

Animal Welfare Advisory Committee

Date: August 13, 2025
Time: 1:00 pm
Location: Community Support Services, Conference Room A
218 SE 24th Street, Gainesville, FL 32641

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:02pm

2. Approval of the Agenda

Perry Koon opened by stating he had additions to the Agenda. His suggestions were as follows:

- Amend agenda to add to new business to discuss public comments
- Add proposed sheriff's office takeover of enforcement
- Community concerns about staff and the shelter and after-hours calls for emergency services
- Additional addition to committee comments

Motion to amend agenda with added topics made by Kristen Young, seconded by Svetlana Korotkevitch. All in favor, motion carried.

Motion to approve made by Melissa Moomaw, made by Patti Gordon, all in favor, motion carried.

3. Approval of Minutes May 21st, 2025

Motion to approve minutes made by Melissa Moomaw, seconded by Jacob Schaffer, all in favor, motion carried.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:26pm.

4. Public Comment

Public comment opened at 1:07pm.

Citizen Kathleen Rupert opened the floor. She looks forward to comments on public comments. Concerned about this committee making suggestions to the county, did not see anything about advising the county on future issues, does not understand why the committee cannot give a comment on the location of the new shelter. No public engagement if there is no response to public comment.

No other public comment

5. Old Business

5.1 Website Updates

Opened with Julie Johnson introducing the website updates that were voted on at the last AWAC meeting. Added Shelter Animals Count to the statistics tab at the recommendation of this committee. You can view intakes, outcomes, different categories for intakes and outcomes to dive deeper into the data. Down below are the stats the way we have always shown them. Took in more than 300 cats and over 100 dogs, cat adoptions have been successful lately. Julie said homepage updates are also made, still a work in progress, there are button icons now with live links. One of the big suggestions was adding animal control resources, including affidavits, ordinances, bite reports, and dispatcher emails so people can talk to dispatchers directly. Still a work in progress but want to continue increasing functionality. Chelsea Bower remarked it looks great. Kristen Young remarked it looks great. Kristen suggested elaborating on the links and what they are for and when to use them.

5.2 Event Recap

Julie Levy said it was funded by Wagmore, 15th annual event, adoptions are down especially for dogs, much of the funding was for PR and things like Spotify were used to help promote the event. We had about 200 parties that came and filled out entry survey, more than half of those adopted animals so more people adopted than expected. Cat kennels are emptied but did not empty as many dog runs as liked. Wanted to give a pat on the back to the staff for running the event. One thing Julie mentioned there was no poop anywhere, made a huge difference. Julie Johnson said volunteers were so kind, so many donors, PetSmart, Bark Box, Cava, Raising Canes, Newberry Animal Hospital, Bagel bakery. Adopters were excited, it was positive and helpful. Kristen was there at noon, remarking how cool it felt walking through kennels. Julie Johnson said we have made additions to help cool the kennels, such as the misters and shades. Julie Levy recommended everyone who has not been there recently to go by and see the facility updates.

6. New Business

6.1 Staffing Updates

Brittany D'Azzo was introduced as the Shelter Supervisor, has been with ACAR for 8 weeks, was with Polk County originally, comes with years of hands-on experience in the shelter and in the field. Debra Fuller was introduced as the Admin Coordinator, has been onboard for 4 months, and will be transferring to AG Extension office. Brittany said we are fully staffed and just onboarded new Kennel Technicians, three full-timers and one part-time. Kristen asked if this is the highest rate we have had in a while with positions being filled, Julie responded yes.

Dr Stephenson accepted another position, leaving us tomorrow. Julie is working with a consultant to secure relief vets in the interim. We completed interviews and had a candidate selected. Perry Koon said the ordinance addition was going to be removed.

Julie asked County Attorney Allison, she said yes, there are a few items due process wise to work through the language. Julie Levy had a question asking if there is flexibility while there is no vet, Johnson responded yes. We can do foster-to-adopt.

6.2 Ordinance Update

Current wording reads “Any animal that enters the shelter at ACAR will be fixed prior to adoption, reclaim, or any other release unless a Breeder's Permit is purchased in full prior to release”. BOCC is working on the wording, so this is currently on hold.

6.3 BOCC Public Comment Procedures

Julie Johnson wanted to address Public Comments made to commissioners. Julie Johnson said the commission has asked staff to make guidelines for public comment and what they would like to see. The draft resolution would have committees have public comment at the beginning, allowing public comment to any motions made, and at the end of the meeting for anything discussed during the meeting. It will be going to the BOCC and added to the resolution later. That is the direction for all advisory committee meetings in order to make public comment more engaging.

Perry Koon said there is no reason why we cannot discuss this as a committee now and implement something for today until we receive the guidelines. Kristen said she has served on several committees and there are comments at the beginning, asking for public comment during motions. Kristen has brought up things that the public has brought up previously. Kristen said this committee has followed regulations of those committees. A lot of the things we hear from public are outside of the purview of the committee. “it sometimes feels like the BOCC tells people to come talk to us instead of them.” Kristen said she understands public frustration but believes this committee is modeled after BOCC. Doesn't see a problem with it as it stands.

Perry said it was his first time attending a BOCC meeting, said it flowed well having comments following motions. Perry said it was not an open debate, business still has to be conducted, cannot get into back and forth commenting. Says he still hears the public but if its outside of purview we may not be able to comment. We are here to support ACAR and engage, not debate. Julie Levy said it is our duty to hear from the public because there are not many outlets for the public to comment, and this seems like an appropriate venue to do it. We are siloed, we know each other, we may not be as aware of how the community thinks. This committee can work more on issues and projects instead of informational items that could just be an email.

