

**ANIMAL SHELTER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ASAP) \* SANTA MARIA VALLEY HUMANE SOCIETY  
BUNNIES URGENTLY NEEDING SHELTER (BUNS) \* SANTA BARBARA COUNTY ANIMAL CARE FOUNDATION  
SHADOW'S FUND \* DOG ADOPTION & WELFARE GROUP (DAWG)  
K-9 PLACEMENT & ASSISTANCE LEAGUE, INC. (K-9 PALS)  
SANTA BARBARA SHELTER DOG VOLUNTEERS \* SANTA MARIA ANIMAL CENTER (SMAC) VOLUNTEERS**

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February 11, 2016

Chair Adam and Honorable Members of the Board,

This letter is being submitted by all of the organizations involved in the Oversight Team that have been reviewing recommendations made by the American Humane Association (AHA) regarding Santa Barbara County Animal Services. The signatories to this letter are the Oversight Team members representing the Animal Shelter Assistance Program (ASAP), Bunnies Urgently Needing Shelter (BUNS), Santa Maria Valley Humane Society, Shadow's Fund, Santa Barbara County Animal Care Foundation, Dog Adoption & Welfare Group (DAWG), K-9 Placement & Assistance League, Inc. (K-9 PALS), Santa Barbara Shelter Dog Volunteers and Santa Maria Animal Center (SMAC) Volunteers.

The purpose of this letter is to respectfully request that the Board of Supervisors take the following actions in four primary areas:

- 1) The Oversight Team Process: Direct staff to establish a mechanism for addressing operational problems involving individual groups at individual shelters.
- 2) Governance: Direct staff to engage the Oversight Team in further exploration of hybrid models of governance, including a mechanism for stakeholder input and Requests for Information from various community organizations.
- 3) MOUs with Partner Organizations: Direct staff to expedite the process of establishing MOUs with those partner organizations that seek one, and further, direct staff to provide a written timeline by which the MOUs will be completed and signed.
- 4) Continuous Community Body: Direct staff to explore the creation of a permanent Commission on Animals to provide stakeholder/citizen oversight of SBCAS.

The Oversight Team Process:

Since non-staff members of the Animal Services Oversight Team did not contribute to the report submitted to you, we would like to offer our own brief assessment of the process so far. In general, we are encouraged by the Team's efforts to improve the department's provision of services. We have made progress on the 'low hanging fruit' – and we are starting to work on more challenging, and likely more controversial, policies and issues. It is worth noting that the non-staff members of the Team have demonstrated, as your Board letter calls it, "extreme dedication and professionalism" in this. Stakeholder commitment of this kind is essential if we are to solve the problems identified in the AHA report and to ensure a strong program for the future.

We would also like to gratefully acknowledge all the time and hard work that both Dr. Wada and Susan Klein-Rothschild have put into the work of the Team, as well as of the Animal Services staff that have participated. Their commitment to this process has been essential to its effectiveness, and will be equally necessary to its success as we move forward.

We do have one specific request regarding the management of the Team's ongoing work: We ask that you direct staff to establish a mechanism for addressing operational problems involving individual groups at individual shelters. Specific problems continue to be raised at Oversight Team meetings, and because there is currently no other venue for their resolution, they distract the Team from focusing on our main agenda items. Over time, the Team may recommend a process for such disputes, but these concerns are too pressing – often involving the immediate well-being of specific animals – to wait for that process to be established.

The Oversight Team still has a great deal of work to do. However, we would like to highlight two areas where we feel that priority should be placed, and ask you to direct staff accordingly.

#### Governance:

The Board letter provides a broad outline of four basic models for the 'governance' of Animal Services. We deeply appreciate the time and effort that went in to compiling this information. From our own extensive experience working with Animal Services, and the practicality of what would be the best model for this county at this time with existing organizations and opportunities, we would urge you to direct future focus towards hybrid models of governance.

In reality, such a model is already in place here. Our best successes come from the intersection of Animal Services with its rescue partners, in a diversity of relationships that is neither full county control nor full contractual outsourcing. As for the outside contractor model: with no information about a possible single contractor to take over all of Animal Services, and the challenges that would be posed by the essential presence of the existing rescue partners, this model seems to be too far a reach at this time. Ditto for a Joint Powers of Authority model.

