

April 3, 2017

Board of Supervisors, Santa Barbara County

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Re: April 4, 2017 Agenda, Item 17-00248
Santa Barbara County Animal Services (SBCAS)
American Humane Association (AHA) Progress Report

Dear Supervisors:

I am writing you in support of a *temporary* Animal Welfare Commission and against the formation of another Advisory Committee appointed by SBCAS as suggested in the SBCAS April 4, 2017 Presentation to the Board. Additionally, with the success of the non-profit organizations BUNS and ASAP that manage the stray rabbits and cats for SBCAS, I am supportive of exploring the public-private hybrid governance model with an experienced non-profit organization for sheltering the dogs and managing the volunteers. Given the budget problems faced by the County at this time, this approach is required to more cost-effectively use available resources.

Governance

Creating an Advisory Committee would, in effect, be a continuation of the AHA Oversight Team. The AHA Oversight Team has been a closed process with very little public involvement and with significant costs to the County. The Team consists primarily of County staffers, ex-County employees, or representatives from non-profit organizations that operate at the County shelters and are financially dependent on the County. The County is able to control the meeting agenda items and discussion to the extent that independent ideas have a difficult time being heard. When independent ideas are brought forth, we are reminded that the Oversight Team is advisory only.

AHA Report Excerpts for Governance

“Consider classifying the partnerships/relationships that SBCAS has with certain groups as adoption partners or contract services to the groups such as with BUNS, ASAP, K9-Pals and DAWG. See section “Governance, Management and Leadership” for more information and recommendations.”

“Adoption partners can be strategically utilized to manage the shelter population. A proactive approach to moving animals out of the shelter, will reduce shelter census and length of stay.”

“The collaboration between the County, SBCAS and the internal and external partners was a very creative way to solve a problem. The County is unable to fund the true total cost (as described in Section 15 (Finance & Budget) of animal services in a manner that ensures quality of care and the upholding of the Hayden Bill. Investigation into alternative governance models should be undertaken to ascertain if County management for Animal Services serves the community in the most efficient manner. Options include:

- Privatization of some or all County Animal services to a non-profit, either in whole or just the sheltering aspect*
- Joint Powers of Authority”*

With the above guidance from AHA, it was disappointing to hear that the AHA governance sub-committee only discussed an Animal Welfare Commission and, to a lesser extent, an Advisory Committee during their meetings January – March 2017. Even though I provided the sub-committee with written case studies of working public-private animal services shelters and gave them the name of an experienced non-profit organization who was willing to become more involved in SBCAS dog sheltering (Paw Works, Inc.), the sub-committee did not brainstorm these other possible governance models as recommended by the AHA report.

With the success of the non-profit organizations BUNS and ASAP that manage the stray rabbits and cats for SBCAS, I am supportive of exploring the public-private hybrid governance model with an experienced non-profit organization for sheltering the dogs and managing the volunteers. To achieve a foot-hold with SBCAS, the model could include a first step of allowing the non-profit (Paw Works, Inc.) to be responsible for Santa Barbara Shelter dog adoptions at a retail location. This is the business plan that they currently use in Ventura County for dogs and cats. Paw Works, Inc. has already established a relationship with Macerich/La Cumbre Mall for retail space.

As a transition to the public-private organization model, the Board can consider an Animal Welfare Commission comprised of 1 or 2 citizen representatives with animal sheltering experience who are appointed by each supervisor. This Commission would provide a fairer public hearing of ideas and evaluations of the AHA recommendations. A side benefit of this citizen Commission would be the reduced cost in staff time when compared to the current AHA Oversight Team or proposed Advisory Committee. Once the public develops confidence in SBCAS management’s response to the Commission recommendations, they would be more likely to offer support and to donate funds to build the new quarantine and protective custody facilities that are required at the Goleta shelter. Given the budget problems faced by the County at this time, this new approach is required to more cost-effectively use the available resources.

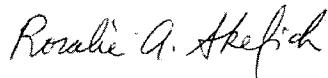
Comments on SBCAS Progress Report Letter to the Board

Item 1 - Summer 2016 – **Survey was not widely distributed** and specifically was not received by a current Ventura County rescue partners with SBCAS (Meade Canine Rescue, Paw Works, Inc.).

Item 3 – Policy & Procedures (P&P) – SBCAS was good about distributing three critical draft P&P to stakeholders for comment; however, the **final P&Ps were never distributed** and are **not readily available to the public**.

Item 12b – Systems in Place – Although the letter indicates that one or more systems **have been developed** (i.e., conversational adoptions, new approach to owner surrender, expanded use of social media, extended outreach activities), most **have not been implemented** because of lack of staff and volunteers. Examples include staff (vs. volunteers) doing dog adoptions, no significant changes to owner surrender of dogs, curtailed use of commercial adoption websites like Petfinder and Adopt-a-Pet, and no offsite dog adoption events or adoption promotions.

Sincerely,



Rosalie Skefich
805-968-2112

- 🐾 Santa Barbara County Animal Services, Shelter Dog Volunteer, Dog Fosterer, Dog Adopter, May 2010 – Nov 2016
- 🐾 AHA Oversight Team Dog Volunteer Representative Alternate, 2015 – 2016
- 🐾 Santa Barbara Humane Society Shelter Dog Volunteer, Feb 2000 – May 2010