MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CADDO PARISH COMMISSION’S
ANIMAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
HELD ON THE 23rd DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2020

The Caddo Parish Animal Services Committee met in legal session on the above date, at 2:00 p.m., in the Government Chambers, with Mr. Jim Taliaferro, presiding, and the following members in attendance: Commissioners Chavez, Johnson, Taliaferro, and Young (4). ABSENT: Commissioner Burrell (1).

Also, in attendance were Parish Administrator Dr. Woody Wilson, Assistant Parish Administrator Erica Bryant, Parish Attorney Donna Frazier, Animal Services Director Travis Clark, and Assistant Animal Services Director Kelvin Samuels.

The invocation was given by Mr. John-Paul Young, and Mr. Johnson led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Mr. Settle said that the City’s Environmental Court are “cranking up” in November. The Mayor has assigned two Environmental Court Officers to track down illegal tire dumping within the city limits of Shreveport. He also said that his paper runs a free weekly ad regarding adoptable animals at the shelter. He also donates several of the unused papers to the shelter.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Taliaferro gave the following remarks:

So before we begin Today, on our agenda, as the Committee Chair, I sit before you, animal poor, as a foster, a transporter, adopter, and an advocate for animal rights. I wanted to express my sincere appreciation to the fellow Commissioners for your willingness to serve on this very important committee. It is a committee like no other because we are associated with the department solely responsible for the humane care of other living creatures. I view this as an awesome responsibility of trust to our constituents, and our staff, and to the animals that we are responsible for looking out for their future, their safety and their well being. That we exercise the best practices in animal care industry to ensure appropriate ordinances and laws are passed; implemented and enforced to provide a wholesome environment for our animals and the support our staff to Dr. Wilson and our Caddo Parish, Animal Services staff. Thank you for your attendance today. And it’s all about knowledge and understanding of where we are our future, and how we can get there collectively.

Mr. Taliaferro welcomed everyone to the meeting, and stated that today’s meeting is to discuss the following items:

- Review of 2020
- Status of construction projects at Animal Services Compound
- Operations update: changes, improvements, etc.
- Current initiatives
- Future initiatives
- Update on Best Friend’s return visit
- Personnel updates
- Mosquito traps

Mr. Travis Clark, Animal Services Director, came before the Committee and gave the following report. Year to date, the live release rate (LRR) is 88%, with an intake of 2,600 animals.

There has not been much operational updates, changes, and improvements due to COVID-19. He also said that the vet staff hosting a virtual training for continuing education, which allowed nine Caddo Parish bodies to attend virtually to retain their certifications for the year 2020. Animal Services also has new radios with the cutter date set for September 30. They are also rolling out Everbridge notifications, which has been instrumental in notifying citizens of mosquito spraying.

As far as current initiatives, Animal Services is continuing on working on all possible positive life saving measures. Currently, during the summer months, there is an influx of parvo positive puppies that come into the shelter. Mr. Clark said that it is difficult to narrow down the cause of it due to being unvaccinated and being outside in the dirt. He also mentioned that often times, the shelter does not know the situation where these animals come from.
Mr. Clark announced that Animal Services did receive a grant to assist them with heartworm positive dogs and being able to treat them. He said that the funding will help approximately 200 large dogs to be treated with the slow-kill method. Close to 50% of the adult dogs that come to the shelter are heartworm positive, so that creates a hurdle for them to get adopted or rescued out.

Regarding future initiatives, Animal Services was able to build up relationships with several different schools prior to COVID to partake in an educational piece in the 4H programs. Due to COVID, they need to slowly work their way back into the school system and continue to build their relationships with the hopes of continuing those partnerships in the future, as well as building partnerships with various rescue groups throughout the Parish.

The Best Friends Summit was cancelled due to COVID, but Mr. Clark was able to attend a workshop in January in Baton Rouge.

He said that there are several seasonal adoption promos that were successful in years past, such as, Home for the Holidays and other foster events around Christmas. They delivered puppies and kittens last year for Christmas.

Mr. Clark then went over the statistics for the shelter as of year-to-date. There were about 1774 dogs that came into the shelter, with 55% of them being bully breeds. 262 dogs have been humanely euthanized year-to-date. Dr. Wilson wanted to know the daily rate at the shelter. Mr. Clark replied that today, there are 127 dogs and 113 cats.

Answering a question from Mr. Taliaferro regarding the reasons 262 dogs were humanely euthanized, Mr. Clark said that some of the dogs had medical issues, behavioral issues, prior bite history, aggression towards dogs and animals, etc. He also explained that the most severe bite cases have been dogs biting their owners. If a dog caused gross injury, that is not an animal that needs to be put back into the community.