As a next step, we ask you to direct staff to engage the Oversight Team in further exploration of hybrid models of governance. As your Board letter notes, the Oversight Team was not a participant in the initial work of compiling information about models of governance. For the future, however, it only makes sense for the Team to take on the task of further exploration. This is because we, both Animal Services staff and partner organizations, are the ones most familiar with what is already in place in this county, and what is and isn't likely to work given the diverse and complex landscape of animal care here. We further urge you to direct staff to create opportunities for additional stakeholder input into the exploration of these models. This should include Requests for Information to invite various organizations and stakeholders to share information about possible models and resources.

#### MOUs with Partner Organizations

While the Oversight Team is pursuing research on hybrid governance models, it is still critical that written MOUs be established with those partner organizations that seek them. It is astonishing to realize that organizations such as ASAP, BUNS, CAPA and the Animal Care Foundation have been operating without such written agreements for many years, even decades – which means there has been no clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of both parties, and no protection for organizations which devote hundreds of thousands of dollars and hours of equivalent FTEs to serving the animals and people of this County. We ask you to direct staff to expedite the process of establishing MOUs with those partner organizations that seek one, and further, direct staff to provide a written timeline by which the MOUs will be completed and signed.

In reality and practicality, these MOUs will provide valuable information that can be utilized in the review of hybrid models of governance, and will likely form the basis for the recommended future model of governance that is best suited for our community.

We want to emphasize there will not be a one-size-fits-all MOU that will work for all the partner organizations. The needs and goals of an organization such as the Animal Care Foundation, which does not care for animals in county shelters, may be very different from those of ASAP and BUNS, which have assumed nearly total financial and managerial responsibility for sheltered cats and rabbits in Santa Barbara. The articulated goal of consistency among all three shelters certainly has its place where some policies are concerned, but would be inappropriate, and even damaging, in this instance.

Commission on Animals:

The other area where we ask you to provide direction is in exploring the creation of a Commission on Animals. It is entirely clear to not only those of us involved with the Oversight Team, but to the wider community of stakeholders, that oversight by stakeholder groups has already made a big difference in improving both programs and performance at Animal Services. We believe that it is essential that ongoing oversight continue after the work of the Team is finished.

The County already has nearly 20 Boards and Commissions, the purview of which ranges from the arts to women to mental health services, and from purely advisory in nature to being tasked with governing responsibility. It is long past time that we have a citizen body dedicated to oversight of an area of service which is so critically important to a great many residents of this County.

Your Board letter notes the Oversight Team's support for an ongoing team or committee, a "continuous community body" as the letter calls it. Again, we urge you to task the Team with the study of models in order to make a recommendation for your consideration, supported by staff research into different models of oversight. As the Team becomes more practiced in the work of overseeing Animal Services, they will be your best resource for determining what model would be the best to succeed us as we conclude our work.

We thank you for all the time and attention that you have devoted to Animal Services and to the people and animals who are served by this important County program. We stand ready to continue our work on the Team as we all strive to make this program the best it can be.

Sincerely,

Angela Walters Rockwell, Executive Director  
*Animal Shelter Assistance Program (ASAP)*

Charlotte Alexander, Executive Director  
*Santa Maria Valley Humane Society*

Phil Seymour, Founder/Board Member  
*Bunnies Urgently Needing Shelter (BUNS)*

Linda Greco, Co-Founder/President  
*Santa Barbara County Animal Care Foundation*

Jill Anderson-Rackley, Co-Founder/Director  
*Shadow's Fund*

Janelle Ward, Founder/President  
*k-9 Placement & Assistance League, Inc. (K-9 PALS)*

Shirley Jansen, Founder/Board Member  
*Dog Adoption & Welfare Group (DAWG)*

Chris Erskine, Volunteer  
*Santa Barbara Shelter Dog Volunteer Representative*

Amy Black, Volunteer  
*Santa Maria Animal Center Volunteer Representative*