

March 30, 2017

Board of Supervisors,  
Santa Barbara County

#3

Dear Supervisors:

I am writing you in support of an Animal Welfare Commission and against the formation of another Advisory Board. The reason that I am against another Board similar in makeup to the current Oversight Team is the OT has been a closed process with very little public involvement, with significant costs to the County. The Team primarily has County staffers, or ex-County employees, or representatives from groups that operate at the County shelters and are financially dependent on the County. Therefore, the County is able to control the agenda items and discussion to the extent that independent ideas have a hard time being heard. When independent ideas are brought forth, we are reminded that the OT is advisory only.

One example of the closed process is that in December 2015, I attended an OT meeting as a representative of the Santa Barbara Dog Volunteers. The County staffers told us that the Operations Manager position was being opened. They were reminded that they had promised to have stakeholders involved in the interview process. So they subsequently chose a member of the Santa Barbara County Animal Care Foundation to represent the stakeholders. SBCACF was a non-profit group started by the County and previously listed Jan Glick as an officer on their reporting documents. The representative never contacted any of the other stakeholders to get their input on the candidates or selection process. They subsequently chose a candidate who has made some very controversial decisions in the last year.

Another example of the closed process is the County's response to the AHA recommendation of extending shelter hours (attached). The shelter dog volunteers had been asking for this for years to increase the numbers of adoptions and minimize confinement time. The normal response by AS management to this request was to blame the union rules for preventing the flexible hours. However, we have contacted the unions and they say that flexible start and stop times are allowed within certain limits as shown in the MOUs. The Ventura County shelter has implemented these flexible hours and have very similar MOUs. So we feel that the AS management is not being truthful with the dog volunteers on this issue.

Because of this, we feel that an Animal Welfare Commission with 1 or 2 representatives appointed by each supervisor with experience in animal sheltering issues would provide a fairer public hearing of ideas and evaluations of the AHA recommendations. The citizen commission would also cost much less in staff time than the current OT or proposed Advisory Board. After the public develops confidence in AS management's response to the Commission recommendations, they would be more likely to donate funds to build the new quarantine and protective custody facilities that are required at the Santa Barbara shelter in Goleta. Given the budget problems faced by the County at this time, this new approach is required to more cost-effectively use the available resources.

Sincerely,

Mark Bandurraga  
Santa Barbara Shelter Dog Volunteer and Dog Fosterer, 2008-2016  
Oversight Team Dog Volunteer Representative Alternate 2015-2016  
Voter in Janet Wolf's District