

GRAND JURY #1879

Rec
8/31/04
CWB

Response to the 2003-2004 Sonoma County Grand Jury Report Agricultural Commissioner's Office/Animal Regulation Division Response from the Agricultural Commissioner/Department Head

SEP 14 REC'D

Finding 4, Page 13:

Disparate philosophies have created a rift between some permanent staff and volunteer members. This rift negatively affects day-to-day operations and interpersonal relations. The present management seems unable or unwilling to resolve these issues. For example, there are permanent staff members who are more likely to euthanize animals, whereas some volunteer members believe almost every animal should be saved.

Response:

Partially disagree. I agree there is diversity among the people who work at the shelter. This includes hired clerical staff, field staff, and shelter staff, supervised inmates and volunteers, all bringing different perspectives. I believe this creates a challenging work environment, but one that can add to the service we are able to provide. As the new department head, this is one of the first challenges realized and being addressed. However, I do not agree with the example given "there are permanent staff members who are more likely to euthanize animals" as the decision when to euthanize is based on state law and shelter policy not on an individuals criteria. Beyond state law, the decision to euthanize or not is made after determining adoptability, considering humane standards, contacting rescue groups, and evaluating available space at the shelter.

Finding 5, Page 13:

Many shelter operational problems stem from poor communications between management and shelter staff. Interviews revealed that management's lack of appreciation for the staff and volunteers contributes to the daily stressful conditions at the shelter.

Response:

Partially disagree. There are regular staff meetings among the various staff to aid communications, and to discuss the subject of proper communication. Also, communication is reviewed with the volunteers during orientation. Even still, the subject of communication is being reviewed because improvements could be made. The County does have an employee appreciation program and the Animal Regulation Division has utilized this program in recognizing their staff such as it did in June during the Department Recognition BBQ.

Finding 6, Page 13:

The Sonoma County Agricultural Commissioner previously proposed a new position of Assistant Animal Regulations Director that would help the shelter director to balance the demands of public service with day-to-day operations, but the County Administrator rejected it.

Response:

Agree. The deputy director position was discussed during the review of personnel needs to accomplish the workload increase associated with the Santa Rosa contract. At that time the position was not approved partly due to lack of funding. The Division does have a heavy workload and additional staffing would undoubtedly help the situation as it is very difficult for one manager to address the internal running of the Division (personnel, budget, contracts, day to day operations, etc.) and the external matters (association with the cities, other organizations, volunteers, running the MAC outreach program's and the fund raising). Review of staffing and modifications will be considered.

Finding 7, Page 13:

The Volunteer Coordinator is a paid shelter staff member and among his many duties attends all Volunteer Board meetings acting as a liaison between the volunteers and shelter management. In addition, a major responsibility of the coordinator is facilitating effective communication between volunteers and permanent staff. Several volunteers stated that the coordinator lacks appropriate organizational skills for the job and is an ineffective liaison between the volunteers and shelter management.

Response:

Partially disagree. The Grand Jury finding is difficult to interpret without specific examples of the lack of organization or lack of liaison efforts. The person in this position plays a pivotal, and difficult role in effectively using volunteers along with the staff. I believe addressing communications within the division, as a whole will enhance the effectiveness of the Volunteer Coordinator. Like the previous finding and response regarding communications, this is something that needs continued attention.

Finding 13, Page 14:

Many licensed rescue groups/individuals believe that they are routinely overlooked as a source of help to the shelter. They perceive there is a lack of teamwork and cooperation between the shelter and themselves. It is their perception that shelter management has an unfriendly attitude toward him.

Response:

Partially disagree. This finding is not well supported in the report. Nonetheless, we will examine our policies and procedures, and question the groups we deal with to see if we can, and how, more fully utilize their services.

Recommendation 2, Page 15:

The Agricultural Commissioner must create a new position: Assistant Animal Regulations Director, whose responsibilities would include managing and coordinating personnel and daily shelter operations, establishing a more effective public relations program and improving staff training program.

Response:

The recommendation requires further analysis. The Division does have a heavy workload and additional staffing would undoubtedly help the situation as it is very

difficult for one manager to address the internal running of the Division (personnel, budget, contracts, day to day operations, etc.) and the external matters (association with the cities, other organizations, volunteers, running the MAC outreach program's and the fund raising). However, further analysis and approval from the Human Resources Department, the County Administrator's Office, the Board of Supervisors and the Civil Service Commission would have to take place before a new position is added. How to fund such a position would also have to be analyzed and solution found before adding this position. Discussions on the topic have started and the initial analysis will be completed within six months.

Recommendation 3, Page 15:

The Animal Regulation Division Director should install a more efficient phone system within one year to accommodate staff and better serve the public.

