# ROLL CALL:

# Members Present: Scott Ellingson, Colby Collier, Anna Accetta, Cherie Aronson, David Chila, Karen Dorney, Cathy Kamen, Susan Stanek, Garon Delmonte

**Not Present**: none

1. **PUBLIC COMMENTS –** Dan Fiore, Assistant Animal Control Officer, spoke. He explained how similar situations are not always handled in the same way. He described a previous situation with Rocco, a German Shepherd who had lived with one owner who passed away. The sister of the deceased brought the dog to Milford Animal Control. He had a history of bite issues. The sister reached out and found a new home for the dog on her own. Dan shared the triggers that might cause this dog to bite with the new owners, so they would be aware of the risks. Within 2 weeks, he learned Rocco had bitten the new owner, and was euthanized. Contrast that with the recent situation where a Rottweiler who had a bite history was taken by a rescue for rehabilitation.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES –** 1/19/2023 Ms. Stanek made a motion to approve; Ms. Dorney seconded. Approved unanimously.
3. **WARDEN’S REPORT –** Mr. Ellingson provided the State report for review. Motion to approve by Ms. Dorney, second by Ms. Accetta. Approved unanimously.
4. **DEPARTMENT REPORT –** Mr. Ellingson reported Milford is currently housing 6 dogs; two just came in yesterday and the ACO is looking for the owners; one is a petite Husky and the other a Shiba Inu. The rest are dogs who have been available for over a month awaiting adoption. There are currently two cats in ACO care.

Individual updates – dogs:

Barney is still awaiting adoption; Ms. Stanek recorded a video of him in hope of attracting new interest. Someone came in Wednesday in interested in Barney or possibly Spice; expected to return Saturday.

Chloe is still awaiting adoption.

Spice is still available.

Zoe was adopted.

Calvin was adopted.

Elijah is still awaiting adoption. A gentleman came in today who is interested; he said he will bring his wife in on Saturday to see if it is a good fit.

The Rottweiler in the shelter’s care, who has bite issues, has been taken in by a rescue.

Individual updates – cats:

Petunia has been adopted.

Chunky was adopted.

Princess will be picked up by a cat rescue.

A black male cat, unnamed, in MAC care may also be picked up for rescue at a future point.

A male cat with a wound of unknown origin was acquired; this cat will need to remain at the shelter for 6 months in quarantine because its vaccination status is unknown. The cat is overweight and was being fed by someone in the neighborhood. It was initially thought the cat had a broken leg; examination proved that not to be the case. Not yet named.

A second male cat picked up was also believed to have a broken leg; examination proved that was not the case. Not yet named.

No pending work orders have been completed.

Dan Fiore, current AACO, said he may be interested in transferring to Marc Ruby’s position when it becomes available. Mr. Ruby’s scheduled last day is February 17th. Mr. Fiore would like to have Marc’s hours, and kennel attendant responsibilities. Both job descriptions will need to be reviewed to see what responsibilities are listed for each. A search will be conducted for a replacement for whichever of the 2 positions will be available. Mr. Ellingson wants the replacement to be an AACO, not just a kennel attendant, and he will pursue that. He advised the commission the last available position had 70 applicants, which is encouraging. Ms. Stanek asked if commission could have some input in the hiring process, Capt. Delmonte said yes.

Brief discussion regarding the ability to hire someone temporary in the interim; Mr. Ellingson to investigate.

1. **CORRESPONDENCE –** West Shore middle school students and faculty created calendars with photographs of pets and provided the shelter with one. The pupils made cards for the employees and commission, which were shared at the meeting. Mr. Ellingson spoke at the Devon Rotary. He addressed the need for donations to the pet food bank.
2. **DONATIONS –** Donations reported as follows:

* January 2023 public donations: $170.00
* West Shore Middle School donation: $300.00

TOTAL: $470.00

* ShopRite has a pet food collection this month for Milford Animal Shelter.

**H.COMMISSION REPORT –** none.

1. **NEW BUSINESS –**
2. October meeting – reschedule due to holiday Monday, October 9th. Commission agreed to reschedule to Thursday, October 12th.
3. Volunteers. Question whether commissioners are banned from volunteering. Lieut. Chila said they are not; however, when visiting the MAC offices as a volunteer, you are a member of the public who does not have access to the inner office and inner animal holding areas. When visiting, you visit as either a volunteer or a commissioner, but not both. Chairman Collier suggested it appears some rules regarding volunteers have changed, and they continue to evolve. He stated it seems the public/volunteers are not being welcomed into the MAC office. It was reported there are many people signed up to volunteer, but those individuals have no direction on what to do, or when they can do it. Someone needs to coordinate these forces. Shelley Steeves may be willing to handle the coordination but has been working a long time for minimum wage and wants a raise to do so. Mr. Ellingson did request, and was granted, a $1000 increase in the seasonal/temporary employee budget which would cover such an increase if the Mayor approves. Mr. Collier asked Mr. Ellingson to send him a copy of the pay increase request letter so he can update it to include signatures from everyone on the commission in support. Mr. Ellingson to report back at the next meeting. The seasonal/temporary person prior to Ms. Steeves was the volunteer coordinator. Currently, Ms. Steeves does not have a set schedule and it was not likely she would have such a schedule moving forward. The department used to also have someone who would work with the cats and kittens; currently, Ms. Accetta volunteers her time to do so. Ms. Steeves can work a maximum of 1000 hours per year; approximately 19 hours per week. Currently she handles entering the State reports; Mr. Ellingson was concerned once the ACO switches over to the police department ARM database she will no longer be eligible to do so but Lieut. Chila advised she would just need to sign a document stating she would not access information in the database for personal use.