Mr. Taliaferro wanted to know who makes the determination of which dogs are aggressive. Mr. Clark said that they don’t have a behavioral specialist, however, each staff member who interacts with the animals also has the ability to update memos of their interaction. This helps provide information such as preferences towards men or women, aggression or non-aggression towards smaller dogs or bigger dogs, etc.

Mr. Taliaferro then wanted to know the length of stay for the dogs coming in with behavioral issues. Mr. Clark said that it is circumstantial and it depends on the dog and the space the shelter has.

Mr. Young wanted to know if the 262 dogs euthanized included owner surrenders. Mr. Clark said that it does include owner surrenders that have a euthanasia request attached to it. Mr. Young wanted to know how is this presented to the public. Mr. Clark explained that when the statistics are updated each month, it includes the numbers for the animals whose owner requested euthanasia, animals who died in the shelter, etc. He said that these numbers are presented on the website and are updated on the first of each month.

Mr. Clark also pointed out that 81 cats have also been euthanized.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know what the LRR was prior to Mr. Clark being appointed as Animal Services Director. Mr. Clark believes that it was approximately 62%. He also said that the community is supporting Animal Services, along with altering the animals prior to them being adopted out. He said that there are not as many intact animals in the community.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know if they verify that the person is a Caddo resident prior to bringing an animal in to be euthanized. Mr. Clark said that the shelter is a Caddo facility, so only Caddo residents are provided the service.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know the percentage rate the shelter must achieve to become a no kill shelter. Mr. Clark said it would have to be 90%. Mr. Johnson wanted to know if those numbers included owner surrender euthanasia’s. Mr. Clark said that those animals are not included in the LRR, along with the animals who are unhealthy and untreated.

Mr. Young wanted to know why the shelter is not at 100%. Mr. Clark explained that if a dog does not have a positive outcome, it counts against the shelter. The LRR excludes owner surrender animals who are unhealthy and untreatable and animals who may have died in care.

Mr. Clark said that they had a Dangerous & Vicious Dog Board meeting yesterday. There was a situation in which three pitbull type dogs who got out of the yard. Within a 30-minute time span, they bit two separate people. Those dogs were deemed dangerous by the board. If a dog is deemed dangerous by the board, the dog must be fixed, microchipped, along with a placard installed on the house stating that a dangerous dog resides there.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know the difference between a vicious dog and a dangerous dog. If a dog is deemed dangerous by the board, the dog must be fixed, microchipped, along with a placard installed on the house stating that a dangerous dog resides there. The dog is not to be off of the property
without having a muzzle on and has to wear a red and yellow collar stating it is dangerous. It has been under “lock and key” at all times and cannot be unsupervised. If a dog is deemed vicious, the owner cannot reclaim that dog and must be humanely euthanized.

Mr. Taliaferro wanted to know how many dangerous dogs are in Caddo Parish. Mr. Clark said that there are approximately eleven dogs throughout the Parish.

Mr. Kelvin Samuel, Assistant Director of Animal Services & Mosquito Control, gave an update on the bat that recently tested positive for rabies. Since 1970, Caddo Parish has had 41 bats, 3 cats, 1 dog, and 76 skunks that has had rabies. He said that recently, a bat flew into the back of a citizen’s neck. The citizen felt a sting, and the bat fell to the ground. The results came back from the state epidemiologists that the bat tested positive for rabies.

Mr. Chavez wanted to know if the animal is killed, if it tests positive for rabies. Mr. Samuel said that the specimen must be sent down to Baton Rouge, and there are protocols and procedures for sending it.

Mr. Chavez then wanted to know what happens to dogs who are bitten by rabid animals. Mr. Samuel explained that the dog would go through a 10-day quarantine. A vet staff would then monitor the animal for any physical or neurological signs. If that animal passes during quarantine, that specimen is sent to Baton Rouge to determine its rabies status.

Mr. Samuel recommended that citizens not engage in wildlife, unless they have to.

He then said that Animal Services gave out 600 boxes of rat poison this year. He said that has to do with the COVID shut down. The restaurants no longer had food in dumpsters, so the rats moved onto the residential areas. He mentioned that this is a service that is provided to Caddo Parish residents.

Mr. Samuel then gave an update on West Nile. He explained that there are 3 types of West Nile: a symptomatic, fever, and neuro-invasive. Currently there are two West Nile related deaths in Louisiana. He also pointed out that Caddo Parish has 3 neuro-invasive cases and 1 fever case; Bossier has 1 neuro-invasive case. He encouraged citizens to “fight the bite” by wearing mosquito repellant containing 15% DEET or higher, wearing long sleeves, and getting rid of stagnant standing water. He said that Animal Services & Mosquito Control does offer granules to put in standing water to kill mosquito larvae.

He also explained that they set two different types of traps for data regarding West Nile and mosquitoes. Of the 189 they tested, 25 came back as West Nile positive.