Response:

The recommendation requires further analysis. A more efficient phone system would help staff handle the high workload. There is a semi-automated system in place now, but to go with a fully automated system may not fit into existing County policy. This aspect will have to be studied before implementing a new system. Options will also have to be discussed and evaluated with the County's Communications Department. We have monitored phone calls for a number of months and this information will be useful when studying our options. This area will be analyzed within six months.

Recommendation 5, Page 15

The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee must become a stronger more independent advocate for the animals' welfare and the division's mission, ultimately leading to more animal adoptions and fewer occurrences of euthanasia. A good first step would be inviting representatives from local rescue organizations to serve on this committee.

Response:

The recommendation requires further analysis. The Animal Welfare Advisory Committee was formed by a Board of Supervisors' Resolution that establishes the purpose of the Committee, how Committee members are selected, serve, meet, and function (please see attached copy of the resolution). Members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors, one per district plus two "at large" members to include at least one veterinarian. Current membership does include persons involved in animal rescue. The Department will look at ways the Committee, under the current Board of Supervisors' Resolution, may assist in advancing the Division's mission. This will take place within six months.

Recommendation 6, Page 15:

The success, or failure, of the MAC van program lies in its frequent usage and high visibility of its scheduled services within the community it serves. As such, an immediate priority of shelter management must be to vigorously promote the availability of the MAC van and to aggressively utilize it throughout the county.

Response:

This recommendation has been implemented. The MAC and related programs are in their first year of implementation and already a very important outreach tool for the Division with many resources spent to maximize its benefits. Current utilization of the MAC includes use by the County, City of Santa Rosa, and Forgotten Felines for adoption and/or spay-neuter events throughout the County. Numerous MAC events have occurred, are scheduled and being planned. We will evaluate the program in one year and make adjustments as needed, striving to maximize the success of the MAC, including increasing awareness and utilization.

Recommendation 7, Page 15:

The shelter director must insure that the Volunteer Coordinator acquire more training on liaison skills, effective coordination of numerous tasks, and recognizing volunteers for their efforts on a continuing basis. Management must insure this training be put into practice, and documented by performance evaluations.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented. Additional training has been provided to the Volunteer Coordinator since the Grand Jury's Report. Ongoing analysis will include examining the need for additional training, what the need is, and the expected results. Continued efforts, including accessibility to ongoing training, will be made to increase staff effectiveness throughout the division.

Recommendation 8, Page 15 :

The shelter director needs to utilize all opportunities, especially the Internet, to publicize the shelter's many services.

Response:

The recommendation has been implemented and the Division will continue to improve outreach programs that it uses to provide information to the public. The following have or are in the process of being implemented:

- Update division/volunteer website and continually update the 579 SPAY informational number
- Expand information on the site to include information about shelter programs- MAC, spay/neuter, etc.
- Include newsletter on the website
- Continue printing of information that is available in the shelter office
- Work with contract municipalities to insure information about Division programs are a part of each community's newsletter
- Issue news releases that highlight volunteer and division activities

ATTEST: MAY 9 1990

EDDIE T. LEWIS

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SONOMA,
STATE OF CALIFORNIA FORMING THE SONOMA COUNTY ANIMAL WELFARE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
By (Signature) Deputy

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors recognizes the importance of animal regulation and related activities and issues; and

WHEREAS, Government Code section 31000.1 authorizes the Board of Supervisors to appoint committees of citizens to study problems of general or special interest to the Board and make reports and recommendations to the Board; and

WHEREAS, establishment of an advisory committee comprised of concerned citizens of the County will provide the Board with comment on general or specific issues relating to animal welfare;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma that a seven (7) member Animal Welfare Advisory Committee is hereby established.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that said advisory committee shall:

1. Meet bimonthly, or as necessary to address issues assigned by the Board, said meetings to be in accordance with the provisions of the Brown Act, Government Code Section 54950 et seq.
2. Be comprised of seven (7) members appointed by the Board as follows:
 - one (1) member per supervisorial district.
 - two (2) "at large" members to include at least one (1) veterinarian.
3. Organize itself, adopt rules and regulations for meetings, and shall select from its members a chairman and vice-chairman and upon appointment of the first members of the committee shall meet and shall, by lot, select three (3) of its members to serve for a term of two (2) years and four (4) members to serve for terms of four years, thereafter members shall serve for terms of four years.
4. Advise the Board on general matters relating to animal welfare or other issues as directed by the Board.
5. Provide support to the Animal Regulation Division with emphasis on enhancing the services provided to the community at large.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors is directed to post notice of the creation of this committee as required by Board Resolution No. 56448.

Supervisors

Nicholas aye Harberson aye Smith aye Esposti aye Carpenter aye

Ayes 5 Noes 0 Absent 0 Abstain 0

SO ORDERED