Board to act as a liaison between the Animal Services Committee and the Commission. Dr. Wilson said that the citizens have come before this board and the full body on several occasions to express their concerns and opinions on various topics. Dr. Wilson also said that Animal Services has always been a highly emotionally charged area. Tremendous progress has been made, and the number of animals coming into the building has drastically decreased. He also said that putting legislation in place to hold people more accountable could reduce that number even more.

Mr. Chavez would the website to be updated to reflect the services that Animal Services and Mosquito Control offers.

Dr. Wilson said that the Animal Services Committee has been an effective process. He would also like the Commission, at some point in the future, to help put some legislation in place for real accountability. He believes this will help stem the flow of animals coming into the building.

He also said that each time an Animal Services Director is hired, there has been civic involvement in the process from the animal welfare community. Animal Services as a department is regulated by state statutes and parish ordinances.

Dr. Wilson also said that currently there are over 100 animals in the shelter, sometimes that number gets up to 200 animals per day. It is a daunting challenge to move that many animals in a small community, so the department has to look to rescues to partner with. He said that rescue groups and spay/neuter has been great to decrease the number of animals coming into the building. He also mentioned that the shelter will never be a clinic because they do not have the resources to do clinical staffing, but they do the best they can.

Mr. Young thanked Dr. Wilson for his explanation of Animal Services. It sounds like you're describing our Animal Services facility a little bit more like a police station for animals rather than a nursing home, he said.

Mr. Taliaferro wanted to know what type of legislation is needed for Animal Services. Dr. Wilson talked about a trip he went on to San Jose, California. He said that they have 3.4 million residents that live in that area. He went to their Animal Services facility, and there were only ten animals in the building. He asked where the animals were, and they told him that they hold their people accountable. Stray animals in San Jose are rare because they have mandatory pet registration. If an animal is at-large, they take them back to their owner, not the shelter. He also said that mandatory spay and neutering would help solve the problem of overpopulation.

Mr. Taliaferro wanted to know if Animal Services has the resources to enforce the mandatory pet registration or mandatory chip. Mr. Clark said that they do.

Mr. Taliaferro then wanted to know the live release rate (LRR) year to date. Mr. Clark said that it is 89.6%. Mr. Taliaferro then wanted to know at what percentage would the facility be classified as a no-kill shelter. Mr. Clark said that term could be misleading because of the inconsistencies with the intake of animals. He further explained that they are at 89.6% right now, but if intakes increase over the next few months, they may not be able to attain the 90% LRR.

Mr. Taliaferro then wanted to know who maintains the Caddo Parish Animal Services social media platform. Mr. Clark said that Kim Warren and Megan Everett do, and at special request, Krystle Beauchamp. Mr. Taliaferro would like the Facebook page to be utilized more.

Mr. Taliaferro also wanted to know who is tasked with reaching out to rescue groups. Mr. Clark said that the Rescue Coordinator, Megan Everett, handles that. He also said that there are over twenty rescues that Animal Services works with. Mr. Clark mentioned that the foster group Animal Services works with is Parish Paws.

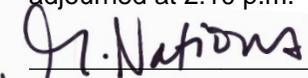
Mr. Chavez asked that Administration provide a checklist of the desired legislation to the Committee. He also asked for cruelty charges and at-large violations from the past two or three years.

Mr. Chavez also said that he is against mandatory chip and registration. His concern is that the only people who are going to adhere to that legislation are the ones who already do it.

Mr. Johnson said that a policy would need to be put in place in order for the Animal Services Director to enforce it. If Mr. Clark is following the policies that are currently put in place, the Commissioners have to support him and inform their constituents of those policies.

Dr. Wilson said that they have not received many complaints regarding enforcing policies. He also explained that they try to work with the animal owners so their pets can stay with them as opposed to Animal Services taking them. This minimizes how many animals are in the shelter, but not at the sake of public safety. Dr. Wilson also said that the heart of the issue is that there are too many unwanted animals in this community.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.


Assistant Commission Clerk