

Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

Date: November 20, 2024
Time: 1:00 pm
Location: Community Support Services, Conference Room A
218 SE 24th Street, Gainesville, FL 32641

Members Present Chelsea Bower, Stacy Hudak, Melissa Jenkins, Kristen Young,
Perry Koon, Julie Levy

1. Call to Order

Members Present

- Chelsea Bower
- Perry Koon
- Melissa Moomaw
- Kristen Young

Members Absent

- Julie Levy

Staff Present

- Julie Johnson
- Sarah Gilley
- Blake Jacoby
- Cecelia Albright

The meeting was called to order at 1:01pm.

2. Election of Chair

The meeting began with the election of the Chair. Kristen Young made a motion to make Perry Koon the Chair, seconded by Chelsea Bower. All in favor. Motion passed at 1:02pm.

3. Election of Vice Chair

Election of the Vice Chair. Kristen Young made a motion to make Melissa Moomaw the Vice Chair, seconded by Chelsea Bower. All in favor. Motion passed at 1:03pm.

4. Approval of the Agenda

Melissa Moomaw made a motion to approve the agenda as presented; Chelsea Bower second; unanimous approval; motion carried at 1:03pm.

Julie Johnson requested at 1:04pm to discuss New Business before Old Business due to a guest speaker being present. Perry Koon approved this change.

5. Approval of Minutes from 8/14/24

Melissa Moomaw made a motion to approve the 8/14/24 minutes as presented; Kristen Young second; unanimous approval; motion carried at 1:04pm.

6. Public Comment

The floor for public comment was opened at 1:04pm. No public comment.

7. Old Business

Old Business discussion began at 1:17pm.

8. New Business

Discussion of New Business began at 1:05pm.

8.1 Pet-Inclusive Housing Study

Kristen Young stated the Wagmore Foundation reached out to Dr. Applebaum regarding the Pet-inclusive Housing Study to see if any research can be done in Alachua County. Dr. Applebaum put together a proposal for Julie Johnson and is here to present that proposal.

8.1.1 Introduction to Dr. Applebaum

Dr. Jenny Applebaum introduced herself, has a masters in shelter medicine, previously worked at Alachua County Humane Society. She has intimate knowledge of Alachua County systems. This motivated her to get her degrees and begin this research. She wanted to figure out ways to do evidence driven approaches to support the animal-human bond, supporting pet ownership for vulnerable and lower resource communities. One of the passion areas is related to impact of housing issues on pet relinquishment.

Dr. Applebaum put together a proposal that has three parts, running through 2025. The first step is policy analysis – looking at local and federal regulations to look at what current laws and policies state. The second step is program assessment to see what other places are doing to alleviate burden of pet rent, restrictions, pets altogether. The third step is focus groups to talk to landlords, stakeholders, pet owners needing to surrender due to housing issues and how it impacts decisions to not adopt and relinquished pets. This will be done in collaboration with ACAR.

Julie Johnson stated she had met with Dr. Applebaum, and staff will begin asking people if they are comfortable sharing this information. Julie stated people have come into the shelter with concerns due to pet rent and deposits being high. Julie is interested to learn the results and might be able to discuss the results with Adam Leath at Jacksonville Humane to see if there could be funding available for grants to support this. Dr. Applebaum hopes to share results and recommendations so policy makers can be informed, create information resources for owners, and create academic studies.

Kristen Young stated study is robust, there are numerous data points that go into housing issues and adoption trends. Kristen stated if we don't know what's going on data wise its difficult to make policy and operational decisions. Julie stated when Dr. Applebaum and her met, there was a unique conversation about pets being considered property as other items that are considered property do not have fees. Dr. Applebaum stated many policies are exploitive and unregulated.

Kristen Young asked if data is collected with surrenders. Julie responded yes, but it can be made more robust to include different subsets of housing for intake types. Dr. Applebaum responded for this study, owners would be handed information about this study, and data refinement can be discussed at a later date.

9. Response to Public Comment

There was no response to Public Comment.

7. Old Business

7.1 Director Announcements

7.1.1 New Shelter

Julie Johnson opened Director Announcements with discussion of the new shelter. Julie stated there is progress, much closer than there had been previously in discussion with the University of Florida. The County Manager has met with UF personnel, feels they have gotten closer. On the vet agreement and shelter medicine side, there will need to be a separate agreement like an MOU and not part of the lease agreement for the property. Julie explained this still has to go back to the County Commissioners, then another update would follow soon. The internal and external discussions with the architect have already started. After the architect and construction manager are onboarded, there will be community engagement meetings. Other experts were needed to be on board to hear community input firsthand. Kristen Young responded she has been involved in other committees, and public input is always interesting. Kristen believes it should be more broad feedback about what the experience should be instead of daily functionality. Julie agreed and stated she wants to ask the public about what they want to see and feel when they walk in. Kristen asked if there is any advocacy the committee can do in the meantime, Julie said not at this time but hopes to have additional updates at the next meeting.

7.1.2 Found pet checklist for local veterinary practices/rescues

Julie Johnson opened discussion of the Found Pet Checklist for local veterinary practices. Julie stated there have been struggles with practices accepting healthy animals as stray, but clinics are being held to the same standards as the public. ACAR staff has already been distributing Found Animal Resources to finders, but this checklist was created due to a suggestion at a previous AWAC meeting. Julie asked the committee if they had any feedback for the checklist or found animal guides. Sarah Gilley stated the committee members could review the checklist and found resources and send in feedback anytime.

7.2 Committee Announcements

7.2.1 Annual Work Plan and Accomplishments

Sarah Gilley asked Perry Koon if there were items the committee would like added to the Annual Work Plan and Accomplishments.

Perry Koon responded many accomplishments could be found in the previous minutes, but several notable accomplishments were creating a protocol for responding to public comment, quorum issue regarding majority of current members was fixed, ordinances related to the agricultural center were discussed.

10. Appreciation Luncheon

Julie Johnson stated staff wanted to recognize everyone on the committee as they are all volunteers and want feedback on where and when the committee members would like to host an Appreciation Luncheon. Kristen Young suggested a sandwich platter before the next meeting. Perry Koon asked the committee if they wanted to meet at 12:30 in this location prior to the next meeting, unanimous approval.

11. Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, February 12th at 1:00pm in the Community Support Services Building, Conference Room A.

Prior to adjournment, Kristen Young asked if there were any event or staffing updates. Julie Johnson responded Whisker Wonderland was coming up on December 6th. The event was not sponsored by Best Friends this year, but a public purpose form that came out of the donation account was used to help promote the event. There are ads running starting on Black Friday on several platforms including Fox35 Orlando to reach more people.

Julie also responded that postings just closed for a second dispatcher to go 7 days a week to take load off calls to 911 and hopes to fill the position quickly. Chelsea Bower asked if we are still hiring a Shelter Supervisor, Julie responded yes. Julie stated there are new candidates with shelter management experience. Chelsea Bower also asked if there had been feedback from the officers about the spay/neuter vouchers they were giving out to the community. Julie responded she would follow up with the officers to determine the feedback they are receiving as they hand the vouchers out.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at x.