

ANIMAL COMMISSION MINUTES FOR MEETING HELD THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 2023

The meeting of the Animal Commission came to order at 5:18 pm.

A. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Anna Acetta, Cherie Aronson, Karen Dorney, Cathy Kamen, Susan Stanek, Colby Collier

Not Present: David Chilla

Staff: Scott Ellingson, Animal Control Officer, Susan. LaFond, Recording Secretary

- B. PUBLIC COMMENTS** – Gina Amenta, Assistant Hospital Manager for VCA Baybrook Hospital, 56 Qurik Road, Milford, spoke. She detailed her background in feline rescue, working for the Norwalk Humane Society and Dawes in Danbury, prior to joining VCA Baybrook 7 months ago. VCA Baybrook is private but owned by a corporation. She said the trend is that dogs are brought in for health care 2 to 3 times more than cats, and often when cats are brought in for care, it is too late. To educate the public and encourage better cat health care, she has begun a Feline Medical Compliance campaign. Most owners get their cats “by accident” and don’t realize that cats can hide pain very well; a skill they learned to survive in the wild, so their owners don’t know if they are hurting. She adopted a cat from Milford Animal Control a while ago. Baybrook is interested in hosting an adoption event on behalf of Milford Animal Control in the spring. They have corporate sponsors such as Hill’s, Royan Canin, and Zoetis (the creator of Solensia, an FDA approved treatment for feline osteoarthritis pain). The event can be held at VCA, with food and refreshments provided. VCA would advertise the event. They ask that Milford Animal Control bring in a few cats and kittens for adoption, preferably in folding metal cages. Colette Chadik, DVM, a feline specific vet, would be in attendance. A representative from ‘Final Gift’ will provide ‘quality of life’ checklists for pet owners. Possible bounce house for kids. Possibly face painting. She would like to find a mutually agreeable date in the spring. Milford Animal Control can bring their own adoption applications and volunteers to the event, or she can assist, since she has previous experience as an adoption counselor. Cats for adoption must come from Milford Animal Control. She shared a “Healthy Start Program” flyer which she indicated would be part of the process and event.

The Commission agreed to work on available dates for scheduling the event and firming up details.

- C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – 11/14/2022 Minutes were approved unanimously.

- D. WARDEN’S REPORT** – Officers’ reports for November and December 2022 for both Orange and Milford were submitted for board review.

- E. DEPARTMENT REPORT** – Mr. Ellingson spoke. He advised someone requested four years of Orange and Milford records, as well as information on when the shelter was built, cat cages, kennels, etc. under the Freedom of Information act. He does not know who made the request.

Currently, the shelter has 6 dogs and 2 cats available.

Individual updates – dogs:

Milton was euthanized after consultation due to aggression issues. Ms. Dorney asked if going forward the Commission can be privy to decisions for euthanasia prior to the euthanasia taking place.

Fritz has been adopted.

Barney has a good temperament, has high energy, and has been awaiting adoption since September 2022.

Calvin is also happy go lucky and awaiting adoption for several months.

Chloe is a friendly dog awaiting adoption.

Zoe is happy go lucky and awaiting adoption.

Elijah is awaiting adoption.

Chestnut, who was actually Scarlett, was adopted along with Rhett by a family member of the deceased owner.

A rottweiler in the shelter’s care due to a deceased owner bit a member of staff and was quarantined; he is going to a rescue.

Individual updates – cats:

Chunky and Petunia - an older couple has shown some interest in both. Their current adoption fees are just \$25 each.

Petunia has been on reduced calorie food and has lost some weight.

Four Caswell Cove ferals were sent to a rescue.

Princess is still at Animal Control.

Wedge, an older Caswell Cove feral, had to be euthanized due to ear cancer.

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Ms. Stanek would like to see better communication from staff as to animals available, and animals adopted, so Commission members have current information to provide to interested parties.

Marc Ruby has given his notice; his final day will be February 17th. The office will be short one ACO. Mr. Ellingson is requesting the position be advertised as a full ACO, because the individual in this role assumes the risks associated with it. Also, only ACOs can write tickets; they must have 40 hours of state-mandated training if they work any length of time as an ACO. Ms. Dorney asked if the position must be posted internally first; Mr. Ellingson explained if a position requires special skills, it is usually posted directly to the public. He stated Mr. Ruby's departure also causes some issues with vacation time that must be used before the end of the fiscal year. Ms. Kamen asked if they could hire a temp in the meantime. He can put in a request for a temp, but those hours won't count for that individual as time worked for the City.

A few pending work orders have been completed. Fallen sheetrock in the attic was repaired though not painted. Signs for ACO officer parking were created but misspelled; Mr. Ellingson fixed as best he could. The kennel has been repaired to some extent, and the guillotine door was fixed. Sean Moore from the PD has been following up on outstanding work orders.

Chief of Staff Rosen asked if the facility needed help with evacuations before the last storm; a partial evacuation was conducted, and some dogs were temporarily relocated to Snowflake until the water receded.

F. CORRESPONDENCE – Letter of thanks from Karl Sachs was shared with the Commission.

G. DONATIONS: Donations reported as follows:

- November 2022 public donations:	\$ 375.00
- December 2022 public donations	\$ 1,815.00
- Estate of Norma Posewicz November 2022	\$30,000.00
- Milford Oyster Festival December 2022	<u>\$ 300.00</u>
TOTAL:	\$32,490.00

H. COMMISSION REPORT – Sara Nierenberg has resigned as Commission Chair. Election of Chair and Vice Chair required. Ms. Dorney nominated Mr. Collier for Chairman and Ms. Kamen seconded. Motion to elect Mr. Collier as Chair. Passed unanimously.

