

MCAS Community Advisory Committee Notes from Meeting on October 13, 2014

In attendance: CAC: Marci Jo Carlton, Karol Dietrich, Jeff Gosda, Glenda Hughes, Kara Kerpan, Megan Mautemps, Tonia Wagner. **MCAS:** Ann Potter, Mike Oswald, Gail Wilson, Stephanie Collingsworth.
Others: Sue Dicile, facilitator.

The meeting convened at 6:30pm

Minutes from the September 8th 2014 meeting were approved.

Agenda Overview

- The facilitator noted that the Shelter Review topic is likely to take place over three meetings, with this meeting focused primarily on the history preceding the current program and the purpose and methodology of the Shelter Review Committee.

Announcements

- MCAS has applied for a \$62,000 grant to fund the Kitten Triage program. MCAS is looking at three sites for the satellite facility.
- Mike attended the Best Friends national conference, where MCAS was asked to do a presentation on its success in saving lives of shelter animals.
- At committee members' request the following update on recent incidences featured on local news about people bitten by pitbulls was provided: There has not been a "rash" of such attacks. MCAS sees approximately 1000 cases of aggressive dogs each year and between 700-800 cases of dog bites. Through the increased use of social media, victims are self-reporting – and contacting the news media. The incidents highlighted in the media recently are not representative, nor do they indicate a trend.

Shelter Review Overview

History

Mike Oswald outlined the historical background:

- The ordinance authorizing MCAS states its purpose as "dog control" and protection of people from animals. In the late 1970s and 1980s homeless dogs were the primary problem, with packs of dogs presenting a public nuisance and resulting in dog bite issues. During this era there was no program to address behavior, no rescue groups, and no fostering program. Some cities, for instance Dallas, continue to take this approach.
- In the 1980s the focus on "responsible pet ownership" began to gain traction in Multnomah County. As owners licensed, spayed/neutered and vaccinated their pets things began to change.
- The following data shows results of the community taking responsibility:

Year	Intake of dogs (approximate)	Adopted	Euthanized
1981	10,000	767*	6,700*
2000	3,900	1635	1140
2010	3,000	726	417
2013	2,900	766	194

*Figures from 1983

- In the late 1970s euthanasia was conducted using a compression chamber. Multnomah County began using injection, which became state law. Injection required close contact between shelter staff and the animals during the process, increasing the emotional distress on staff.

Today

- Today, the live release rate for dogs is 90%, and the goal is to get to that rate for cats. Evaluation of animals must balance saving animals with the animal's medical issues and with the safety of the community.
- There has not been a lot of change in the number of cats received at the shelter, with intake at 4,000 in the early 1980s and 3,900 in 2013. MCAS has established innovative programs to improve the live release rate for cats, including:
 - Trap, Neuter, Return.
 - Partnering with the Feral Cat Coalition and Cat Adoption Team.
- Holding times, before an animal is made eligible for adoption, are 72 hours for an animal without ID and 6 days with ID. (*In response to a question it was noted that "holding time" is specific to "eligibility for transfer or adoption" and is in no way connected with euthanasia.*)
- Web activity is a major factor. Lost dogs and cats are being posted to the MCAS website and are being returned to their owners.
- How decisions are made:
 - The ordinance places the authority for disposition (return, rescue/partner transfer, euthanasia) with the MCAS Director. The recommendation is made by the Shelter Manager in consultation with committee members, which include the Field Supervisor, a Veterinarian, and an Animal Care/Behavior Specialist.
 - Each case is treated individually. The individual animal's history, medical issues, and behavioral issues are considered in the committee's recommendation.
- Case review is objective and fact-based ("beyond attachment") and has brought structure, objectivity, and greater refinement to the assessment process. Issues considered in the review include:
 - Behavior – in the shelter, the home, with the owner, with other animals (including prognosis of training)
 - Medical – feasibility, cost, impact on the animal.
 - Resources
- Instead of a "checkbox"/"cookie cutter" approach used in the past, the triage used in Shelter Review considers options based on each individual animal. This shift has been transformative. The Shelter Review Committee members ask "have we done everything we can for this animal?" with the goal of advancing animal welfare, protecting the public and raising the live release rate.

Behavior Assessment

Mike noted that Stephanie, a behavior specialist, has played a critical role in the increased live release rate. *Stephanie, Mike, and Ann all contributed to the following overview:*

- Four years ago, through MCAS' strategic planning process, "live release rate" was established as the shelter focus. The entire shelter organization was included in this process and embraced this vision.
- We provide uniform assessments of all animals even with multiple people doing assessments.
- The objective is to save lives/improve the live release rate. In order to meet that objective MCAS has a range of strategies, including its focus on behavior issues and partnerships in the community.
- The assessment developed by the Center for Shelter Animals is used:

- Straight to adoption – if social, friendly, good with other dogs and children.
 - More time, with options to calm or improve behavior – if some behavioral issues are present.
 - Euthanasia – if dangerous or having medical issues that are too costly or would result in unacceptable suffering.
- Stephanie provided the following example: Some dogs don't want to be touched when they are in the shelter however that could be the result of stress in the moment. MCAS works to build a dog's "social resume", building a profile for each dog and putting time and work into socializing each dog. "Open Paw" is used to interact with dogs so they can remain in the process longer.
 - Assessments are done 2 days after intake to give the animal time to acclimate and calm down.
 - Even in cases where the dog has bitten a person the assessment takes the individual animal and the circumstances into consideration: severity of injury, risk, facts of the situation, and conditions for ownership. Owners can also appeal through a hearings officer.
 - For cats, everything possible to increase their live release rate is done, based on the resources available at MCAS and in the community.
 - A graph illustrating the decrease in euthanasia driven by the assessment and review approach was distributed. A CAC member noted that the graph should be on MCAS' website.

Resources

- *Pit bull Placebo* by Karen Delise
- National Canine Research Council
- Dogstardaily.com
- MCAS website

Next Meetings

- The next meeting of the CAC will be held on November 10th. It is likely the meeting will be back in the Copper Room, but specific room information will be included with the agenda.
- Next steps for the November meeting will include "thinking through criteria" and case studies.

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 pm.