6.4 Merger of ACOs with Sherriff's Department

Discussion of the Sheriffs Deal began at 1:35pm. Discussed BOCC voting to have the sheriff's dept possibly taking over enforcement duties for ACAR. It is still in draft format, has not been formally voted on. Designed to provide more safety for officers in the field. The shelter is not going under the sheriff, this is just for enforcement. You would contact the sheriff to dispatch officers, not the shelter. Not concrete, that is currently what is on the table.

Perry Koon stated this committee has not been consulted or asked to provide any feedback regarding this item. Chelsea asked if the dogs would still be housed at the shelter, Julie responded yes. Melissa asked what kind of training they would receive, would they be trained in handling. Julie said it's the current fleet of our officers but does not know going forward. In the state of Florida AC officers need to have euthanasia certification and ACO certification. Those certifications would need to continue, our officers will now have to receive training in sheriff's systems and everything regular officers have to do to apply because of the security level they are getting. They will see much more on full history of the address. Our officers have to call law enforcement out to specific address all the time, just getting animal history currently but would now get full history.

Kristen asked about continuity between sheriffs because there have been issues with new sheriffs and BOCC over budget and policies, Kristen said there is a concern with future sheriffs not providing the same level of priority. Julie J said radios are not on the same law enforcement channels but can flip to a different channel to get law enforcement help. They do have the ability to get help currently. There was a concern previously because a radio template was deleted in 2012, the template is back and works now.

Patti Gordon has a question, the current ACO officers will move over. When there is a vacancy, will we assist with hiring based on our standards and training history. Julie said correct. Chelsea asked if one of our supervisors would have input, Julie said no. A sergeant would oversee from a new bureau that would blend our officers with ag officers, all animals under one jurisdiction. No insight from the ACAR director. Patti said when she was helping at Dignity Village, when cops came out it was very difficult to work with officers and having animals confiscated unnecessarily and escalating situations. ACOs do a good job deescalating but sensed regular officers did not want to be there, did not prioritize communicating with the owners. Jacob would want to know what credentials their staff is being hired on. Julie said their HR department would oversee that, the mandated certifications would still be required.

Julie said the commission has guidelines throughout the pilot; the commissioners did vote to check in at 6 months to see how things are going. Julie said many calls for service can overlap. Kristen asked if our budget would be reduced, Julie said correct. Julie said they asked for additional funding, BOCC approved it 4 to 1. Kristen asked what ACO duties are. Julie said they will still have to do vaccines, set up kennels, intakes still have to be done properly. If an animal is suffering, humane euthanasia is still expected. Emergency veterinary clinics would still be contracted for after hours. Our vet would still provide assistance during the day. Those dogs get emergency treatment now.

Chelsea asked if it was a done deal, Julie said yes with a goal of November 1st. Melissa asked if they would have authority to make euthanasia decisions, Julie said the hope would be they follow the euthanasia certification but would follow up with an emergency vet to stabilize animals. Julie Levy said there is normally work done in the field to try and reunite owners and animals, working on managed intake to support when kennel staff is area, Julie Levy said it seems there will be a huge increase in intakes. The

commissioners said we will not be going backwards on progress made, we will not be dumping thousands of animals. Kristen asked if things like passing out food, helping fix food, Julie said we do not know what their standard will be. Julie Levy said the current staff knows how to do this but there might be issues in the future.

6.5 Committee Comments

Chelsea Bower said her board and leadership team are working on committees, wants to make a community engagement committee to move away from the welfare people and wants to work on education and resources the communities can move. They want to partner with organizations that know owners who have pets. Kristen asked if just non-animal people, Chelsea said yes but also wants community leaders, wants to get into the schools, wants to work on little things to get out there a little more. Community Foundation and Chamber recommended by Kristen Young.

Dr Levy requested an agenda item for the KSD program to help keep kittens out of the shelters and rescue system. Trying to share nationally, better to have kittens stay with people who find them. A follow up would be Petzel implementation for post-adoption support. Julie said PetPoint is going away, might have to wait until. Adopt-a-pet and PetPoint sends out notifications. This system is next level. Julie said adoption returns are very limited, we do provide training and veterinary resources at adoption, happy to look back into it. Melissa said she can bring stats; Julie said our staff was trained. Dr Levy said she would bring statewide statistics at the next meeting. Melissa said OC did their 100,000 cat recently.

7. Response to Public Comment

Response to public comment began at 2:20pm. Perry Koon started it. Two main things: this community provides input to BOCC. Perry stated this committee will take a look at anything BOCC hands down and wants the committee's opinion on. We do not have authority to make decisions but can provide any info they request. Wants to support anything that ACAR needs and brings to the table. We are here to support, not run the show. Unless there is a need that must be met. The other is the public comments.

We have discussed and decided not to make changes to procedures our committee put into place but knows the county is working on guidelines for all committees so it is more universal and across the board. We will adopt those guidelines. Kristen asked if we will have the new guidelines by next meeting, Julie said most likely. Julie Levy said one view is our job is to respond to requests from the county but also assumed our job was to bring things forward to assist the shelter. That's where public comment comes in.

8. Next Meeting

The next AWAC meeting is November 12, 2025 at 1:00pm in the same location, Conference room A of the Community Support Services Building.