He also said that they are testing the mosquito trap that Mr. Young introduced to the Commission at its last meeting.

Mr. Samuel cautioned even though Fall is here, the mosquitoes are still active. He said that if the temperature drops 70 degrees or lower for five consecutive days, the mosquito population will drop. He also mentioned that mosquitoes are a vector for heartworms, so he encouraged the citizens to protect their pets as well as themselves.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know if a dog can transmit heartworms to humans. Mr. Samuel stated that they cannot.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know if the TNR cats have been released in the areas with high rodent populations. Mr. Samuel said that they do release the working cats in those communities.

Mr. Taliaferro asked if the people who have old tires and are breeding mosquitoes are cited. Mr. Samuel said that he works closely with Mr. Green, City Property Standards, to ensure that safety measures and precautions are taken in regards to that. He also mentioned that if a certain area gets numerous complaints regarding mosquitoes, Mosquito Control goes out to determine the cause of the complaints.

Mr. Maurice Carson, Facilities & Maintenance, came before the Committee to provide an update on the shelter. Due to COVID, there was a delay in some of the projects, but they are about 80% complete with the HVAC, lighting, and mechanical upgrades. The engineering specs should be completed in 30-45 days, then they will go over the scope of the work. Mr. Taliaferro asked for a brief summary of the projects being completed. Mr. Carson said that the projects are kennel upgrades to the outside kennels. Mr. Clark clarified that that overflow kennels and medical isolation kennels are currently single kennels. This project would make those kennels double sided, so the animal could be isolated to one side while it is being cleaned.

Mr. Samuel then talked about Best Friends National Society has been mentoring the Caddo Parish Animal Services Department since 2018. Since then, Best Friends has performed an audit, but it is not needed to conduct additional audits because the staff is in contact with the Regional Director from Best Friends. He also said that CPAS has answered the manager’s responses from the previous audit. Mr. Taliaferro wanted to know if Best Friends physically comes into the shelter. Mr. Samuel said that they do, but they have not this year because of COVID.
Mr. Taliaferro asked that the organizational chart of the Animal Services Department be provided to the Committee.

Mr. Young talked about the audit performed by Postlewaite & Netterville. He specifically mentioned glove use. Mr. Samuel said that the glove usage was to prevent disease transmission from one kennel to the next. They are used when the staff is handling animals, but not during cleaning.

Mr. Young also said that Best Friends recommended that adoptions be available outside of work hours, such as in the evenings or on the weekends. Prior to COVID, the shelter was open on weekends, along with several off-site adoptions. He also said that they plan to continue that once COVID is over.

Mr. Young wants to know if a citizen can adopt “tagged” animals. Mr. Clark explained that one of the reasons they ask for fosters is so that the animal is out of the shelter and into a foster home. He said that if an animal is going up North to a rescue, those rescues are also working on their end for when the animal arrives.

Mr. Young then asked about “roaming cats”. Mr. Clark explained that they do participate in the Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) program. He explained that the cat is brought into the shelter, fixed, and released back to the same area it came from. Mr. Clark said that this adult cat cannot reproduced, so the cat population has decreased. He also said that the fixed cat deters other cats from coming into the area. Mr. Clark also explained that if the cat is problematic, they will fix it and turn it into a barn cat.

Mr. Johnson wanted to know why people up North want to adopt Caddo Parish animals. Mr. Clark explained that people up North want to help with the overpopulation in the South. He also explained that they do not have full shelters due to harsher winters, mandatory microchipping, licensing, difference in laws, etc.

He then talked about the mandatory microchipping. Mr. Clark explained that if the animals are required to be microchipped, the shelter can identify who that animal belongs before it even comes into the shelter.

Mr. Johnson said that Animal Services is doing their job according to the laws that are currently in place. Mr. Clark said that a few choice laws could be enacted to help the situation with the overpopulation of animals. Mr. Johnson then suggested that legislation should be enacted piece by piece over a period of time to get the citizens acclimated to the changes. Dr. Wilson agreed that the Commission should consider taking small legislative bites of the apple.

Mr. Taliaferro mentioned that the attitudes towards pets is different from the North and the South. He said that the South looks at their pets more of as property, than of a pet.

He also agreed with Mr. Clark in that the North has stricter laws, harsher winters, and the culture towards animals is different. He gave an example of hunters whose dogs can no longer hunt. He said that hunters will just let their dogs go in the wild because they can no longer perform a service.

Mr. Young then talked about mosquito control. He wanted to know if Animal Services has the authority to authorize citations to citizens in the Parish for having old tires or things of that nature. Mr. Clark said that he would like to research this further.

Mr. Young then pointed out that in the personnel manual, a woman is allowed small earrings, but a man is not.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:32 p.m.

/js/Michelle Nations
Michelle Nations
Assistant Commission Clerk