Question whether Gary Farrar Jr. should be or could be coordinating volunteers; also, what Mr. Farrar’s job responsibilities entail.

Mr. Ellingson will discuss the volunteer coordinator duties with both Ms. Steeves and Mr. Farrar and report back at the next meeting.

The commission was advised that commissioners cannot also be City employees, so a current commissioner would not be eligible to be paid as a seasonal/temporary worker nor as a full-time employee.

Mr. Ellingson was asked how many paid employees the ACO office has. There are four full time positions: one ACO, an AACO, a canine maintenance position, and an office administrator. Ms. Steeves is a temporary/seasonal employee with no City benefits.

Mr. Ellingson advised less people have been coming in to take the food from the food bank.

Capt. Delmonte reported this would be Lieut. Chila’s last evening with the commission. Lieut. Luke Holder will be picking up the role starting with the next meeting. Lieut. Chila was thanked by the commission for his participation.

1. **OLD BUSINESS**
2. Facebook account consolidation – no progress. How many admins are on the site, and can it remain where everyone posts on the same site. Lieut. Chila said there should be one official City of Milford site, with one employee moderator and one commission moderator, to be determined between the commission and Animal Control. He said a further hierarchy can be created from there with limited abilities afforded a few additional people. Question why no one on the commission was contacted before the second, conflicting site was created. Ms. Kamen and Ms. Stanek had their page up and running since 2018, with permission from the City, and collected 2700 followers. New page is where the adoptable animals go with just 700 followers. No comments can be placed there. Mr. Ellingson is concerned that people may try to report emergencies, dog bites, etc. on the page if comments are allowed. Ms. Kamen explained the official page has a disclaimer. Lieut. Chila said you can’t deny comments due to 1st amendment rights. This applies to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. The Police Department site allows comments and keeps them posted regardless of content. They have a disclaimer that emergencies must call 911. To be continued.
3. Long-term shelter resident adoption plan –Ms. Stanek created a video of Barney who still needs to be adopted. Mr. Ellingson reported Milford Animal Shelter only receives $5 per animal adopted, regardless of the fee collected. The other funds go to pay for medical expenses. There is a rule that anyone in the food bank cannot adopt another animal. Suggestion to work on partnering with VCA Baybrook to offer wellness perks to adopters. Someone came Wednesday to look at Barney and possibly Spice. We can offer a price reduction if need be.
4. Rabbit spay is scheduled for February 17th at a reduced “shelter” rate.
5. Dog walkers – many volunteers but no direction. Who will coordinate? Ms. Dorney spoke with Jennifer from Team Rescue. She and her team can perform dog walking as professionals. Brad from Team Rescue is willing to make a presentation on what it would involve and the cost. City Attorney’s Office wants to be sure they have insurance. An Animal Control Officer must be present when dogs are out, as a City representative in the event something happens (walking a husky, for example, who wants to run). Ms. Dorney was asked to reach out to the group to schedule a presentation.
6. Rabies clinic – Suggested it as possible springtime event with Karen Fortunati, City Clerk. Mr. Ellingson has concerns. The event used to be at West Shore recreation hall, but that requires DPW to pay someone overtime to open, close and clean the facility. Ms. Fortunati suggested the gazebo behind the library. Dr. Bob Mickolyzck from Snowflake wanted it at his office. Mr. Ellingson prefers to have the event at a veterinarian’s office because records must be kept for 3 years, and the veterinarian would track the vaccinations. Regardless of where the clinic is held, we would need an ACO there who would also need to be paid overtime. Maybe do only one event per year. Tabled until Animal Control has more staff.
7. Benches – Ms. Kamen reported she has still not been able to reach Mr. Saley regarding bench(es).
8. Mama cat, calico on the hill – Mr. Ellingson reports they are too savvy and untrappable. Ms. Dorney suggested a “sneak up net;” a technology she will share with Mr. Ellingson before the next meeting.
9. Wastewater TNR Project and Smudge – traps have been unsuccessful; Smudge has not been seen. Wastewater is willing to keep two cats on premises.

**J. ADJOURNMENT –** Meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.