



Forsyth County Animal Services Advisory Board

November 17, 2022

6:00 - 7:30 PM

5570 Sturmer Park Circle
Winston-Salem, NC 27105

Bill Cowan, Chair
Chad Griffin, Vice Chair
Priscilla Ivester
Erin Turner
Rick Borucki
Bill Cowan
George Francisco
Lida Calvert-Hayes
Adam Bowditch
Shannon Maloney

Members Present

Priscilla Ivester	Rick Borucki	Shannon Maloney
Bill Cowan	Adam Bowditch	Lida Calvert-Hayes
Erin Turner	Michelle Connelly	Chad Griffin

Staff Present

Capt. V. Loveland
Tonya Ward

CALL TO ORDER

- The Advisory Board meeting was called to order at 6:05 pm by Bill Cowan. Staff let the Board know that George Francisco would not be present.
- Approval of meeting minutes September 15, 2022
MOTION: Rick Borucki made a motion to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Lida Calvert-Hayes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Rabies Clinics 2022**
Tonya Ward let the Board know that 65 animals were vaccinated at the clinic held on September 24th. This was the last clinic for 2022.
- **Meeting with State Senator**
Bill Cowan stated that he was still attempting to schedule a meeting but the Senator is very busy and it is hard to coordinate a date and time.

NEW BUSINESS

- ***New Member***

Shannon Maloney, who is a new member in the capacity of Representative of the Health Department introduced herself. She told the Board a little about her role at the Health Department. The other Board members introduced themselves.

- ***Forsyth Humane Society Contract***

Special Guest Speaker: Mark Neff, Executive Director Forsyth Humane Society

Prior to Mr. Neff's arrival, Bill Cowan spoke briefly. He said initially he did not want to interject while negotiations were ongoing but he considered that the Board could be asked for a recommendation and everyone should form their own opinion. Mark Neff arrived and thanked the Board for inviting him. Bill Cowan asked about the previous discussion of cats and amending the Running at Large ordinance. Mark Neff said that was put on hold due to the current contract negotiations. Bill Cowan asked if the Board wished to make their own recommendation, could they? Mr. Neff said of course.

Mark Neff then began his presentation. He said he wanted everything to be clear and for the Board to have all pertinent information regarding the position of FHS. He went on to say that the recent article in a local newspaper had featured some incorrect information. FHS has had no excessive staff growth. He went on to discuss staffing over the past 5 years including having a full time veterinarian as a part time vet could not cover all tasks.

Mark Neff explained that intake of cats and dogs in 2018/19 was around 6600-6800 per year and the "save rate" was 36%. He went on to say the concern is that, if the shelter reverts to being run by Forsyth County, these numbers will return as well.

He explained that FHS had asked for an increase in funding in December 2021 but was told that an existing contract could not be negotiated. A contract had been signed in 2020 prior to the cost of many things increasing substantially. The numbers for 2020 were based on only having one facility open, less staff, and less intake. In 2021 intake and costs increased. Bill Cowan commented that fees at his personal vet had increased 30%. Mark Neff said there is a national vet shortage and that, without care by FHS, animals would be euthanized with treatable medical conditions.

Mark Neff went on to detail the negotiations, explaining the initial ask and how the current expenses would bankrupt FHS within 9 months. He went on to explain that FHS had to exercise the contract exit clause in order to continue negotiating. Bill Cowan commented that only a few people remained who were around during the initial transition. He then asked about donors. Mark Neff explained that the commissioners had looked at 2016 numbers when FHS was campaigning for their new facility on Country Club Road and those numbers were not accurate long term. He further said that overall donations are down (especially larger gifts due to the current economic climate) although FHS is working with nationwide organizations to obtain grants whenever possible. Mark Neff then said FHS has been operating at a loss since 2018 but has been able to cover those expenses despite them being a county responsibility. He pointed out that information is available online to compare shelters and budgets statewide and Forsyth is at the bottom

Erin Turner asked if the report shows euthanasia numbers and Mark Neff replied yes. Bill Cowan asked about the cost for the Mighty Mouser cat program and Mark Neff replied that cost for that was minimal and was handled internally. Chad Griffin asked if he thought the county cares about the animals and Mark Neff stated that he has had to commitment to save more animals except from Commissioner Plyler. Mark Neff said that they had offered to get through 2023 fiscal year then go into the new budget year and discuss further costs at that time but the county rejected this offer. He went on to say FHS has reduced their requested funding twice.

Chad Griffin asked Captain Loveland if FCSO will take over running the shelter to which Captain Loveland replied that FCSO will not due to the shelter being underfunded and understaffed. Additionally, FCSO has no experience/knowledge regarding running an animal shelter. He went on to explain the county budget

analyst had come for a meeting and that he had explained this and given her all information regarding what the county would need to do. FCSO supports FHS and wishes to continue the partnership.

Erin Turner pointed out that it has also been suggested that other groups could step in.

Priscilla Ivester asked about a computer system and software and there was discussion of the previous system used by the county.

Priscilla Ivester also asked about the cost of the foster program. Mark Neff explained that FHS has 3 employees managing 400-600 animals in foster at any given time. There was discussion of the foster program and costs.

Erin Turner asked about intake numbers. Mark Neff explained that there has been a 20% increase nationwide in intake. This was followed by a discussion of spay/neuter. Lida Calvert-Hayes said she does not think the public is aware of all of this. Mark Neff said he has not issued any public statements which could interfere with negotiations.

There was discussion of all the work FHS does within the community, volunteers and the amount of money their time is worth. There was further discussion of speaking with the commissioners and FCSO involvement. Then further discussion of stray animals and hold times – how this would be managed. Mark Neff let the Board know he would send them a copy of all documents with information.

Priscilla Ivester asked if the Board should take a position. There was discussion.

MOTION: Priscilla Ivester made a motion that the Board issue a statement in support of FHS, it was seconded by Chad Griffin and passed unanimously.

Bill Cowan stated he would send this statement to the commissioners and Chad Griffin suggested everyone should also send an email individually.

- ***Hearing Tribunals***

The docket and members for the Tribunal Hearings scheduled for December 15th were discussed. Erin Turner, Rick Borucki, and Adam Bowditch said they were available. Bill Cowan and Priscilla Ivester both said they would serve as alternates.

ADJOURN

MOTION: With no further business Bill Cowan asked for a motion to adjourn. Rick Borucki made the motion, which was seconded by Priscilla Ivester. Bill Cowan adjourned the meeting at 7:572 pm.