Ms. Dorney nominated Ms. Stanek for Vice Chair; Ms. Kamen seconded. Motion to elect Ms. Stanek as Vice Chair. Passed unanimously.

I. NEW BUSINESS – Discussion regarding the dual Facebook accounts representing the City of Milford Animal Control office and adoptions. The first Facebook page, Milford CT Animal Control, was opened in 2019 with the blessing of City Hall. This page has 2500 followers. When a comment is left, an automatic message is generated explaining the site is not monitored and that if the person has an emergency, they must call the Animal Control number. Subsequently, Mr. Ellingson gave Gary Farrar, Jr, ACO staff, permission to create Milford Animal Control Pet Adoption page as well. This site shows information about available animals for adoption but does not allow comments, only shares, or saves. Petfinder is another source for those seeking to adopt a pet from Milford Animal Control but not a subject of this discussion. Mr. Collier believes merging the two is best; Ms. Kamen may know how to do that. Multiple admins are allowed on a single site so the one site could accomplish the work of the two current sites. No firm determination was made; subject to be discussed under Old Business at next meeting.

Discussion regarding long-term shelter residents, and how to better advertise them to get them adopted. Barney has not had a photo on the websites since September 28, 2022. Mr. Ellingson said he is a big dog with high energy. Spice has been at the shelter since October; she is sweet with people, but it has not been determined if she is dog friendly. Ms. Stanek offered to make a video on Monday to attract some new interest as videos seem to be popular. Ms. Kamen asked if we could have an adoption event for these 2 long time residents. Suggestion was made to offer vouchers on a 2 for 1 basis; this has been done previously for cats. Another option is to waive adoption fees for dogs who have been at the shelter a long time.

Ms. Stanek asked about a rabbit brought in a few weeks ago. The rabbit was dumped near the Margaret Egan center, and the shelter has no way to care for it. It has a temporary home with Ms. Stanek's sister. It needs to be neutered; cost is approximately \$700 because rabbits are considered exotic animals. She asked if the ACO will fund the spay. Mr. Ellingson said there is \$6000 in the budget item for Other Med Fees and Services that can be utilized. He stressed the City will require a W-9 form, invoice with no state sales tax, and a copy of our Commission minutes showing the use of funds was voted on and authorized. Ms. Stanek said they have a tentative appointment for February 17th for the surgery. She will furnish Mr. Ellingson

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with the veterinarian's and foster's information so he can contact the veterinary office to advise the City will pay for the surgery once it is completed and documents submitted.

Ms. Stanek made a motion to use up to \$800 from the Other Med Fees and Services fund to spay a rabbit abandoned in the City. Mr. Collier seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion regarding the need for a professional dog walker. It is difficult to find walkers in the rain or cold weather. Ms. Kamen would support paying this position from ACO funds. Mr. Ellingson made it clear a W-9 form will be needed from anyone hired, and that no sales tax may be charged to the City. Finance will need to establish an account. He stressed someone with behavioral experience would be a big plus. Discussion regarding the schedule variation required based on the number of dogs in the shelter at any given time. Ms. Kamen suggested a possible per diem or on call setup. Mr. Ellingson said if a dog walker is out, at least one ACO should remain on premise in case something happens (e.g., runaway dog). Previous events of dogs getting away from dog walkers reinforce the necessity of this. Ms. Dorney will reach out to her contacts. Mr. Ellingson prefers someone close to Milford. He asked that it be a reputable company or dog walking service.

Ms. Kamen motioned to create an account to fund professional dog walkers to assist at the shelter with an initial funding of \$1000. Ms. Dorney seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Dorney suggested a rabies clinic in the spring; also inquired on the possibility of a volunteer drive which is currently nonexistent. There is no current volunteer coordinator; that position was temporary/seasonal in the past. Ms. Kamen asked if Shelley Steeves, staff, would be interested in assisting.

A tree fell at the dog park; was any action taken to repair the damage?

J. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Ellison and Mr. Collier briefly discussed the current ARMS Animal Research Management System. Mr. Ellison said the ACO is in the process of being incorporated into the system Milford Police currently use. Great care must be used when this happens as the database offers some access to sensitive information.

Benches: Ms. Kamen and Mr. Collier have been attempting to reach Public Works Director Chris Saley since October 12 of last year. Chris and his assistant director, Steven Johnson, have been on vacation over the past several weeks. Ms. Kamen and Mr. Collier will continue their attempts and offer an update at the next meeting.

Chestnut: clarification that this was actually Scarlett and that she was adopted by family of the deceased.

Gazebo at Caswell Cove: The gazebo has finally been removed. One cat was never caught. Large rocks were installed to stop visitors from driving too far.

Mama cat, calico on the hill: no update

Wastewater is in the process of having cats trapped, neutered, and released. Smudge has not been seen for 4 days and is too trap savvy to catch. He has been seen by wastewater staff previously.

Ocean State Job Lot wanted to do a fundraiser on behalf of Milford Animal Control. Mr. Ellingson said he received one phone call but never heard back.

The Thanksgiving VCA fundraiser brought in formulated food but most in need want regular food.

K. ADJOURNMENT was at 7:14 pm.

Attest: Susan LaFond, Recording Secretary

**New Business, not on the Agenda, may be brought up by a 2/3's vote of those Members present and voting.
ANY INDIVIDUAL WITH A DISABILITY WHO NEEDS SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MEETING SHOULD CONTACT THE
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, (203) 783-3230, FIVE DAYS PRIOR TO THE MEETING, IF POSSIBLE.**